

## Opposition in Burma calls for free referendum

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New Delhi -- Ethnic and pro-democracy forces based in Burma today called for the referendum in May to be conducted freely and fairly.

Generation Wave (GW) said in a statement issued today that they call on the junta to give the people fundamental rights during the referendum process, such as free speech, free association and organization, international monitoring, an independent referendum commission, a free and fair electoral system inclusive of polling booths and ballot boxes and a reliable vote counting system. GW also demanded the release of all political prisoners including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

"We have chosen a path in which the people can play an integral part. If we attack and boycott the referendum it will provide a way out for the SPDC. In our position we have factored in both international and domestic considerations. We chose this path because it is homogeneous between the international community and the people of Burma and does not weaken the organization of the people," Ko Kyaw Kyaw, a spokesperson for GW told Mizzima.

GW affirms that they will not accept the new draft constitution which was designed without the consent of the NLD and ethnic forces and which ignored the 1990 general election result.

In their missive GW makes known that they will continue their revolution against the planned referendum with mass and class support if the SPDC does not meet their demands by the end of March. However they did not elaborate on the details of their plans.

The Kachin Independence Organization (KIO) gave a similar warning yesterday. The KIO said that the government needs to hold a free and fair referendum and to make sure the entire people can express their genuine desire both freely and democratically.

"The main point is for the referendum to be free and fair, incorporating all appropriate criteria. The ruling government might have their own intentions as to how the referendum will be conducted. Therefore we say we need a free and fair referendum. We considered and weighed our position with this in mind," Col. Gun Maw, a spokesman for KIO told Mizzima.

The KIO position also calls for the formation of an appropriate monitoring unit to ensure the referendum is free and fair and so that the result of the referendum can be respected and recognized by all.

"We have yet to decide on reforming our organization or political party. We are in a wait and see position. It will depend on what the ruling government will do and what the response of the people is, only then will the KIO decide on a course of action", Col. Gwan Maw added.

Ko Tun Myint Aung from the 88 Generation Students urges the SPDC to implement the recommendations of GW.

"The people expressed their will and desire very clearly in the September movement by sacrificing their lives. Now the people want to cast a 'NO' vote in this referendum. If the junta says the referendum result is 'YES', it must be a sheer lie and due to vote rigging. If they hold a free and fair referendum, the result will certainly be 'NO'", he stressed.

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