



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Land confiscation due to a road repair and expansion project in Bilin Township, Thaton District, January 2014

This News Bulletin describes land confiscation which occurred as a result of a road repair and expansion project in Bilin Township, Thaton District, from January 2nd – 4th, 2014. On January 2nd 2014, the Zwe Nyi Naung Company arrived in D--- village, Hta Paw village tract, Bilin Township, Thaton District to repair and expand a road. The project resulted in the confiscation of villagers' plantation lands, paddy fields and the yard around a house. The villagers raised their concerns, as they lost their land, and they would like to be compensated for what they have lost.¹

Villagers in D--- village, Hta Paw village tract, Bilin Township, Thaton District faced the loss of their plantation lands, paddy fields and yards due to a project to expand and repair the road in their village. Initially, the villagers were told by the Zwe Nyi Naung Company that they were only going to repair the road in the village, and they did not mention anything about the fact that they would also expand the road onto the villagers' land. The villagers were very happy at first because this would improve their transportation; they did not know that their land would be confiscated.

The confiscation began on January 2nd 2014; the road expansion and repair project also started on that day. Some villagers' lands were confiscated on January 4th 2014 as the project continued. The company who led the project is the Zwe Nyi Naung Company, a company that is based in Yangon, which is the former capital city of Myanmar. The villagers who lost their lands reported that the project started on January 2nd, but it has not been completed by the time we (KHRG) received the information, which was on July 10th 2014.

¹ This News Bulletin was written by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Thaton District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It summarises information from seven land grabbing forms received by KHRG in July 2014. The land grabbing form was developed by KHRG for the villagers to record how and why their lands were confiscated and how many acres of their lands were confiscated. 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 redesigned Website.



These photos were taken on May 7th 2014 in D--- village tract, Bilin Township, Thaton District, and show the road in D--- village that is being repaired and expanded. As it is shown in the photos, the road has been expanded into some parts of the villagers' paddy fields, which makes them smaller in width. [Photos: KHRG]

There are seven villagers who reported the loss of their lands to KHRG. The villagers reported that they were not consulted about the confiscation. They were told that the road would be repaired, so they thought that the project might not affect their livelihoods, so initially they were very pleased about it. However, once the project started, their lands were confiscated, and now they at least want compensation for their loss. Most of the villagers' land was inherited from their ancestors, and thus some of them do not have the land title. Among the seven villagers who reported the abuse, some of them have the land title provided by Karen National Union, but they lost their land title papers, so they cannot prove to the company that they own the land.

There were 14 acres of land confiscated from five out of the seven villagers who reported the abuse. One of the other villagers lost 17 rubber trees, and the other lost the front yard of his house and four coconut trees. The villagers indicated that they are happy that the road was repaired, but they also have their livelihoods to consider; therefore at a minimum they want the Zwe Nyi Naung Company to compensate them for what they have lost.²

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

- "Thaton Interview: U A--, May 2012," (May 2014)
- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- "Thaton Situation Update: Hpa-an, Thaton and Bilin townships, January to July 2013," (December 2013)
- "BGF Battalion #1014 forced labour and forced recruitment, April to May 2012," (May 2013)
- "Incident Report: Forced labour in Thaton District, April 2012," (May 2013)

² This information was included in the land grabbing forms received by KHRG in July 2014 from a KHRG community member from Thaton District.

Thaton (Doo Tha Htoo) District



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