

KAREN REFUGEE COMMITTEE
MONTHLY REPORT
JANUARY 1999.

With January, we have now entered the New Year 1999, and the stay of Refugees in Thailand is being extended by one more year.

This is the year of the Rabbit and Rabbits are usually associated with Wisdom in folk-lore. So, wisdom can be expected of Peoples and Nations around the world in this New Year.

For the K.R.C. Which is tasked to speak for and represent the Karen Refugee Community in Thailand, a very heavy work schedule lies ahead. To that end the K.R.C is being restructured and Camp Administrative Committees are to be reformed to meet the Task and to give more impetus, drive and coordination.

There is the worry about the shifting of vulnerable Camps to a more secure site, which from experience are very demanding on the energy and resources. There is the worry about more people trying to seek cross border asylum, trying to enter refugee camps.

As is the case, the acceptance of refugees depend on condition that there is " Fighting", which would not encompass brutal repressive measures and severe destitution brought on to the common people as a result.

For the refugees, the year begins with the same uncertainties, the same fears and worries. There is the fear of the repeat of last year's attacks and burnings, as usually happen in the open seasons. There is the uncertainty about the relocation of camps and the fear of forced repatriation. There is the worry about the future of the younger generation.

Elsewhere around the world, the New Year is being welcomed by sounds of explosions and conflicts, and media exposure of misdeeds. It is becoming apparent that wisdom is being set aside to make way for the evil instinct inherent in man.

On the brighter side, with the beginning of 1999 the UNHCR is becoming involved in our Refugee Affairs with the role of "PROTECTION". There is evidence of beefed up security for the camps. There is also the tacit understanding that there will be no forced repatriation. Which would mean that refugees will have to linger on for quite a while, given the sorrowful situation inside the home country.

Overall, we refugees can only hope for the best in this New Year. For, the Donor Groups are as ever, committed to providing us with needed support and help, while the UNHCR is committed to giving protection.

We are thankful to the Thai People and Government for their understanding and sympathy and to the NGOs who are always ready to help. In return, on our part we need to live in goodwill and harmony and to heed to the wisdom of Royalty and the Government for the preservation and betterment of the environment.

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