



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

December 14, 2016 / KHRG #16-79-A2-I1

Dooplaya Interview: Naw G---, September 2016

Naw G--- describes events occurring in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, In August 2016, four villagers were injured by shrapnel during the fighting between Border Guard Force (BGF) and the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) splinter group Na Ma Kya in D--- village. One teenager was blinded by the shrapnel, her mother was injured by shrapnel below her armpit and her father's nape of his head was also injured by shrapnel. One pregnant woman from D--- village was also injured by shrapnel.

Interview | Naw G---, (Female, 45), D--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (September 1st 2016)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Dooplaya District on September 1st 2016 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including two other interviews, 150 photographs and one video clip.²

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Farming

Position: N/A

I am going to introduce myself and then I will ask you some questions. Could you answer my questions?

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeastern 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 conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeastern 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.

Yes.

Could you tell me your name please?

People call me Naw G---

How old are you?

I am 45 years old.

Where do you live?

I live in D--- village.

You are Karen, right?

Yes, I am Karen.

What is your religion?

I am Christian.

What is your job?

I do not do anything. I am just working on the farm and planting vegetables.

How many family members do you have?

There are two females and four males in my family. [3 sons and one daughter]



This photo was taken by a KHRG community member who interviewed Naw G--- in D--- village, Kawkareik Township on September 1st 2016. Naw G--- talked about the injuries that her family gained due to Na Ma Kya and BGF fighting in August 2016. [Photo: KHRG]

Sister, we heard that the fighting happened in your village in August 2016. Is it real? Do you know anything about this fighting? Could you please tell us what you know about this fight happening, step by step please?

We [I] do not know any accurate thing because when my son and I woke up early in the morning around 5 AM, the fighting was happening.

In August 2016 right?

Yes

Which armed groups were fighting each other? Do you know that?

Which armed groups were fighting each other? There was the Border Guard Force [BGF] in [my] village. We [I] live in the upper [eastern] part of the village and they stayed in the lower [western] part of village. They [Na Ma Kya³] came and attacked them in the village.

³ Na Ma Kya is a Burmese phrase which directly translates as ‘Deaf Ear’. Na Ma Kya in this context refers to the name of a Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) splinter group based in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. According to local villagers, this group often acts with impunity, ignoring both the local people’s input as well as the higher DKBA authorities’ orders. Commander Kyaw Moh, well known as Na Ma Kya, who was leading this splinter group, was killed by one of BGF Commander Bo Tin Win’s mahouts on August 29th 2016. According to unpublished KHRG information from Kawkareik Township in Dooplaya District the circumstances surrounding his death remained unconfirmed. For more information see [DKBA Splinter Group Confirms Leader’s Death](#), August 31st 2016, The Irrawaddy; [ပိုလ်နားမကြားက ဆင်ထိန်းများကို ပြန်ပေးဆွဲခြင်းမဟုတ်ဟု ဒီကော့ဘီအေပြင်းဆို](#), September 2nd 2016, Democratic Voice Of Burma.

Did Na Ma Kya come into the village and attack the BGF?

Yes, I think Na Ma Kya came into the village and attacked them.

Did you know the Na Ma Kya leader's name?

I am not sure if it included Na Ma Kya [the Commander] himself or not. I just heard people said "Na Ma Kya are coming and [they] are attacking the BGF".

Did you know the name of the BGF's general?

I do not remember the name of the BGF general's name.

When they were fighting in the morning, were you sleeping in your house?

Yes, I was sleeping in my house.

How many people were sleeping in your house?

