



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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**Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Ta Naw Th'Ree Township,
January to May 2015**

This Situation Update describes events and issues occurring in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, during the period of January to May 2015, including military activity, access to education, and access to healthcare.

- *In Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, the Tatmadaw have been using horses to transport rations to the border areas.*
- *A group of Burma/Myanmar government staff from Military Security Affairs, which is the Burma/Myanmar government's intelligence agency, have also been active in the township, trying to gather intelligence on the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA).*
- *A local, anti-malaria community group entered the area and treated those who were suffering from malaria. A local non-governmental organisation (NGO) came once a month and provided vaccinations to the mothers and children in the villages. KNU health workers also visited the villages and provided medical treatment to the villagers.*
- *The Burma/Myanmar government is investing in the local government schools and sending their own trained teachers to teach in them. The Karen Education Department (KED) supports the Karen schools in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township by providing materials such as pens, notebooks, pencils, and clothes for the teachers.*

**Situation Update | Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, Mergui-Tavoy District
(January to May 2015)**

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in June 2015. It was written by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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.¹

Ta Naw Th'Ree Township six [five] month situation update, from January to May 2015.

The contents are:

- Introduction
- Tatmadaw activity
- Human rights abuse

¹ 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.

- The situation of the civilians
- Healthcare
- Education
- Conclusion

Introduction

I would like to discuss the situation in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, from January to May 2015. The topics include Tatmadaw activity, human rights abuse, the situation of the civilians, healthcare, and education.

Tatmadaw activity

In Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)² #224 has been active in Moh Taw area. LIB #593 led by Battalion Commander Kyaw Shein has been active in Kay area. LIB #561 has been active in Ta Keh area. I do not know the military activity in other areas. I am still in the process of finding out. During these six [five] months, the Tatmadaw conducted activities such as using horses to send their rations to the border area, and they have also been active near the villages. A group of [Burma/Myanmar] government staff that is active are from [the Burma/Myanmar government department of] Military Security Affairs,³ and they are always trying to find out about the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army].

Human rights abuse

During these six [five] months, I did not see any human rights abuse. In the past when the fighting was happening,⁴ the companies confiscated the villagers' lands and they did not pay

² 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.

³ Military Security Affairs (MSA); commonly referred to by its Burmese acronym *Sa Ya Pa* is the office of the Burma/Myanmar armed forces tasked with intelligence gathering. It was created to replace the Military Intelligence Service, which was disbanded as its chief Khin Nyunt fell from favour in 2004. The office is charged with handling political issues, and had played a central role in monitoring the 2007 popular protests in Burma/Myanmar; coordinating widespread arrests of protesters and their interrogation. Human Rights Watch reported that as part of its interrogation process, MSA uses sleep deprivation and condones the beating and kicking of detainees until they are unconscious, see "[Crackdown: Repression of the 2007 Popular Protests in Burma](#)," *Human Rights Watch*, December 2007. As of September 2014, MSA is headed by former army chief of staff Lieutenant General Mya Tun Oo. For further details see, "[Burmese Military Reshuffle Sees New Security Chief Appointed](#)," *The Irrawaddy*, September 2014.⁴ This refers to the years of armed conflict in southeast Burma/Myanmar, prior to the signing of several ceasefire agreements: On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups and on-going conflicts in ethnic regions, a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the KNU, see "[Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups](#)," *Reuters*, October 15th 2015. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the 2012 preliminary ceasefire, see "[Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#)," KHRG, May 2014.

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them compensation. Regarding the list of the land that was confiscated in the past, I am in the process of collecting the list [of the confiscated lands]. I will send it to you later when we have collected the list.

The situation of the civilians

Regarding the situation of the civilians in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, the civilians have more freedom to work and travel after the ceasefire. They do not have to be afraid [of the Tatmadaw] like they did in the past. The villagers mostly work on hill farms, plantations, and paddy fields.

Healthcare

During the six month period, the civilians were mostly suffering from diseases [and ailments] such as malaria, anemia, malnutrition, tuberculosis, and other minor diseases such as herpes, and diarrhoea. Those who suffer from diseases have to go to KNU [Karen National Union] clinics and [Burma/Myanmar] government hospitals for treatment. Regarding malaria, I see that a local, anti-malaria [community] group entered [into the area] and treated [those who were suffering from malaria]. Regarding the mothers and their young children, Mother and Children Group [local non-governmental organisation]⁵ came and gave vaccination injections once a month to them. We can also presently see that KNU health workers entered into the village and are providing medical treatment for the villagers.

Education

At present, regarding the education sector in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, the [Burma/Myanmar] government is improving the schools, as they received funding from an [unknown] organisation. Now, we can see that Karen language is allowed to be taught in some schools in the spare time [outside of school hours]. The [Burma/Myanmar] government also sent their own teachers to most of the schools. In the past, the villagers had to hire most of the teachers. In terms of the Karen schools which are in Ta Naw Th'Ree Township, we see that the Karen Education Department [KED]⁶ supports the schools by providing materials, pens, notebooks, pencils, and clothes for teachers.

Conclusion

The above mentioned is the real situation that I have experienced, seen and heard, and then written up [in this report].

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

the 2012 preliminary ceasefire, see "[Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire](#)," KHRG, May 2014.

⁵ This most likely refers to the [Myanmar Maternal and Child Welfare Association](#), an NGO in Burma/Myanmar which aims to protect mothers and children across the country. The organisation works with over 300 township associations in Burma/Myanmar and is supported by volunteers working in local communities who engage in activities from supporting women and children's health and education to social and economic activities.

⁶ The Karen National Union's Education Department. The main goals of the KED are to provide education, as well as to preserve Karen language and culture. During the civil war in Burma/Myanmar the KED became the main organisation providing educational services in the KNU controlled areas in Southeast Burma/Myanmar. The KED also previously oversaw the educational system in the seven refugee camps along the Thai-Burma/Myanmar border, however in 2009 these activities were restructured under the Karen Refugee Committee – Education Entity (KRCEE). See "[Conflict Erupts over Govt teachers deployed to KNU areas](#)," Karen News, August 20th 2013 and the KRCEE website: "[About](#)," accessed July 21st 2015.

- “Mergui-Tavoy Situation Update: Ler Muh Lah and Ta Naw Th’Ree townships, January to June 2015,” (October 2015)
- Press release on “*With only our voices, what can we do?: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar,*” (August 2015)
- “*With only our voices, what can we do?: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar,* (June 2015)
- Press release: “*With only our voices, what can we do?: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar,* (June 2015)
- “Mergui-Tavoy Photo Set: The impact of development in Mergui-Tavoy District, May 2014,” (February 2015)
- “Chapter: The impact of anti-personnel and other mines in Southeast Myanmar since the January 2012 ceasefire,” (July 2014)

