



Incident Report

June 15, 2018/ KHRG #18-41-I18

Hpapun Incident Report: Tatmadaw road construction results in the indiscriminate firing of mortars and displacement in Lu Thaw Township, March 2018

This Incident Report describes an event that occurred on March 4th 2018, during which Tatmadaw forces indiscriminately fired mortars into local villages in Lu Thaw Township. This incident occurred because the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and local community forbid the construction of a road planned by the Tatmadaw.

Incident Report | Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District (March 2018)

The following Incident Report was written by (1) a community member in Hpapun 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 April 2018 along with other information from Hpapun District, including 23 other incident reports, 18 interviews, two situation updates, 322 photographs and 33 video clips.²

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Indiscriminate firing of mortars by the Tatmadaw
Date of Incident(s)	March 4 th 2018

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.

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.

Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	Hkay Poo village, Hkay Poo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Mutraw District
---	---

Victim Information	
Name	Saw W---
Age	--- year old
Sex	Male
Ethnicity	Karen
Family	Yes
Occupation	Farming/ Health
Religion	Christian
Position	Vice Secretary of a community clinic
Village	T--- village

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Tatmadaw	Unknown	Unknown	Hsa Law Kyoh, Khaw Daw Hkoh, Htee Htaw Per villages	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

On March 22nd 2018, I conducted an interview with the vice-secretary of a community clinic Saw W---. He is --- year old and from T--- village. He is a displaced person who is currently settled in Beh Thaw Loh village, Hkay Poo village tract area.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The interviewee knows information about this event because he experienced it himself.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On March 22nd 2018, I met with the vice-secretary of the Hkay Poo village tract area community clinic in T--- village. As described by the villager Saw W---, there are 48 households, with 282 people in Hkay Poo village.

There has been a long-term conflict between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Tatmadaw. In 1997, villagers in Hpapun District had to flee to the forest due to Tatmadaw attacks. A villager named Saw W--- from T--- village, Hkay Poo village tract shared his experience of Tatmadaw oppression. In 1997, his house was burnt down in a Tatmadaw attack. He fled to the forest to hide. In 2007, [a Tatmadaw attack on villagers and their houses] happened again. In this case, villagers did not feel safe to work on their plantation or to stay in their village.

When the Tatmadaw constructed a road in the area in March 2018, local community members became worried about the situation. They believed that this could lead to another possible conflict caused by Tatmadaw.

The most recent clash occurred in March 2018 in Hkay Poo village, Lu Thaw Township, Mutraw District. The clash happened because the Tatmadaw proposed to construct a road in Ler Mu Plaw area, Lu Thaw Township, [in an area] controlled by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). The KNLA did not allow Tatmadaw to bring in machines and construct the road because it was in a KNLA restricted area. The Tatmadaw responded that they would excavate the road by hand [emphasising their willingness to construct the road at all costs].

This made the villagers concerned about the Tatmadaw strategy, since military conflict often occurs in this area. On March 4th 2018, a Sunday morning, a Tatmadaw group that settled near Hsa Law Kyoh, Khaw Daw Hkoh, and Htee Htaw Per villages started firing mortars into a local village. They also entered some restricted places since they planned to construct the road from Hsa Law Kyoh to Ler Mu Plaw area. Tatmadaw also fired mortars and small arms into the local area indiscriminately. This attack did not injure any villagers.

On the same day, Tatmadaw entered T'May Hkee, and Hpaw Na Kyoh villages. Then on March 11th 2018, Tatmadaw entered Way Day village. [In these instances], Tatmadaw soldiers shot villagers on sight as they entered the villages. Fortunately, no villager was injured or died from this attack as they had fled to the forest [based on information received from March 22nd 2018].

