

Community-Based Administration of KIO in Former Kachin Special Region 1

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Abstract

Following the KIO's announcement on 28 November that it had dissolved the designation of Kachin Special Region 1 (KSR 1), home to Jinghpaw, Lisu, Rawang, Lachid, Zaiwa, and Lhaovo ethnic groups, local residents have expressed concerns that the KIO may impose an administration without adequate inclusion of non-Jinghpaw subgroups of the Kachin people. Historically, the Jinghpaw have been accused of dominating other Kachin subgroups in political, cultural, and educational spheres. To promote unity among Kachin groups and build trust between the KIO and non-Jinghpaw communities, the KIO has adopted a more accommodating and participatory approach known as Ginra Mahta Uphkang Masa (community-based administration), particularly in newly controlled territories gained in late 2023 and 2024. Each administrative unit is designed to include four representatives elected or selected by residents and three KIO officials.

Considering past tensions between Jinghpaw and non-Jinghpaw communities and the recent administrative changes in former KSR 1, this study asks, "To what extent does the KIO's current administrative approach align with local expectations of governance?" The study examines local experiences under the new system and the challenges of implementation on the ground.

By cross-examining secondary sources with data from field visits and interviews, this research analyzes how the KIO's community-based administration operates in practice, its level of effectiveness, and the factors hindering its successful implementation.