

Burma

# Kachin Protesters Reject Myanmar Military-Appointed Negotiation Team

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**Yangon — Kachin State protesters have rejected appeals from a military-appointed negotiation team, which was reportedly formed to prevent activists from being harmed in protests and sent to jail.**

Young people leading protests in the state capital, Myitkyina, said they would not accept the negotiation team.

“We don’t want military dictatorship. Therefore, we can’t accept any team assembled by the military,” said a female protest leader, who spoke on condition of anonymity. “We can’t accept the laws arbitrarily enacted by the military dictatorship after it seized power by force. Talks will be useless.”

The 13-member negotiation team formed by the military-run Kachin State Administrative Council on Monday is led by ethnic Kachin singer and composer Hpau La Gam Hpan, who is said to have close ties to the military’s Northern Command. Other members include its vice-chair, female Kachin politician Bauk Ja, Kachin lawyers and ethnic Shanni members.

Anti-regime protesters in Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Hpakant and Bhamo told The Irrawaddy they will also ignore the negotiation team.

“What we want is democracy, not to negotiate with the military dictatorship. We only want to overthrow the military dictatorship. We have no trust in its negotiation team,” said Brang Mai of Hpakant.

Bauk Ja said the team would work independently to protect young protesters from bloodshed and imprisonment.

“Most of the people taking to streets in Kachin State are young. They tend to be angry and can go wild if not controlled. We don’t want clashes with the police and military. We just intend to ensure their safety and give them guidance so that they can do what they want,” said Bauk Ja.

She added that the team would not take orders from the military but stand by the protesters. The military council only gave the team members phone numbers to contact in case security is needed, Bauk Ja said.

The team said it has been working for the release of five young ethnic Rawang activists who are being held at Putao Prison for joining anti-regime protests.

“We have asked the Kachin State Administrative Council to release the protesters. It accepted our

request. We will only talk directly to council chairman Hkyet Htingnan. I think he will talk with the military if the five are being detained by the armed forces,” she said.

Similar teams have been formed in other regions and states at the instruction of the regime’s State Administrative Council and are facing similar opposition from protesters.

Bauk Ja was vice-chairwoman of the Kachin State People’s Party until she was forced to resign on Tuesday for cooperating with the military council.

## **The Irrawaddy**

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