

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
Office of the Spokesman**

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**FACT SHEET**

**Secretary Decides “Material Support” Bar Inapplicable To Ethnic Karen Refugees  
in Tham Hin Camp, Thailand**

Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice has exercised discretionary authority under the *Immigration and Nationality Act*, so that certain refugees in the Tham Hin camp in Thailand who meet all other requirements for resettlement under the Administration’s Refugee Admissions Program, including that they pose no danger to the safety and security of the United States, can be allowed to resettle in the United States even if they have “provided material support” to the Karen National Union (KNU). The exercise of this authority to determine that the material support bar is inapplicable will allow the approval of otherwise eligible Karen refugees by the Department of Homeland Security, the agency responsible for adjudicating refugee applications for the U.S. Refugee Admissions Program.

There are about 9,300 ethnic Karen refugees from Burma in Tham Hin camp, many of whom fled Burmese attacks on their villages over the last decade. These refugees have been identified as a population of special humanitarian concern to the United States due to the privations they have experienced during and since their flight from Burma and due to the lack of any other durable solution. Because of their association with the KNU, a significant portion of these refugees are expected to be affected by the “material support” issue.

The KNU, founded in 1948, historically has functioned as the de facto civilian government of the Karen people in the areas it controlled, resisting the repression of and seeking autonomy from the Burmese regime. The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the armed wing of the KNU. In early 2004, Burma's military regime and the KNU entered into a temporary ceasefire, but the talks have since stalled, failing to formalize an end to the conflict.

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