There were 8 people who were sleeping in my house. They included my [father] in-law and my adopted son who lives in M--- village who had come to visit me. When we heard the [gun's] sound we came down from the house [directly to the ground floor]. Then father [my husband] told my three sons to go back into the house and take their grandfather to Tharamu's⁴ house [which is located] in front of the church because he is dependent [vulnerable]. After that, my sons took their grandfather there. I, my child [daughter] and my husband, the three of us stayed on the ground floor [of our house]. Then my husband told me that, "There are so many heavy weapons [mortars] falling down [exploding] so [we have to] run [to another place]". While I was running out from my house and when I was not so far from my house, there were a lot of sound like, "Ju Juu Juu" [from the heavy weapons] so I returned back to my house. Then a heavy weapon [mortar] fell down [exploded] on the drain [at my house] and it was just beside us. When the heavy weapon sound came out [exploded], there was a table on my ground floor so I stayed under the table, my daughter sat beside me and my husband stayed on the table. Then [shrapnel] hit me a little and it was a little painful but my daughter said, "Mother!! It hit me". It [shrapnel] hit her at her temple [beside her eye]. And then when we arrived at Tharamu's house, Tharamu said "It hit close to her eye and her nervous system [around her eye]". Therefore, her eye was swollen in blotches straight away and it was bleeding nonstop but we did not dare to go [leave his house] so we just had to stay at Tharamu's ground floor. Therefore, Tharamu treated her [Naw G---'s daughter's] injury with a little medicine.

Is she a [Burma/Myanmar] government Tharamu [health worker]?

No, she is a religious Tharamu [leader]. She told [asked] me, "M--- Moh (because people call me M--- Moh), will we go to the [hospital in] town or where?" I replied, "Wherever Tharamu will go to and I will go". I was really afraid and I was crying when I replied to her. And then my husband's brother arranged a car for us and we went to Mae Tao Clinic [located over the border in Thailand]. When we arrived at Mae Tao Clinic, Mae Tao Clinic [health workers] said, "We cannot treat it here. Only Mae Sot [Genera] hospital can treat it." So we went to the Mae Sot [General] hospital and we stayed there for a long time. And then they did surgery in the afternoon at 4:00 pm. After the surgery, I called for an interpreter because I do not speak Thai

⁴ Thara (male) or tharamu (female) is a Karen term used for any teacher, pastor, or any person to whom one wishes to show respect. In this report it refers to a Christian leader.

and I said *“Thara brother,⁵ ask [the doctor] for me, did the Thara [doctor] do surgery and take out shrapnel from my daughter’s eye and temple which is close to her ear?”*. And he [Doctor] replied, *“There is no problem. If this injury is healed, come [to the hospital] again”*. After a couple of days, health workers came and checked it [the injury] every day [after that]. I asked [the health worker] again *“Didn’t the doctor do surgery to my daughter’s eyes and take out shrapnel from her eyes?”* He or she replied, *“If you want to [take out this shrapnel], you have to change [go] ,to another hospital”*. And then I asked *“Where do we have to go to?”* They replied, *“If you want [your daughter’s eye] to receive surgery and have the shrapnel taken out, you have to go to Phitsanulok [provincial] hospital [in Thailand]. They can do surgery and take it out for you”*. And then I said, *“I do not speak Thai and I do not know how to go there”*. Thara [the doctor] continued *“You can keep [her] like this. There will be no problem if [you] keep [her injured eye] clean and no bacteria [gets in].”* Some people told me that *“This is dangerous because it [the injured eye] can infect the other eye”*. I worried for my daughter because she is my only daughter, she is the youngest and she will study in Standard Eight this year. Therefore I worry [for her]. I went to [hospital] on [August] 24th for the appointment and [the doctor] injected two vaccines [to prevent infection for my daughter]. After that [the doctor] said *“There will be no more appointments later”*. I asked Thara [doctor] *“What do I have to do?”* He replied that, *“There will be no problem but if it suddenly gets painful, even though there is no appointment, you should come here [to hospital] directly and I will do surgery for you [your daughter]”*. Then I made sure directly and asked, *“If [you] do surgery [on my daughter’s eye], what will happen?”* He replied *“I will take out the eye because there is a piece of shrapnel in her eye, at the side of her eye close to her ear [temple]. [e I] could not take it out for you [your daughter] yet.”* I have only one daughter and she is a student so I am really sad. Now she cannot see anything [she is blind].

Aww, therefore she cannot see anything and cannot go to school now, right?

Yes, she cannot go to school.

[Her school] teachers have to allow her to take a rest?

