



## Situation Update

November 28, 2014 / KHRG #14-57-S1

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## Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe, Nabu, Paingkyon and Hti Lon townships, May to July 2014

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*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Hlaingbwe, Nabu, Paingkyon and Hti Lon townships, Hpa-an District during the period between May and July 2014, including destruction of villagers' farm land due to road construction and drug awareness and eradication efforts carried out by armed groups.*

- *Burma/Myanmar government road construction, planned from Hlaingbwe town to Meh T'Waw village, damaged parts of villagers' farm land. No compensation for the loss of land has been provided.*
  - *From May 21<sup>st</sup> to May 25<sup>th</sup> 2014, the Tatmadaw, Karen National Union (KNU), Democratic Karen Benevolence Army (DKBA), Border Guard Force (BGF) and Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army - Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC) collaborated to conduct several meetings throughout Hpa-an District to promote drug awareness.*
  - *On June 23<sup>th</sup> 2014, the KNU, BGF and Tatmadaw collaborated to destroy more than 200 kratom plants in Hti Lon Township.*
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## Situation Update | Hlaingbwe, Nabu, Paingkyon and Hti Lon townships, Hpa-an District (May to July 2014)

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in July 2014. It was written by a community member in Hpa-an District 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.<sup>1</sup>*

This report [covers events] between May 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 and July 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 and presents abuses occurring in Lu Pleh [Hlaingbwe], [Nabu, Paingkyon and Hti Lon] townships, Hpa-an District. There were no serious issues during this reporting period and the situation is as provided below.

The Burma government had planned to construct a highway between Lu Pleh [Hlaingbwe town] to Meh T'Waw [village]. But in 2014, they [had] only finished construction reaching to Klaw Ka Tee [village]. The road construction damaged some parts of villagers' farm lands, but they [Burma/Myanmar government] did not give any compensation. When water flooded some flat paddy fields, the owners asked [the company] to dig a water channel, but some paddy fields were destroyed. The company

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar 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.

that constructed the road is Chit Lin Myaing Company. This company does logging [in Hlaingbwe Township] too. In 2014, because the military took control in Thailand,<sup>2</sup> the Thai military do not allow any logging exports [from Burma/Myanmar] into Thailand. Therefore, there are many logs waiting [in Hlaingbwe area for export and sale].

From May 21<sup>st</sup> 2014 to May 25<sup>th</sup> 2014, [all] Burma armed groups [active in the area: Tatmadaw, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA), Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA),<sup>3</sup> Border Guard Force (BGF)<sup>4</sup> and Karen National Union-KNLA Peace Council (KNU-KNLA PC)<sup>5</sup>] gave awareness [information] to the [local] communities that drug consumption and sale would be banned and [must be] stopped in Karen [Kayin] State. The meeting was held in Htoh Kaw Koh village, Htoh Kaw Koh village tract, T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township, Hpa-an District. There was one meeting held on May 21<sup>st</sup> 2014 in Htoh Kaw Koh's monastery and another time [a meeting was] held on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014 in K'Soh's monastery, K'Soh village tract, Ta Kreh [Paingkyon] Township, Hpa-an District. Another meeting was held on May 25<sup>th</sup> 2014 somewhere in La Nay's monastery, La Nay village tract, Lu Pleh [Hlaingbwe] Township, Hpa-an District. In Lu Pleh [Hlaingbwe] Township, the armed groups held two separate meetings in Lu Pleh [Hlaingbwe] Township, Hpa-an District; one was in T'Moh Ya village, T'Moh Ya village tract and another time in La Nay village.

On June 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014, after the armed groups met with the [local] community about drug awareness, ethnic armed groups such as the KNU, BGF, and Burma government military [Tatmadaw] collaborated and they went and destroyed drugs plants which were

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<sup>2</sup> On May 22<sup>nd</sup> 2014, the Royal Thai Army, led by General Prayuth Chan-ocha, confirmed the suspension of the 2007 constitution and the military's seizure of power after six months of political crisis and often violent protests. The coup and the establishment of the National Council for Peace and Order (NCPO) followed the removal of Yingluck Shinawatra as Prime Minister and the declaration of martial law earlier that month. Shortly after, the NCPO issued a statement that national economic, social and political reforms must be enacted before elections were to occur. Three months later, on August 21<sup>st</sup> 2014, General Prayuth was unanimously elected as Prime Minister. Elections have been tentatively set for October 2015, however there is speculation that they may be delayed. For more information see "Thailand military seizes power in coup," *BBC*, May 2014; "Prayuth assigns duties, pledges to pay farmers," *Bangkok Post*, May 2014, "Leader of Thai junta hints at delay in return to elections," *Reuters*, October 2014.

<sup>3</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/Myanmar 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/Myanmar 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>4</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 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.

<sup>5</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.

kratom<sup>6</sup> trees in Noh K'Mler village tract, Hti Lon Township, Hpa-an district. [They] were grown by one group of Mon ethnic [villagers] who live in In Du [town], Mon State. They came and planted it at the bottom of Noh K'Mler's cliff, Noh K'Mler village tract, [Hti Lon Township]. They arrested one owner and destroyed more than 200 kratom trees.

Further background reading on the situation in Hpa-an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Hpa-an Interview: Saw U---, December 2013," (October 2014)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe Township, April 2014" (October 2014)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Paingkyon Township, July 2014," (October 2014)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Hti Lon Township, March 2014," (September 2014)"
- "Human Rights Violations by BGF Cantonment Area Commander Kya Aye in Paingkyon Township, Hpa-an District, February 2013 to July 2014," (September 2014)

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<sup>6</sup> *Beh htee* is the Karen language name for *Mitragyna Speciosa*. The plant, known in English as kratom, produces a mildly narcotic sensation in users when its leaves are chewed. Kratom is outlawed in Burma/Myanmar and Thailand.

# Hpa-an District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)