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## **Ethnic People from Burma Plea for International Help to End Abuses**

Burma's Kachin ethnic group have submitted a petition to UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon and other international leaders, urging global action to end the conflict and human rights abuses that have been ongoing in Northern Burma. Those who signed the petition come from Burma as well as 22 countries.

After a 17-year ceasefire was broken in June, conflict in the Kachin areas of Burma has led to widespread human rights abuses and created a humanitarian crisis. Local Kachin as well as international human rights organizations have released information about atrocities Burma's army is committing against the Kachin population, including forced labor, land confiscation, and sexual violence. The petition states its support for the Kachin Independence Army by declaring: "The Kachin Independence Organization is not waging a war of separatist movement, ethnic autonomy, or fighting exclusively for the Kachins' rights. It is defending for the rights of all the inhabitant of the Union of Burma including the soldiers of all ranks in the Burma Army."

"What is needed in Burma is not a military solution, this has only led to greater problems, what is needed is an immediate national dialogue of reconciliation between all ethnic groups, democratic forces, and the military. We need to find real answers, otherwise the ethnic people of Burma will continue to suffer," said Gum San, a spokesperson for the group Help Save the Ethnic People of Burma Alliance.

Local groups estimate that over 30,000 ethnic Kachin have fled their homes, but only about 10% of those have been able to access international aid. "Kachins have reached out to UN agencies for humanitarian assistance, but their meager response has been disheartening. We need their help to push the Chinese and Burmese to stop their aid blockade, otherwise the situation will become even more disastrous" said Gum San.

Other conflicts are currently happening in Burma. In March, Burma's military broke the long-standing ceasefire with Shan ethnic groups and atrocities have been escalating there. Conflict in Eastern Burma, especially in Karen areas has been ongoing for 60 years and is the world's longest running civil war.

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