



## Situation Update

July 3, 2014 / KHRG #13-90-S1

---

## Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe Township, January to August 2013

---

*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyonedoe Township, Dooplaya District during the period between January and August 2013, including arbitrary demands, land confiscation and the impacts of development projects.*

- *A village administrator is forced to provide goods to the Tatmadaw.*
- *Border Guard Force members are implicated in the confiscation and sale of local people's land in the Dali Forest Reserve to wealthy business people for rubber plantations; the Karen Peace Force and KNU/KNLA-Peace Council members are also involved in selling forest land and are also assisting businessmen mine for stone; and a DKBA lieutenant set up an office in one village and began demanding taxes for rubber plantations, logging machines and other items.*
- *A BGF joined local Karen organisations in a public conference addressing issues such as education and health. Villagers asked for funding assistance for schools.*
- *The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) and UNICEF are coordinating to construct three schools, but failed to consult villagers before initiating the project.*

*This Situation Update 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 in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire.](#)*

---

## Situation Update | Kyonedoe Township, Dooplaya District (January to August 2013)

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in September 2013. It was written by a community member in Dooplaya District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>1</sup> This report was received along with 26 photographs from Dooplaya District.<sup>2</sup>*

---

<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma to document individual human rights abuses 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 situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

<sup>2</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 categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's Website.

I am reporting about the politics, campaign, health, education and the human rights situation of the villagers in Kyonedoe Township, where many groups such as the Thein Sein [Burma] government, BGF [Border Guard Force],<sup>3</sup> DKBA [Democratic Benevolent Army],<sup>4</sup> KPF [Karen Peace Force]<sup>5</sup> and KPC [KNU/KNLA-Peace Council]<sup>6</sup> are operating when I went there from January to August 2013.

## Government and the BGF

Sometimes, the operations column [Tatmadaw] arrives in A--- village, B--- village, C--- village, D--- village or E--- village. When they arrive [in those villages], they order the village administrator to come to them and when the village administrator arrives, they [village administrator] provides them with one to two *viss*<sup>7</sup> (1.6 kg. or 3.52 lb. to 3.2 kg. or 7.04 lb.) of chicken. When the other [armed] groups come, he also provides for them, as he provides food for guests. The column commander [once] asked whether the DKBA or KNU soldiers come to the village and they [the village administrator] answered to him that sometimes they [DKBA or KNU] come, but sometimes they do not. He [the column commander] asked what they [DKBA or KNU] come and do, and they [village administrator] replied that they come for community development, such as for education and health. He [the column commander] said that during the ceasefire period, we [Tatmadaw] do not need to be afraid of gunfire. He slept [column commander] in some villages, but in some villages he just asked questions and left.

Some members of the BGF cooperate with the rich people from other areas and they sell the Dali Reserve Forest for 270,000 kyat (US \$273.56)<sup>8</sup> per acre and nearly all of the land from the forest reserve is to be sold. Since November 30<sup>th</sup> 2012, they sold 100

---

<sup>3</sup> 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 or 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.

<sup>4</sup> The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "[Inside the DKBA](#)," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

<sup>5</sup> Karen Peace Force was formed in February 1997 after splitting from the KNU/KNLA and surrendering to and signing a ceasefire with the Burmese military government. The KPF controls some administrative areas in Three Pagodas Pass and operates a number of road and river checkpoints in the area of Three Pagodas Pass. Following repeated rejections of Burmese government proposals to reform KPF into the Tatmadaw Border Guard, substantial elements have since reformed in the Tatmadaw Border Guard in 2010 while others remain independent.

<sup>6</sup> The KNU/KNLA Peace Council (also called the Karen Peace Council or KPC), is an armed group based in Htoh Gkaw Ko, Hpa-an District, which split from the Karen National Union (KNU) in 2007 and subsequently refused to comply with orders from the then-SPDC government to transform its forces into the Tatmadaw Border Guard. See: "[KPC to be outlawed if it rejects BGF](#)," *Burma News International*, August 30<sup>th</sup> 2010.

<sup>7</sup> A *viss* is a unit of weight equivalent to 1.6 kg. or 3.52 lb.

<sup>8</sup> As of January 13<sup>th</sup> 2014, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 987 kyat to the US \$1.

acres of the forest reserve near Moo Wah [village] and the rest of the forest became a new rubber plantation.

### **KPF and KPC**

The groups cooperate with the rich stone miners and some of their members get involved in selling the forest land.

### **DKBA**

Lieutenant Aung Yin's company<sup>9</sup> set up their office in A'Le Kyun village and they collect taxes for rubber plantations, phones and logging machines from the villages to which they can reach [villages in close proximity to the office].

### **Civilians' situation**

The villagers mainly do hill field farming, flat field farming and plantation for their livelihood. Now, the areas of forest have become narrower year by year for hill field farming. The reason is because of deforestation and an increasing number of rubber plantations. Because of that reason [the deforestation], the area has become warmer and the places [paddies] have dried up. The climate has changed so seriously that some of the villagers are suffering from difficulties.

The KNU [KNLA], Thein Sein government [Tatmadaw], BGF, DKBA, KPF and KPC armed groups<sup>10</sup> are controlling the area and the villages need to give [fulfil] the demands from all groups for taxes, donations for the special days, religion, health and education. When the villagers face difficulties, they are not sure which group they have to report to or which group they have to rely on. The culprit often becomes [joins a different armed group after committing a crime], such as the BGF, DKBA, KPC or KPF, so that [the problem] is difficult to solve and the one who reports about the abuse [to the group] would also be in trouble.

