



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Situation Update**

October 6, 2017 / KHRG # Log #15-43-S1

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## **Hpapun and Hpa-an Situation Update: Bu Tho, Dwe Lo and Hlaingbwe Townships, Hpapun and Hpa-An Districts (March to May 2015)**

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*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Bu Tho, Dwe Lo and Hlaingbwe Townships, Hpapun and Hpa-An Districts during the period between March to May 2015, including military activity, the murder of one villager, threats and intimidation, and land surveying.*

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### **Situation Update | Bu Tho, Dwe Lo and Hlaingbwe Township, Hpapun and Hpa-An Districts (March to May 2015) Hpapun and Hpa-An Situation Update: townships, March to May 2015**

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in June 2015. It was written by a community member in Hpapun and Hpa-an 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>*

#### **Introduction:**

This Situation Update describes events occurring between March 16<sup>th</sup> 2015 and May 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 in K--- village, J--- village, I--- village, Mel K' Law village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District, and R--- village, K' Tai Ti village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Hpapun District, and Myaing Gyi Ngu special region, Lu Pe Lel [Hlaingbwe] Township, Hpa-An District.

#### **Military activity by Border Guard Force [BGF] Battalion #1013 and Battalion #1014**

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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.

Information related to the BGF Battalion #1013 was provided by Maung Q--- (aged 45), R--- village administrator.

It seems that Major Saw Hla Kyaing (aged 52) and his BGF army did not previously travel anywhere to fulfil their duties since the BGF was formed. Therefore, in order to please their senior officers, Major Hla Kyaing of BGF Battalion #1013 decided to move his troops through the villages located on both sides of the Hpapun - K' Ma Maung road. The four villages that were particularly affected include the big A--- village, the small A--- village, B--- village, and C--- village.

In a meeting held in K' Tai Ti operations commander's office on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, Major Hla Kyaing, told village administration officers on May 15<sup>th</sup> 2015 that [BGF] troop movements do not imply that they desire a battle. He [Major Hla Kyaing] said that they will try and avoid head to head meetings with opposing KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] battalions and said that when his troops intend to travel, he will inform local authorities and obtain permission from them. If the local authorities do not give the BGF permission, then the BGF will not travel.

### **Security concerns of local people due to armed group activities**

In the same meeting discussed above, after Major Hla Kyaing announced his troop movement plans, KNLA troops informed the local people that in order to protect themselves they had placed landmines around the areas they are controlling and where the BGF might cross over. The villages that the BGF troops will travel through are entirely under the control of the KNLA. This may be another reason why the BGF troops will move their troops. Since the KNLA troops have created forbidden areas by placing landmines, local villagers – especially from big A--- village, small A--- village, B--- village, and C--- village (in K' Tai Ti village tract, Dwe Lo District) – cannot travel freely to farm, find firewood, and visit nearby villages; they travel with anxiety.

### **The murder case of a B--- villager, Maung A---, by Border Guard Force Battalion #1011**

The murder case happened in Myaing Gyi Ngu special region, Sone Nan Thar Myaing Shwe Myo Taw, E--- Myaing section, on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015.<sup>2</sup> The person who committed the murder is soldier Saw Maung Thet, aged 42, who is in BGF Battalion #1011, led by Battalion Commander Major Soe Naing. The person who was murdered was Maung A--, aged 37, from B--- village (K' Tai Ti village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District). It is unclear what should be done [with this case] because although the BGF soldiers do not understand the law they were very [over] proud [confidantes to commit murder].

The details of the murder case are as follows: Maung A-- lived in B--- village, K' Tai Ti village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District but worked as a chef in the health training boarding school which is located outside of K' Ma Maung City. Maung Thin Lwin sometimes drank alcohol and he was a bachelor.

