



Incident Report

November 22, 2018 / KHRG #18-27-I1

Toungoo Incident Report: Forced military labour in Thandaunggyi Township, February 2018

This Incident Report describes an instance of forced military labour. Two civilians were forced to serve as navigators by the Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) # 607, guiding soldiers to an area where fighting had occurred the previous day.

Incident Report | Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District (February 2018)

The following Incident Report was written by a community member in Toungoo 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 This report was received in February 2018 along with other information from Toungoo District, including one interview and 3 photographs.

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Forced Labour
Date of Incident(s)	February 24 th 2018
Incident Location	Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District

Victim Information	
Name	Saw H---
Age	53
Sex	Male
Ethnicity	Karen

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual incidents of abuse 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 incident reports, community members are encouraged to document incidents of abuse that they consider to be important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

Occupation	Plantation worker
Religion	Christianity
Village	M---

Perpetrator Information			
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base
Paing Soe Thein	Major	Military Operations Command (MOC) #6, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #607	Than Daung Myot Thit

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

After hearing about an incident of forced labour in the area, a KHRG research called local people to gain more information. They went to the village where the incident occurred to interview the victims of this case of forced military labour.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The KHRG researcher heard about this incident of forced military labour first-hand from the victims. He interviewed one of the victims of forced military labour.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On February 23rd 2018, forestry officers from the Karen National Union (KNU) went to Kan Ni Chang area accompanied by Company #1 from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Battalion #2. A businessman, Win Aung, had been logging a nearby forest after receiving permission from the Myanmar government in 2006. The KNU forestry officers and KNLA soldiers wanted to prohibit these logging activities.

The Tatmadaw Company Commander Major Paing Soe Thein, and soldiers from the Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #607 under the Tatmadaw Military Operations Command (MOC) #6, heard about the KNU's intentions. They moved into the area where the KNLA Company #1 was based and opened fire on them. The skirmish occurred around 4PM on February 23rd 2018. After the fighting took place, the Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #607 retreated, and returned to M--- village that night.

On February 24th 2018, the Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB #607 wanted to return to the location of the skirmish. They ordered two local people from M--- village to guide them. They left the village at 8 AM, and forced the civilians to guide them for a whole day. They only returned to their village after 4 PM. M--- village is far from the location of the incident.

The Tatmadaw soldiers did not provide the villagers with any food, despite the fact that they were forced to serve as a navigators for a full day. The villagers were forced to communicate between the two Tatmadaw groups, and had to walk in front of 20 Tatmadaw soldiers. They were not told that fighting had occurred in the area the

previous day.

When the Tatmadaw soldiers returned to M--- village, Major Paing Soe Thein gave 2,000 kyat [USD 1.29]² to each forced navigator. He told them that it is for alcohol.

According to the International Labour Organisation Forced Labour Convention, forced labour is “all work or service which is exacted from any person under the threat of a penalty and for which the person has not offered himself or herself voluntarily”.³ Receiving a small compensation after the fact does not diminish the severity of this human rights violation. The Tatmadaw has routinely forced civilians to work on infrastructure projects, and to serve as porters, navigators and human minesweepers in conflict areas. In recent years, there has been a decline in forced military labour incidents in Southeast Myanmar. However, the Tatmadaw and ethnic armed groups still force local civilians to work for them, threatening to fine villagers if they refuse. This is a violation of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Code of Conduct, which stipulates that the Tatmadaw and Ethnic Armed Organisations should “avoid forcibly taking money, property, food, labor or services from civilians”.⁴

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

The victim gave permission to KHRG to use this information.

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

- “Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, February 2017,” (January 2018)
- “Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, March to May 2017,” (December 2017)
- “Toungoo Interview: Naw Ka---, October 2016,” (June 2017)
- “Toungoo Interview: Saw A---, January 2016,” (February 2017)
- “Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, November 2015,” (February 2017)

² All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 25/09/2018 official market rate of 1601 kyats to US \$1.

³ International Labour Organisation, [Forced Labour Convention](#) (1930).

⁴ Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement [Code of Conduct](#).

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)