

Date: June 5, 2013

Press release by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand

Burma's war against Kachin creating 'perfect storm' for human trafficking

A new report by Kachin women exposes how the Burmese government's war against the Kachin has greatly increased the risk of human trafficking along the China-Burma border.

"Pushed to the Brink," launched today by the Kachin Women's Association Thailand (KWAT), shows how the displacement of over 100,000 people over the past two years, lack of refugee protection and shortages of humanitarian aid have become significant new push factors fuelling the trafficking of Kachin women to China, already a long-standing problem.

KWAT's report includes 24 cases of actual or suspected trafficking from Kachin border areas since the resumption of fighting in June 2011, mostly involving young women and girls displaced by the war, who have been tricked, drugged, raped, and sold to Chinese men or families as brides or bonded laborers for as much as 40,000 Yuan (about \$6,500 USD) per person. Some ended up as far east as Shandong and Fujian provinces.

Denied refugee status in China, most displaced Kachin are sheltered in crowded camps along the border, which receive virtually no international aid. Desperate to earn an income, many cross the border illegally, becoming vulnerable to traffickers.

"Push tens of thousands of people to China's doorstep, deprive them of food and status, and you've created a perfect storm for human trafficking," said Julia Marip, KWAT spokesperson.

Given the Burmese government's policies of military aggression and blockage of humanitarian aid to displaced Kachin, which have directly fuelled trafficking, KWAT is highly critical of the US government decision to raise Burma from its bottom-level ranking in their 2012 Trafficking in Persons report. Burma's much-proclaimed "anti-trafficking task forces" are non-operational on the Kachin State-China border.

KWAT is urging the international community to tackle the trafficking issue in Burma holistically, including providing urgently needed humanitarian aid to displaced Kachin and pressuring the Burmese government to start making political concessions to end the conflict.

The full report can be viewed on www.kachinwomen.com

Contact persons:

Ms. Julia Marip - +66 (0) 9 0750 4960

Ms. Seng Shadan - +66 (0) 8 9639 6080

As a non profit-making organisation working on behalf of Kachin women, we have a vision of a Kachin State where all forms of discrimination are eliminated; where all women are empowered to participate in decision making at a local, national and international level; and where all Kachin children have the opportunity to fulfil their potential.