



**The NHRCT recommends the government to postpone the proposal to register the Kaeng Krachan forest as a world heritage site with concerns over the rights of the Karen ethnic group in Bang Kloi.**

As the government's decision to propose the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex to be registered as a natural world heritage site at the 44<sup>th</sup> session of the World Heritage Committee, which will be held from 16 to 31 July 2021, Ms. Pornprapai Ganjanarintr, Chairperson of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) has submitted a letter dated 12 July 2021 to the Prime Minister and the Chairperson of the National Committee on Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Heritage, recommending the government to postpone the proposal until the issue of the rights of the Karen ethnic group in Bang Kloi is resolved.

According to the letter, the NHRCT recognizes the value of registering the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex as a natural world heritage site. However, as the human rights situation of Karen ethnic group in Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex has been monitored and previously investigated, the NHRCT has, therefore, proposed recommendations the following:

1. The World Heritage Committee of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) also raised concerns about the human rights of Karen ethnic group in the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex. At present, the facts confirm that the problems still remain, such as the dispute on land rights in the traditional area of the Karen ethnic group in Bang Kloi.

2. The government has solved the problem by allocating land to the Karen ethnic people who were relocated from their traditional areas. However, the group has faced problems of land use including the inadequacy and the soil condition which is inappropriate for arable. In early 2021, some members of Bang Kloei Karen ethnic group returned to their traditional areas and were arrested, which caused further conflicts. The Prime Minister's Office Order No. 67/2564 dated 16 March 2021 was issued to solve the conflict by setting up 5 Sub-Committees to seek concrete and sustainable resolutions. At present, the concrete achievement or conclusion has not been reached and the arrested Karen people are being prosecuted in accordance with the law.

3. Carefully considering the circumstances around the issue, the NHRCT, therefore, recommends that the government should postpone the proposal to register the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex as a natural world heritage site. Until such time that the problems are resolved and accepted by all parties concerned, the NHRCT is ready to support the registration of the Kaeng Krachan Forest Complex as a natural world heritage site.

“The Karen ethnic group in Bang Kloei is a traditional local community whose rights to conserve and revive their identity and tradition should be protected. Their rights include the entitlement to take part in sustainable management of natural resources and environment with the government. This is in accordance with the Constitution of the Kingdom of Thailand, B.E. 2560 (2017) and the treaties to which Thailand is a party and has obligations to comply with.” the Chairperson said.

Office of the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand  
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