Yes. [The doctor] said there will be no appointment but come to the hospital directly if [her eye] gets pain or something happens immediately to her [in an emergency]. And then they will do surgery for us. I think they just gave up [on treating her eye]. When I questioned the Tharamu translator [about my daughter’s eye condition] they replied to me that, *“If something happens to her or her eye [like] it gets painful, come [to the hospital] quickly”*. Then I continued *“What will the [the doctor] do then?”* She [the Tharamu translator] replied that *“[The doctor] will do surgery and take out her eye”*. My daughter said *“If [they] take out my eye then what will I do [in the future]? People [doctors] could not take out the shrapnel for me and I also worry that people [doctors] will take out my eye too”*.

How many people got injured during the fighting?

Another person who got injured [during the fighting] is a woman whose house the Border Guard Force [BGF] stayed in [during the fighting].⁶

Did any pregnant women get injured?

⁵ *Thara (teacher) brother* is used here to show a level of respect from the mother towards the translator.

⁶ In Burma/Myanmar it is common for armed groups to request or demand to stay at villagers’ houses whilst they are travelling or fighting.

Yes, this woman who got injured is pregnant.

No one died, right?

Yes [no one died]. She [the pregnant woman] got a small injury on her back.

In total how many villagers got injured?

In total there were four villagers who got injured. I, my husband and another [pregnant] woman got a little injured but my daughter got seriously injured and she cannot see anything up 'til now. We [I and my husband] discussed [the problem] with Pastor O---. I told my husband, *"The people [the doctor] did not take out the shrapnel from our [daughter's eye] and they told us to go to Phitsanulok [provincial hospital] but we do not speak Thai and do not have enough money so how will we do this?"* [Pastor O---] contacted Doctor P--- [in Way Ta Ku/Yangon] for us. Doctor P--- said he will arrange it for us. He replied, *"Daughter!!⁷, It will cost five million [5,000,000] kyat [US \$3861.55]⁸."* [It costs a lot] because his hospital [in Way Ta Ku/Yangon] is a private hospital. I asked my husband *"It will cost five million [5,000,000] kyat [US \$3861.55] so what will we do?"* He replied *"We cannot do [pay] anything so we just have to keep her like this"*. And then I said *"How can we keep her like this?"*

The people [the doctor] said they had already done surgery to my daughter's eye but they could not take the shrapnel out because her blood had clotted in her injured eye and they could not find [all] the shrapnel so they left one piece in her eye. [They told us if her eye] gets pain immediately, [come to hospital quickly] and they will do surgery and take it [shrapnel] out for us. Her eye is always swollen

Regarding your travelling to hospital and having to stay in hospital, did you get any help or money [compensation] from the Border Guard Force [BGF] or the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army [DKBA] Na Mak Kya group?

I do not know anything about [getting compensation from] the Border Guard Force [BGF] or the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army [DKBA] Na Ma kya splinter group but I got one hundred thousand [100,000] kyat [US \$77.23] from our village tract leader Saw P---; I do not know where he got it from. [My daughter's] school female principal gave me forty one thousand [41,000] kyat [US \$31.66] and Christians in my village gave me over twenty thousand [20,000] kyat [US \$15.44].

Did any of them tell you to take responsibility [for paying the whole cost of your daughter's injured eye]?

No

Will [the people in your village] give you over twenty thousand kyat per annually?

No. There are over ten Christian families in my village, we [they] just helped each other [to raise] over twenty thousand [20,000] kyat [US \$15.44]; the village tract leader gave me one hundred thousand [100,000] kyat [US \$77.23] and the school female principal gave me forty one thousand [41,000] kyat [US \$31.66]. That is all I received.

⁷ This is a title that people in Burma may use to call people who are the same age as their children and does not imply a direct familial relationship.

⁸ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the November 17th 2016 official market rate of 1295 kyat to US \$1.

Now can your daughter's eye see?

