



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**News Bulletin**

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**Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Townhsip,  
September to October 2011**

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*This report includes a situation update submitted to KHRG in November 2011 by a villager describing events occurring in Nyaunglebin District, during the period between September and October 2011. It details an incident that occurred in October 2011, in which a villager was shot and injured while working in his betelnut field; the villager who wrote this report noted that some villagers living in these areas respond to the threat of violence by fleeing approaching Tatmadaw patrols. Following the shooting, Tatmadaw troops imposed movement restrictions that prevented villagers from traveling to or staying in their agricultural workplaces in the area where the shooting occurred. This report includes additional information about the use of villagers to provide forced labour at Tatmadaw camps, specifically to perform sentry duty along roads, and also raises villagers' concerns about food security after unseasonable rain prevented villagers in some areas from burning brush on their hill fields preparatory to planting and paddy crops in other areas were destroyed by insects and by flooding during the monsoon.*

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**Situation Update | Ler Doh Township, Nyaunglebin District  
(Received by KHRG in November 2011)**

*The following situation update was written by a villager in Nyaunglebin 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> This report was received along with other information from Nyunglebin District, including one incident reports, three interviews, one other situation update, and 116 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

In the Tha Ba Ler area of Nyaunglebin District, there was SPDC [Tatmadaw]<sup>3</sup> army troop movement on September 15<sup>th</sup> 2011 in the Moo Kaw Sha area near Maw Kha Der, Ler

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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, villagers 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> When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Nyaunglebin District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the Field Report, "Livelihood consequences of SPDC restrictions and patrols in Nyaunglebin District," KHRG, September 2009

<sup>3</sup> In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) and *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese

Kla, and Htee Ler Baw Hta. The villagers had to flee to the jungle. There was also troop movement in the Ya--- area on October 6<sup>th</sup> 2011 and the SPDC soldiers shot one of the villagers when he was in his betelnut field and [the bullet] broke his leg. This villager's name is Saw Gh---. He is 43 years old and lives in M---. On October 7<sup>th</sup> 2011, all the villagers who had been staying in their plantations [in that area] were forced to go back and stay in their villages.<sup>4</sup> The SPDC Army closed the road and they refused to give the villagers travel permission documents [to go to work in their fields].

As for Yu Loh and Gk'Mu Loh villages, starting on October 1<sup>st</sup> 2011, they did not let villagers carry food [when they went to work in their fields]. Each person was only allowed to carry two bowls of rice to the plantation. These villagers are not working on [dry paddy] hill fields, they are only working on betelnut and durian plantations. They work on the betelnut and durian plantations to get money and then they buy rice to eat. Because of this it causes problems for the villagers.

The real situation for villagers' livelihoods in this region is that 116 farms, about 379 acres, were destroyed by floods. The paddy plants were under water for a long time so all that paddy was spoiled. In Ler Doh, there was two months of flooding and a lot of the paddy plants were destroyed. Also in the Hoh Lu area, the insects destroyed the crops so the paddy plants were destroyed and the villagers could not farm anymore. In the mountainous hill regions, the hill farmers also could not farm in 40 different places because the heavy rain prevented them from burning the brush on their fields. In Hsaw Hteet Township, villagers who work on hill fields could not burn the brush on their fields. Because of this, villagers who work on farms are facing food problems.

In Ler Doh Township, SPDC soldiers were active in the area. On August 8<sup>th</sup> 2011, soldiers from LIB #345 under the command of Thet Saw Win forced villagers from Noh Ghaw and Thoo Gk'Bee village tracts to go and work for them at the Htaik Htoo army camp. At the *gkaw per doh* [literally 'country government'] army camp at Htaik Htoo in Ler Doh Township, the soldiers closed two jails. So forced labour has reduced a bit but there are still demands for forced labour. The *set tha*<sup>5</sup> work has reduced a bit but the villagers still have to do it in some places. In places like Kyweh Cha and Aung Soe Moe, the villagers still have to stand guard [as sentries] on the road.

Further background on the current situation in Nyaunglebin District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Nyaunglebin Situation Update: August to October 2011" (December 2011)
- "Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Township, May to July 2011," (November 2011)

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government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10<sup>th</sup> 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the villager who wrote this report and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this report.

<sup>4</sup> According to additional information provided to KHRG in December 2011 by the villager who wrote this report, Saw Gh--- is a resident of M--- village near Ler Doh Town, to which villagers from five village tracts in the Ya--- area were ordered to relocate in 1974. While residents from Saw Gh---'s village tract and another village tract abided by the relocation order and moved to M---, residents of Te---, Gi--- and Ca--- village tracts stayed in the Ya--- area and, as the shooting of Saw Gh--- demonstrates, violence continues to be exercised against villagers who remain in this area in breach of the previous relocation order. See *'All the information I've given you, I faced it myself': Rural testimony on abuse in eastern Burma since November 2010*, KHRG, December 2011, p.46.

<sup>5</sup> *Set tha* is a Burmese term for forced labour duty as a messenger stationed at army camps or bases and serving as a go-between to deliver orders from army officers to village heads, but also involving other menial tasks when no messages are in need of delivery.

- “Nyaunglebin Interview: Naw Sa---, May 2011,” (August 2011)
- “Nyaunglebin Interview: Saw My---, May 2011,” (August 2011)
- “Nyaunglebin Interview: Naw Ka---, May 2011,” (August 2011)
- “Nyaunglebin Interview: Saw Th---, May 2011,” (August 2011)