On a day in which he had no responsibilities to attend to and had money to spend, he was slightly drunk and visited Myaing Gyi Ngu special region, Sone Nan Thar Myaing Shwe Myo Taw, E--- section which exists beyond the river of K' Ma Maung City. After he got into an argument with several car drivers at the sugar factory's car gate in E--- section, he was sent to the BGF Battalion #1011's gate (which is in front of the sugar factory) and BGF soldiers beat

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on the killing of Maung A---, see: "[Hpa-an Incident Report: Violent abuse and killing committed by BGF soldiers in Myaing Gyi Ngu Town, April 2015.](#)" KHRG, August 2015.

him. Maung A--- died because of the wounds inflicted by the soldiers at 12 AM, on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2015.

Although the relatives of Maung A--- asked for 10,000,000 kyat (US \$8,790.80)<sup>3</sup> as compensation and BGF Battalion commander Soe Nai (aged 53) agreed to provide 3,000,000 kyat ((US \$2,637.24) as compensation, Myaing Gyi Ngu special region, second senior monk U Nyar Ni Ka, aged 50, only provided 500,000 kyat (US \$439.70) [as compensation]. Maung A---'s brother (F---, aged 45), sister (G---, aged 39), and uncle (Saw H---, aged 52) accepted this compensation because they were afraid. Both of Maung A---'s parents are dead.

Section administrators of B--- village have not resolved the problem. Similarly, BGF Battalion #1011, led by Battalion Commander Soe Nai, has not taken any action [discipline] against the soldier Saw Maung Thet. Murder cases like this are caused by BGF soldiers' ignorance of human rights and will continue until their pride is reduced.

### **Threats after the murder**

The threats began on April 25<sup>th</sup> 2015 in the monastery where U Nyar Ni Ka, Myaing Gyi Ngu second senior Sar-Cha [lecturing] monk (aged 50) lives. U Nyar Ni Ka threatened Maung A---'s brother (F---), sister (G---), and uncle (Saw H---). His threats are due to his pride and belief that his knowledge and position as a senior monk entitles him to rule over others as if he was a dictator.

After BGF Battalion Commander Soe Naing agreed to compensate Maung A---'s relatives with 3,000,000 kyat (US \$2,637.24), he asked U Nyar Ni Ka to provide the money to the relatives. However, when they [Maung A---'s relatives] arrived at U Nyar Ni Ka's house, U Nyar Ni Ka said, *"Bring me my sword! I will attack everyone! Do you not know that you cannot drink alcohol and get drunk at places like this?!"* After acting unruly, he only provided 500,000 kyat (US \$439.70) as compensation. In fear, F--- and his relatives took the money.

No responsible organisation came and resolved the issues raised by the threats. No organisation took any action towards U Nyar Ni Ka, who has also threatened other people.

On March 6<sup>th</sup> 2015, Staff Sayar [teacher] Tee Ku from KNU [Karen National Union] Headquarters in the Office of Land Surveys and Registration began cooperating with the department in charge of P' Doh Saw Thaw Thi and his team from the Mu Traw [Hpapun] District Department of Land Surveys and Registration to survey the lands and farms from I--- village, J-- village, K--- village, L--- village, M--- village, N--- village, O---village and P--- village, and give them land grants.

For KNU land surveys, villagers have to pay 2,000 kyat (US \$1.75) for each acre surveyed and 5,000 kyat (US \$4.39) for one land grant. [Villagers] also have to pay 5,000 kyat (US \$4.39) for contracts which allow them to buy, sell and mortgage their property. At the time that this report was being written, the land surveying teams' work was ongoing. Although the KNU wanted to also survey the SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] army's lands which were confiscated by the SPDC army [Tatmadaw] from Hpapun, the Hpapun Operations Commander has not given [the KNU] permission. Due to this, the KNU is not able to conclude how many acres of land they have surveyed in total.

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<sup>3</sup> All estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the July 14<sup>th</sup> 2015 market rate of 1,137 kyat to the US \$1.

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

- “Hpapun Interview: Saw B---, October 2016,” (March 2017)
- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, March 2016,” (January 2017)
- “Hpapun Field Report: January to December 2015,” (December 2016)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, June to August 2016,” (November 2016)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, September to November 2016” (June 2017)

# Mu Traw (Hpapun) District