On July 11<sup>th</sup> 2013, about at 9:00 am, BGF Battalion #1012 held [a meeting] led by Battalion Commander Saw P'Loo in Kyonedoe Township in a monastery chapel and there were over 150 people from two villages who attended the ceremony. The people who attended the ceremony [included]:

- (1) Kyonedoe Township KNU Campaign [Committee member] Director Saw Kyaw Kaw [and] Kyonedoe Township KNU Campaign Committee [member] Saw Hsa Yoo Moo;
- (2) KNDO [Karen National Defence Organisation]<sup>11</sup> Battalion #6 Commander Saw Hpah Ni and KNDO Battalion #6 Deputy Commander Mahn Nyunt Maung;
- (3) DKBA *Klo Htoo Baw*<sup>12</sup> Lieutenant Saw Moo Say;

---

<sup>9</sup> A company is a Tatmadaw unit of approximately 100 soldiers, but most are under-strength.

<sup>10</sup> The KHRG community member has written armed groups, a term which refers to non-state armed actors, but has included state actors in the list as well, including the Tatmadaw and the Border Guard Force (BGF).

<sup>11</sup> The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

<sup>12</sup> The Klo Htoo Baw are DKBA forces in Hpa-an and Dooplaya Districts that refused to transform into Tatmadaw Border Guard battalions and which, in November 2010, began fighting Tatmadaw forces. They

- (4) BGF Battalion #1012 Commander Saw P'Loo; and
- (5) KPC Company Commander Mahn Hkin Lin.

In that public conference, they discussed and explained about health, education, land and religious issues.

From the DKBA, Moo Say said that, even though our [military] structures, clothes and logos are not the same, we are still human beings and we also hold the four principles of Saw Ba U Gyi<sup>13</sup> firmly.

From the BGF, Saw P'Loo said that, *"We do not want to be BGF but we have to be members because of the situation. If you take out my blood, it is still Karen blood."*

As the villagers are facing difficulties, and in order to benefit something [from the meeting], they reported [asked the armed actors] to help them by building the school in Tha Main Doot, as it is not finished yet, and [they asked if] the groups [could] provide 1,000,000 kyat (US \$1,013.17) to each village. Some of the civilians said that the public conference and the support for renovating school building were led by the BGF battalion commander; they persuaded the community to trust them. They try to show the civilians that, even though they are separate [from the KNU] they are good and united for the Karen people. In 2011, they met and held a public conference with the SPDC [Burma]<sup>14</sup> government but nothing has happened. Would it be fine for the villagers if there is only the ceasefire process? The villagers reported to them that now [since the 2012 ceasefire], the only improvement is that there is no fighting, but the villagers have to provide items, such as rations, petrol fees for cars and motorbikes to many groups [armed actors], which costs more money for villagers.

## Health

There is no special information related with education [health].

## Education

---

have been referred to as DKBA #907, Klo Htoo Baw (Golden Drum), and Brigade #5. Each of these terms refers to different configurations of DKBA units commanded by the brigadier general commonly known as Na Kha Mway, whose real name is Saw Lah Pwe. In September 2011, it was reported that the remaining DKBA forces were to be reconfigured into two tactical commands, Klo Htoo Wah and Klo Htoo Lah, and that Na Kha Mway would be the senior commander of these forces. In early November 2011, Brigade #5 signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma government in which demands for its forces to transform into Border Guard units were removed, and the brigade has moved to re-establish its headquarters at Wah Lay, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. See ["DKBA to accelerate military tactics,"](#) *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, September 8<sup>th</sup> 2011; and ["DKBA Brigade 5 Reaches Ceasefire with Naypyidaw,"](#) *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, November 4<sup>th</sup> 2011. For more on the origins of the current conflict and the transformation of DKBA troops into Border Guard battalions, see: ["Protection concerns expressed by civilians amidst conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts,"](#) KHRG, November 2010.

<sup>13</sup> The four principles of Saw Ba U Gyi, founder and former president of the Karen Nation Union, are; 1. For us, Surrender is out of the question; 2. We shall retain our arms; 3. The recognition of the Karen State must be complete; 4. We shall decide our own destiny. See, [KarenNationalUnion.net; KNU History.](#)

<sup>14</sup> In Karen, the Burmese phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) is commonly used to refer to the Burma government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) continue to use that phrase, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011; see: ["Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved',"](#) *Myanmar Times*, April 4-10<sup>th</sup> 2011.

In our region, the Norway NGO [Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI)]<sup>15</sup> and UNICEF [United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund] cooperate and are building three schools with no consultation [from the residents].

## Conclusion

I would like to report that in the campaign area [of multiple authorities] of Kyonedoe Township, because the armed groups have taken control, I predict that there will be land issues, no rule of law and the civilians might face many difficulties.

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

- "Villagers report negative impacts of stone mining on their livelihoods in Kyaik Ma Yaw Township, 2011 to 2014," (June 2014)
- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, May to August 2013," (February 2014)
- "Tatmadaw soldiers pilfer villagers' livestock in Dooplaya District, May to August 2013," (November 2013)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyone Doh Township, July to November 2012," (June 2013)

---

<sup>15</sup> The Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was formed in March 2012 at the request of the Burma government. It is a Norwegian-led humanitarian aid programme with the goal of providing temporary support in ethnic conflict areas during the peace building process. See, [Myanmar Peace Monitor](#); "[Relevance of Norway-Supported Peace Project in Myanmar Under Review](#)," *The Irrawaddy Magazine*, January 15<sup>th</sup> 2014; and the [Peace Donor Support Group website](#). For more information on the MPSI and other pilot programs in Nyaunglebin, see these KHRG reports: "Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Township, November 2012 to January 2013," KHRG, April 2013; "[Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Moo, Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, January to June 2012](#)," KHRG, October 2012; and "[Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Kyauk Kyi Township, July 2012](#)," KHRG, September 2012.