She cannot see anything. Of course, I asked Thara [the doctor] if any pieces of shrapnel were left in [her eye]. He answered to me that a small piece of shrapnel has been left in her eye. Even though I do not speak Thai, of course I asked people to translate it for me. Thara [the doctor] said *"Maybe she can see [later] or maybe not because the shrapnel has not come out yet"*. And they also said my daughter's eye has been injured twice; one is at her temple [next to the eye], it is very close to her eye, and another one is on another part of her temple. Her eye was already swollen [when we went to the hospital]; the blood clotted and turned black so when they [the doctors] did surgery, they could not find another piece [of shrapnel] in her eye. Some people said, *"It has gone so deep in her eyes so the doctor did not dare to take it out"*. I do not know if they [the doctors] did not dare to tell us [this information or not], because I did not see it [the surgery]. Even when I listened to this [information], I was really afraid and my heart was getting painful [stress].

How about yourself?

It injured me just a little, in two places under my armpit.

So you embarrassed to show [your injury to the doctor]?

Why not? Here you see, [the injuries are] twice under my armpit and another one is under my breast. I just went to the hospital in my village or I can also treat it by myself. It has already healed.

How about your husband?

It hit him just a little at the nape of his neck by his hairline.

Do you have any more information to add? Regarding any information left that has not been included in my questions. If you have any more information to add, you can report it to us now.

I do not know how to say anymore and I do not dare to tell you anymore.

Tell us, why you do not dare to report it? What problem do you have?

The problem is that we are feeling afraid. We are afraid that people [armed groups] will come and attack [us again].

So you have to live in fear?

Yes, we have to live in fear. Now, we already dug an underground shelter [to hide in during the fighting] because I am afraid. Even though other people are not afraid I am afraid and I worry when I hear any sound. I am afraid even when I hear the sound of a dog barking. Because I never have been faced [with fighting] like this before. The artillery fell down [exploded] very close to us when we were under the table, just at my house's drain but we did know that it had fallen down. [We just knew it had happened] when my daughter cried out and said, *"Daddy, it hit me"*. And then [her eye] was bleeding and her blood ran down non-stop. My husband said *"Oh my youngest daughter has been hit [by shrapnel]"* so he carried her and we ran to Tharamu's house. Tharamu said *"It is a dangerous injury because it is close to her eye"*. I thought her eye could still see. When we arrived to the Thara [the doctor at Mae Sot general hospital] he said *"We could not do surgery to your daughter's eye and we did not have to take out the shrapnel because we could not find that shrapnel [in her eye]. It hit twice at her temple and we do not know where the shrapnel went so there is a piece of shrapnel left in"*. I asked Thara *"Can't we*

do surgery?" He replied *"If you want to take it out, you have to go to another hospital in Phitsanoluk [Province]"*. We do not know any people there so how will we go there? I do not speak Thai, even when we stayed in Mae Sot hospital for over ten days, I had to call other people [to interpret for me when I wanted to know something]. Just four of us: I, my son, my [injured daughter] and Tharamu [the Christian leader] stayed at the hospital [we did not leave the hospital as we could not speak Thai].

So the Doctor said if your daughter's injured eye gets painful or gets worse, you have to send her back to [hospital] quickly right?

Yes. Tharamu [interpreter] said, *"Come to [hospital] quickly"*. Tharamu [doctors] did not tell us anything. They just said, *"You can keep [the shrapnel in her eye] like this and you always have to clean it. We cannot take out the shrapnel"*.

How many days ago did you come back [from hospital]?

There is almost two weeks [since we came back].

Do you have any other more information that you want to add or do you want to give us any suggestions?

No

You do not have any other information to tell us so I would like to thank you for giving us information about what happened during the fighting in your village. Thank you very much. Do you have any problem regarding livelihood issue in your village?

There is no problem. We are only afraid that the guns will fire [the fighting will happen] so we are travelling in fear.

Your living location [situation] is going well right?

Yes.

Thank you sister, for informing and telling us what is happening here [in your village]. Thank you very much.

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

- "Dooplaya Interview: Saw B---, March 2015," (November 2016)
- "Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, February 2016" (November 2016)
- "Ongoing militarisation in southeast Myanmar," (October 2016)
- "Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, February 2016," (August 2016)
- "Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's testimonies from southeast Burma/Myanmar," (August 2016)

Dooplaya District



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