

For Immediate Release



**Contact:**

**Paul Donowitz +011 202 466 5188**

**paul@earthrights.org**

**Ramon Magsaysay Award Winners Announced: Burma's *Ka Hsaw Wa*  
Awarded "Nobel Prize for Asia" for Emergent Leadership**

**Ka Hsaw Wa is Available for Interviews**

Washington, D.C. – August 3, 2009 -- EarthRights International (ERI) is delighted that ERI's Co-Founder and Executive Director, Ka Hsaw Wa, has been selected to receive the prestigious **Ramon Magsaysay Award for Emergent Leadership** in 2009. Ka Hsaw Wa will receive the award, also known as Asia's Nobel Prize, at the Magsaysay Award Presentation Ceremonies on Friday August 31, in Manila, Philippines. Ka Hsaw Wa, an ethnic Karen from Burma is being recognized for "his dauntlessly pursuing non violent yet effective channels of redress, exposure, and education for the defense of human rights, the environment, and democracy in Burma."

The six awardees for Asia's most prestigious prize, announced today include: Krisana Kraisintu (Thailand); Deep Joshi (India); Yu Xiaogang (China); Antonio Oposa Jr. (Phillipines); and Ma Jun (China) and Ka Hsaw Wa (Burma).

Upon notification of the award, Ka Hsaw Wa stated, "This is a great honor for EarthRights International and a recognition for Emergent Leadership in training young leaders in Burma and throughout Asia. I thank the Ramon Magsaysay Foundation for recognizing our work."

In 1988, Ka Hsaw Wa was one of the student leaders of the nation-wide uprising for democracy and freedom, and was forced to flee the country soon after. Since then, he has worked as a human rights activist, co-founding the Karen Human Rights Group and his current organization, EarthRights International (ERI) in 1995. In addition to directing ERI's overall operations, Ka Hsaw Wa coordinates a grassroots field staff in Burma, whose documentation of environmental and human rights abuses provided key evidence in a ground-breaking human rights lawsuit against Unocal (1997-2005) for human rights abuses in Burma. ERI also runs two EarthRights schools in Southeast Asia that train young activists to effectively wage their own environment and human rights campaigns and empower local communities. ERI also trains Asian public interest lawyers and oversees a powerful network of alumni working on earthrights issues in the Mekong Delta Sub-region.

**US Office**  
1612 K Street, NW, Suite 401  
Washington, DC 20006  
Tel: (202) 466-5188  
Fax: (202) 466-5189  
Email: [infousa@earthrights.org](mailto:infousa@earthrights.org)

**Southeast Asia Office**  
PO Box 123  
Chiang Mai University  
Chiang Mai 50202 Thailand  
Tel: (66) 81 531 1256  
Email: [infoasia@earthrights.org](mailto:infoasia@earthrights.org)

For Immediate Release



Through its schools, alumni network, and training sessions, ERI integrates local capacity building with international legal work, spreading environmental and human rights protection to other countries and also passing it on to the next generation. Ka Hsaw Wa's past awards include the Goldman Environmental Prize, Reebok Human Rights Award, Whitley Fund for Nature/Sting and Trudie Styler Award for Human Rights and the Environment, and the Conde Nast Environmental Award.

The Ramon Magsaysay Award, often considered the Nobel Prize for Asia, "seeks to acknowledge individuals and organizations in Asia who exemplify the ideals and service for which he [Raymon Magsaysay, the late President of the Philippines] is remembered." The award is given in six categories: government service; public service; community leadership; journalism, literature and creative communication arts; peace and international understanding; and emergent leadership.

The award for Emergent Leadership, created in 2000 with support from the Ford Foundation, recognizes "outstanding work of an individual, age 40 and below, on the issue of social change in his/her community, but whose leadership is not yet broadly recognized outside the community." The award consists of a certificate, a medal bearing the likeness of Ramon Magsaysay, and a \$50,000 cash prize, of which \$30,000 will go to Ka Hsaw Wa and \$20,000 to EarthRights International.

Ka Hsaw Wa becomes the fourth individual from Burma to receive the Magsaysay award, and the first to win in the Emergent Leadership category. In 1959, Edward Michael Law Yone received the Ramon Magsaysay Award for journalism, literature, and creative communication arts and that same year, Tee Tee Luce received the award for Public Service. In 2002, Dr. Cynthia Maung received the award for Community Leadership for providing medical care to refugees fleeing Burma at her clinic on the Thai-Burma border.

**Ka Hsaw Wa is the Co-Founder and Executive Director of EarthRights International (ERI)** a nonprofit, nongovernmental organization that combines the power of law and the power of people in defense of human rights and the environment. Focusing on earth rights, ERI works at the intersection of human rights and the environment. ERI specializes in fact-finding, legal actions against perpetrators of earth rights abuses, training for grassroots and community leaders, and advocacy campaigns that seek to end earth rights abuses and promote and protect earth rights. For more information, please visit:

[www.earthrights.org](http://www.earthrights.org)

###

**US Office**  
1612 K Street, NW, Suite 401  
Washington, DC 20006  
Tel: (202) 466-5188  
Fax: (202) 466-5189  
Email: [infousa@earthrights.org](mailto:infousa@earthrights.org)

**Southeast Asia Office**  
PO Box 123  
Chiang Mai University  
Chiang Mai 50202 Thailand  
Tel: (66) 81 531 1256  
Email: [infoasia@earthrights.org](mailto:infoasia@earthrights.org)