



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Incident Report**

May 22, 2014 / KHRG #13-8-I2

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**Toungoo Incident Report: Villagers request improved communication between KNU and local community, Htantabin Township, September 2012**

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*This Incident Report describes the KNU's demands for taxes on traders at checkpoints, movement restrictions on villagers in September 2012 and villagers' concerns about the dam construction in Htantabin Township. Villagers in the Kaw Thay Der and Kler La areas of Htantabin Township, Toungoo District described an increase in the levying of taxes by the KNU, as well as an increased number of KNU checkpoints that have restricted villagers' ability to move freely. Villagers in these areas also reported a lack of information and understanding on the current status of the Toh Boh Dam project, which previously led to the displacement of 100 households in the area.<sup>1</sup> In response to these problems, villagers recommended the election of leaders who are accountable to the local community. This Incident Report was initially published in May 2014 in the Appendix of KHRG's in-depth report, *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire.**

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**Incident Report | Htantabin Township, Toungoo District (September 2012)**

*The following Incident Report was written by a community member who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights abuses. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>2</sup> This report was received on January 24<sup>th</sup> 2013 along with other information from Toungoo District, including one other incident report, four interviews and 36 photographs.<sup>3</sup>*

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<sup>1</sup> See "Photo Set: More than 100 households displaced from Toh Boh Dam construction site in Toungoo," KHRG, August 2012.

<sup>2</sup> KHRG Incident Reports are written or gathered by a community member in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma 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.

<sup>3</sup> In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma, 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 categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's redesigned Website.

## **Part 1 – Incident(s) detail**

<b>Type of Incident</b>	The mother organisation [Karen National Union (KNU)] demanded a tax for travelling; loss of villagers' land because of dam construction
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	September 2012
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	Kaw Thay Der village, Kaw Thay Der village tract, Htantabin Township, Toungoo District

<b>Victim Information</b>								
<b>Name</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Sex</b>	<b>Ethnicity</b>	<b>Religion</b>	<b>Family</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Responsible</b>	<b>Village</b>
Naw Heah Thaw	32	Female	Karen	Christian	Single	Farming	Religious woman leader	Kler La
Saw Law Pleh Ler	35	Male	Karen	Christian	Married	Farming	-	Kler la

<b>Perpetrator Information</b>				
<b>Name</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander</b>
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## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

<b>1. Explain the specific manner how you collected this information.</b>
According to a villager who lives close to the Kaw Soe Koh area, after the ceasefire agreement <sup>4</sup> [was signed], the mother organisation set up a taxation checkpoint beside Kaw Soe Koh.

<b>2. Explain how the source verified information accuracy.</b>
We can rely on this true information. One of the villagers reported that it [the information below] is the experience he faced while he was travelling.

## **PART 3 – Incident Details**

<b>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</b>
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<sup>4</sup> On January 12<sup>th</sup> 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma government in Hpa-an, the capital of Kayin State. The exact terms for a long-term peace plan are still under negotiation. 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.

**space prepared below and create attach if needed.**

After the ceasefire, villagers who live in Kler La village tract have reported that they would like to know why the mother organisation demands taxes, such as on cardamom, and why (the KNU) built a gateway or checkpoint. After the ceasefire, we interviewed one of villagers who explained about the taxes that we [the villagers] had to give [pay] every year [before the ceasefire agreement was signed]. Since the ceasefire agreement, the mother organisation has set up (a gate or checkpoint) and questions travellers more than they are allowed to, according to the ceasefire agreement. Because we [the villager] and [KNU] are Karen ethnicity, we should guide each other in a correct way toward a free future [in which] we are united and work together. The villagers who reported this information [to the KHRG community member] want leaders who make clear decisions for the community and, when they [the villagers] select a leader, it should be a trustworthy [person] for them. They (our villagers) also said that they still do not have much information about the Toh Boh Dam and they do not know how [the construction company] communicates with them. They would also like to know whether the KNU gave them permission to construct the dam or not. Regarding these problems that the villagers reported, we [the villagers] hope that our leaders and the people in charge of our area will make things clear to us [explain more about the problems mentioned above]. We also think that it would be best to have more discussions [about these issues] between the villagers [and the responsible people] in the future.

#### **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

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

The villagers want to know more about the [KNU's] taxation process and if they would know more about this process, they would be happy about it. They [villagers] want KNU to inform them about anything which relates to the village.

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

- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- "Toungoo Situation Update: Than Daung and Tantabin Townships, February to July 2013," (January 2014)
- *Civilian and Military Order Documents: November 2009 to July 2013*, (October 2013)
- *Losing Ground: Land Conflicts and Collective Action in Eastern Myanmar*, (March 2013)
- "Toungoo Situation Update: Tantabin and Than Daung Townships, September to December 2012," (March 2013)

# Toungoo (Taw Oo) District

