



## Situation Update

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## Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, January to February 2015

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*This Situation Update describes events and issues occurring in Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, Dooplaya District during the period between January and February 2015, including fighting between armed groups and updates on education and healthcare.*

- *On February 27<sup>th</sup> 2015, fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and the Border Guard Force (BGF) against General San Aung's group from the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA). It resulted in the deaths of four soldiers, including one soldier from the Tatmadaw, two from the BGF, and one from the DKBA.*
  - *Villages in Kyainseikgyi Township report needing Karen language textbooks in order to teach their students properly.*
  - *Local shopkeepers are owed money by road constructors from the Burma/Myanmar government who borrowed money from them during the construction process and have not repaid their debt.*
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## Situation Update | Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe Townships, Dooplaya District (January to February 2015)

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in May 2015. It was written by a community member in Dooplaya 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 was received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including two other situation updates, two incident reports, seven interviews, 194 photographs, and 14 video clips.<sup>2</sup>*

### Introduction

The information [below] was documented from January 1<sup>st</sup> 2015 to February 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 in Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] and Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] townships. [The report covers] the Tatmadaw activity, BGF [Border Guard Force]<sup>3</sup> activity, Myanmar government activity,

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in southeast 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.

<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast 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.

DKBA's [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army]<sup>4</sup> situation, education, and healthcare. The detailed information is presented below.

### The Tatmadaw activity

On January 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 MOC [Military Operation Command]<sup>5</sup> #19, LIB [Light Infantry Battalion]<sup>6</sup> #588, Lieutenant General Myo Min Thu and a battalion deputy commander marched to a KNDO [Karen National Defence Organisation]<sup>7</sup> army base [checkpoint], [located between] B--- village and C--- village. They destroyed the KNDO's place and threw away the [Karen people's] flag. [Before they went there] they did not inform [KNDO of] anything and did not ask for permission [to enter the KNDO checkpoint].



The above photos were taken on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 on the road between B--- and C--- villages in Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. The photo on the left shows the KNDO checkpoint that was destroyed by Tatmadaw MOC #19 and LIB #588 on January 19<sup>th</sup> 2015. The photo on the right shows that the sand bags which had been planted around the checkpoint to provide structural support had been discarded. [Photos: KHRG]

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 Burma/Myanmar 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>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/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>5</sup> Military Operations Command. Comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each.

<sup>6</sup> Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

<sup>7</sup> The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union (KNU) 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.

On February 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, MOC #13 and LIB #432's Commander Kyaw Myo Min rotated their camp to the Kyaw Hta army camp. There were 30 of them in a battalion. MOC #13 and LIB 358's Commander Thu Way Thaw were [seen] patrolling in B--- [village] and C-- [village]. There were 27 of them in the battalion. MOC #13 and LIB #555's Commander Kyi Tha Pyo are situated in D--- village [army camp]. Those army camps are [currently in] rotation in Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] Township.

On February 26<sup>th</sup> 2015, the Tatmadaw and the BGF joined together to fight DKBA San Aung's group.<sup>8</sup> The fighting took place in A--- [village] [near the] monk's well. The first time, it broke out on February 27<sup>th</sup> 2015 at 5:00 am. The fighting between them then broke out again. It took place in the lower part of A--- [village] beside E--- village at 11:00 [am, February 27<sup>th</sup>]. During the fighting period one Tatmadaw, two BGF and one DKBA soldier were killed. The DKBA soldier was beaten and beheaded before he died.<sup>9</sup> [The fighting] was led by BGF Platoon Commander Eh Doo, Platoon Second-in-Command Myint Win and Maung Aye Lwin.

### **Myanmar government activities**

[There is road construction, which] stretches from Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik Town] to Kyonedoe [Town] and Kyonedoe [Town] to F--- [village]. The road constructors from the [Burma/Myanmar] government lied to the shopkeepers who are based beside the road. They borrowed the money [for their daily food needs] from the people [shopkeepers] and did not return the money back to the lenders. They [the road constructors] moved [from place to place] but none [of the] people know [where they are]. They went to eat in the shops and did not pay the money [they owed for their meals]. They are in debt with the [shopkeepers]. They also borrowed around 400,000 kyat (US \$364.78)<sup>10</sup> from the [shopkeepers].

