



**Situation Update**

November 27, 2018 / KHRG #18-90-D2

---

**Dooplaya Short Update: Kawkareik Township, October 2018**

---

*In October 2018, the Border Guard Forces (BGF) trespassed into an area beyond their control to demand a tax from local community members. Their tax targeted a segment of the population who earn their living by gathering and selling elephant foot yams, and who often face livelihood challenges because they do not have agricultural lands of their own. In response, the local community reported the case to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA).*

---

**Short Update | Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (October 2018)**

*The following Short Update was received by KHRG in October 2018. It was written by a community member in Dooplaya 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>*

On October 1 2018, the Commander of the BGF Battalion #1017 Saw Hsa Poh ordered two village heads from Naung Kaing village tract to meet him.<sup>2</sup> He requested this meeting to demand a tax from the local population that gathers and sells elephant foot yams, a vegetable used in local cuisine. [This segment of the community depends on this activity for their livelihoods, often because they do not have agricultural lands of their own].

The BGF Commander told the village heads that the taxes would be used for a community development fund. He requested a 500,000 kyats (US \$315.70) tax for each five elephant foot yams cooked in the furnace in Naung Kaing village tract.<sup>3</sup> The BGF warned the village heads that local people would be arrested if they did not pay this tax. The village heads were afraid of the BGF Commander but managed to lower the tax down to 400,000 kyats (US \$ 252.57).



Elephant yams are a staple of Karen cuisine. They are commonly found in the mountainous forests of Southern Myanmar and are at times cultivated by local communities.

[Photo: KHRG]

---

<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.

<sup>2</sup> The BGF battalion #1017 led by battalion Commander Saw Hsa Hpoh is based in Kaung Hmuh Camp, Yan Kote village, Yan Kote village tract, Kawkareik Township.

<sup>3</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the November 28 2018 official market rate of 1583 kyats to US \$1.

The local community perceives that the BGF does not have the authority to levy this tax. Although the BGF gave them a tax receipt, it does not include a signature to show who received the money. The BGF only has permission to collect taxes from the Kaung Hmuh village area, not in Naung Kaing village tract.

The local community believes that the BGF is trespassing into an area outside of their control. Because the BGF is based in Brigade #7, they wrote a letter reporting this incident to the KNLA Operation Commander Major Saw Hpaw Doh based in Brigade #7.

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

- Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi and Kawkareik Townships, January to March 2018
- Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi Townships, January to April 2018
- Dooplaya Interview: Saw G---, February 2018
- Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi and Win Yay Townships, November 2017 to February 2018
- Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi and Kyonedoe Townships, November to December 2017

### Dooplaya District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)