Villagers from the following villages fled the violence: Hkay Poo, Tah Hkeh Der, Kaw Hter Der, T'May Hkee, T'Roo Hkee, Baw Kah, Htee Chee Hkee, Cho Hper Hkoh, Kyaw Aye Hkee, Ler Mu Plaw, Kyee Day, Baw Lay Der, Bo Na Der and Moh Kyoh Hkoh.

From 4th to 22nd March 2018, there were eight clashes [between the KNLA and Tatmadaw]. The KNLA did not sustain any injuries. About three to four months before the clashes occurred, [villagers reported that] Tatmadaw released rabid dogs in the Hkay Poo, Thay Thoo Hkee, T'yoo Plaw, Tah Thoo Hkee, Beh Loh and Ter Kaw villages. Local community members believed that these dogs had been released by the Tatmadaw because they were bigger and looked different than the dogs in that area. Three villagers from Tah Thoo Hkee and Beh Loh villages were bitten by rabid dogs. One of them died but two other were cured. In this instance, Ter Kaw villagers shot and killed four rabid dogs released by Tatmadaw, but there are still many other rabid dogs [in the area].

Villagers could not take their belongings such as their clothes and food [with them]

when they fled from the village because of Tatmadaw firing. Therefore, villagers faced a difficult situation when they were hiding in the forest. Some villagers secretly went back to their villages to get their belongings and some food. Other villagers did not dare to go back. Some villagers went back by foot, while others used their motorbikes. Villagers could not help others take their belongings, since they had limited time to even struggle for themselves.

Villagers fled from the following villages: Hkay Poo, Ta Hkeh Der, Kaw Ter Der, T'May Hkee, T'Ruh Hkee, Baw Kah, Htee Chee Hkee, Cho Per Hkoh, Kyaw Aye Hkee, Ler Mu Plaw, Kyee Day, Baw Lay Der, Bo Nah Der, Moh Kyoh Hkoh villages. Villagers in these 14 villages in Hkay Poo village tract fled to the forest.

Villagers perceived that the road construction of Tatmadaw has caused the displacement. They also believe that it has damaged the lands of the local community rather than benefiting villagers. Therefore, villagers are unwilling to let Tatmadaw construct the road. They want Tatmadaw to remove their camp instead, so that villagers will be able to live in peace and work on their plantations freely.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The interviewee gave permission to KHRG to share this information; so that the world will know about the Tatmadaw oppression on the local community.



This photo was taken on March 22nd 2018 in T--- village. This is the photo of the Vice Secretary of a community clinic in Hkay Poo village tract. His name is Saw W--- and he is --- years old. He described how villagers were displaced by the recent conflict between Tatmadaw and KNLA. [Photo: KHRG]



These photos were taken on March 14th 2018 in Ler Mu Plaw area. They show how villagers left their houses and belongings when they fled to the forest because of the Tatmadaw violence. The Tatmadaw indiscriminately fired mortars into local villages. They attacked because the local armed group [KNLA] and villagers did not allow them to construct the road in the area.
[Photos: KHRG]





These photos were taken on March 14th and 15th 2018 in Ler Mu Plaw area. They show how displaced villagers transported their rice by motorbike when they ran into the forest. Villagers could not take all their food, domestic animals and belongings at the same time due to the rapid escalation of the conflict. Some villagers hid their packs full of rice between their village and the forest [anticipating a Tatmadaw attack]. They were able to retrieve their rice by motorbike at night. [Photos: KHRG]



These photos were taken on March 15th 2018 in Ler Mu Plaw area. These photos show how internally displaced people (IDP) fled into the forest because of the indiscriminate firing of mortars by the Tatmadaw. The IDPs were from Hkay Poo village tract. They faced challenges with health, security and shelters. [Photos: KHRG]

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

- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township and Dwe Lo Township, September 2017 and February 2018”, (June 2014)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Lu Thaw Township, February to March 2018”, (May 2018)

- “Attacks on villagers, ongoing fighting and displacement in Hpapun and Toungoo districts from January to April 2018”, (May 2018)

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)