The road constructors from the government stole the [local] people's clothes, dug up wild yams from the [local people's land] and [took] coconuts [in order] to sell [them]. The owners saw them and went to talk with the village head. The village head went to tell [the road construction] managers [about the incident]. The managers said to the village head: *"Could you recognise them? If you can't recognise them, do not say things like that. We are constructing the road for you [local people], we suggest you don't try to point out mistakes we do."*

### **DKBA's situation**

DKBA San Aung's group was patrolling in Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] and Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] townships, which scared the villagers. Fighting often breaks out between the

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<sup>8</sup> Tactical Commander General Saw San Aung, commonly known as Bo San Aung, from DKBA Battalion #907, was relieved of his position in the beginning of 2015 after fighting broke out between his battalion and Tatmadaw troops. Acting independently, he formed his own armed group with approximately 70-80 soldiers. In April 2015, Bo San Aung was accepted back into the DKBA after discussions with the DKBA's top leaders.

<sup>9</sup> KHRG has previously reported on this incident, as well as another incident of fighting that occurred on February 28<sup>th</sup> 2015. In the previous report, the DKBA soldier is reported to have been found in possession of a rocket-propelled grenade and beaten before he was killed; there is no mention of his beheading. For further details, see ["Two separate clashes between armed actors in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, February 2015,"](#) KHRG, May 2015. The censored location names in this report may not correspond to the censored location names in the above mentioned report, however the actual locations are the same.

<sup>10</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2015 official market rate of 1096.55 Myanmar kyat to the US \$1.

DKBA and the Tatmadaw<sup>11</sup> during the ceasefire<sup>12</sup> period. We do not know how they will implement the ceasefire process.

### **Companies' situation**

Natural resource extraction such as logging, metal mining and stone mining is taking place in Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi], Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik], Kruh Tu [Kyonedoe] and Waw Raw [Win Yay] townships. The natural resource extraction negatively impacts the local people because their lands have been destroyed and it is hard for them to make a living. This [natural resource extraction] has been taking place in each township [in Dooplaya District].

### **Education**

As for education in Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township, [there is a concern in] the places where the refugees came back to live, [which] are Htee Muh Khuh Khee, Htee Muh Khuh, D'Lay Poh, Kyaw Kay Khoh and Ta Proh villages. Those villages need Karen [textbooks] for standards one to five<sup>13</sup> in order [to teach students in the school]. The school committee reported it to the [KHRG researcher] and said that there are no Karen [textbooks], therefore it causes problems for them [teacher committee].

### **Healthcare**

The rural villages which are situated in Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik], Waw Raw [Win Yay], and Kruh Tu [Kyonedoe] townships reported that they encountered a problem due to destruction of natural [resources] because they use these plants for [medical] treatment as they live very far from the clinics. The [natural resource extraction projects] destroyed the herbal plants which are in the jungles. [This situation] negatively impacts the rural community therefore they reported it to the leaders [KHRG] and [are waiting to see] how the leaders will deal with this.

### **Conclusion**

The detailed information [which covered] the Tatmadaw's activity, the Myanmar government activities, companies' activity, DKBA's activity, education, and healthcare in Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] and Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] townships is presented above.

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

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<sup>11</sup> For examples of fighting between the Tatmadaw, including its Border Guard Force, and the DKBA, see "[Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik, Kyainseikgyi and Kyonedoe townships, May to October 2014](#)," KHRG, February 2015; and "[Incident Report: Two children injured from DKBA and BGF fighting in Hlaing Bwe, April 2013](#)," KHRG, October 2013.

<sup>12</sup> On January 12<sup>th</sup> 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. In March 2015, the seventh round of the negotiations for a national ceasefire between the Burma/Myanmar government and various ethnic armed actors have begun in Yangon, see "[Seventh Round of Nationwide Ceasefire Negotiations](#)," *Karen National Union Headquarters*, March 18<sup>th</sup> 2015. Following the negotiations, the KNU held a central standing committee emergency, see "[KNU: Emergency Meeting Called To Discuss Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement And Ethnic Leaders' Summit](#)," *Karen News*, April 22<sup>nd</sup> 2015.

<sup>13</sup> A Standard refers to a grade in the Burmese education system. Primary school runs from Standard 1 to Standard 4, middle school is Standards 5-8 and high school is Standards 9-10.

- “Rape and violent threats in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, April 2014 to May 2015,” (July 2015)
- “Dooplaya Photo Set: Development Projects in Win Yay Township, December 2014 to January 2015,” (July 2015)
- “*‘With only our voices, what can we do?’: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar,*” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, April 2014,” (June 2015)

# Dooplaya District



## Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)