



Incident Report

Oct 13, 2014 / KHRG #13-117-I4

Hpapun Incident Report: Forced labour in Bu Tho Township, October 2013

This Incident Report describes the subjection of villagers in Meh P'Lee village tract, Bu Tho Township to forced labour by Battalion #1013 of the Border Guard Force (BGF). According to a village administrator, BGF Captain Maung Soe ordered residents of the village to contribute regular unpaid labour performing sentry duty and acting as messengers at a local BGF camp, as well as providing porters to carry supplies for the battalion when travelling.

Incident Report | Bu Tho Township, Hpapun (October 2013)

The following Incident Report was written by a community member who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This report was received in November 2013 along with other information from Hpapun District, including four other incident reports, 17 interviews, one situation update and 31 photographs.²

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Forced Labour
Date of Incident(s)	October 2013
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- Village, Meh P'Lee village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District.

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual incidents of abuse using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing incident reports, community members are encouraged to document incidents of abuse that they consider to be important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma/Myanmar, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's Website.

Victim Information	
Name	Saw A---
Age	37
Sex	Male
Nationality	Karen
Family	Yes
Occupation	Flat field farmer
Religion	Buddhist
Position	Villager
Village	A--- village

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Maung Soe	Captain	Border Guard Force Battalion #1013	K'Taing Tee BGF army camp	Commander Hla Kyaing

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

Actually, as a KHRG community member, I didn't know about this forced labour committed by the Border Guard Force [BGF]³ [before I arrived at the village]. When I [went to the village] to document information about the case of Ma S---,⁴ the villagers also told me about a case of forced labour. I did not need to go anywhere to follow up the incident because the villagers themselves told me about this incident.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

According to the village administrator who provided this information: "We have had to stay with them [the BGF] since they started to build their camp. While staying with them, we have to look for firewood, chop firewood, carry water and find vegetables for them." By listening to what he said, we can understand clearly that the BGF is still subjecting people to forced labour.

³ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

⁴ This refers to a case of sexual assault committed by BGF Battalion #1014 Sergeant Saw Dah Tu against a local villager, Ma S---. Further information on this incident can be found in the following KHRG News Bulletin: "[Rape and sexual harassment in Hpapun District, June and August 2013](#)," KHRG, November 2013.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.

Since the ceasefire talks between the Thein Sein government and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA),⁵ it's true that forced labour has reduced a little. However, in the places where the KNLA doesn't go or media groups can't reach, forced labour is still happening.

The forced labour [described in this incident report] happened from October 2013 until now [November 2013], which is when the villagers reported the abuse. The abuse is being committed by the BGF and is taking place in A--- village, Meh P'Lee village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. The BGF armed group is still committing human rights abuses now.

The abuse that is happening is forced labour. The armed actor which is committing forced labour is BGF [Battalion] #1013. [It is being ordered by] a company commander, Captain Maung Soe, led by battalion commander Saw Hla Kyaing. The villagers have suffered [as a result of being subjected to] forced labour by them until now.

According to the village administrator, an A--- villager [named] Saw A--- was forced to go and stay at the BGF army camp and serve as a sentry and messenger. Each day, at least one villager has to go and stay at the BGF army camp to serve as a sentry or messenger. While the villagers are staying with them in the camp, they have to chop firewood, carry water and cook rice and curry for them. Moreover, the villagers also have to guard them and carry their rice pots and curry pots for them when they are travelling, without being paid. Therefore, the villagers still have to do a lot of work for the Border Guard and the Border Guard still abuses human rights by ordering the villagers to do things for them.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

After asking permission from the interviewees, they allowed us to use the information as we need.

⁵ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the KNU Stakeholder webpage on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire*, KHRG, May 2014.

Further background reading on the situation in Hpapun District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2013 to February 2014,” (September 2014)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, February to July 2014,” (September 2014)
- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, October 2013,” (September 2014)
- “Violent abuse and forced labour in Hpapun District, November 2013 - January 2014,” (September 2014)
- “Hpapun Incident Report: Forced labour and violent abuse in Bu Tho Township, January 2014,” (August 2014)

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)