



News Bulletin

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Papun Interview: Saw K---, June 2012

This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted during June 2012 in Bu Tho Township, Papun District by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The community member interviewed Saw K---, a 29 year old married father of two, who described the shooting of his friend Saw N--- by Tatmadaw soldiers from Hpah Hkeh Kyo army camp while out collecting truffles with another eight villagers in Bu Tho Township, Papun District. Saw K--- described how Tatmadaw soldiers were lying in wait and shot Saw N--- multiple times, despite the ongoing ceasefire. Saw K--- mentioned that this was the third expedition he and other villagers had taken to find truffles to sell in the same area, an hour's journey from their home at T--- internally displaced persons camp, thinking that they would be safe due to the ceasefire, however, on this occasion Tatmadaw soldiers opened fire, killing Saw N---. Saw K--- also described his opinions on the current political situation in Karen State. This incident is also described in two yet unpublished KHRG reports.¹

Interview | Saw K---, (male, 29), T--- village, Bu Tho Township, Papun District (June 2012)

The following interview was conducted by a community member in Papun District, and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.² This interview was received along with other information from Papun District, one other interview and 11 photographs.³

¹ The shooting described here is also referred to in two forthcoming reports from Papun District, received by KHRG in June 2012.

² KHRG trains community members 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 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.

³ In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma, 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. As companion to this, a redesigned website will be released in 2012. In the meantime, KHRG's most recently-published field information from Papun District can be found in the Report, "Papun Interview: Saw D---, January 2012," KHRG July 2012.

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Christian

Marital Status: Married

Can you tell me what you know about the incident that occurred?

We went twice to collect *ku la er* [truffles]. We thought that there was a ceasefire so nothing would happen. We had already been twice, and the third time, the SPDC [Tatmadaw]⁴ shot my friend.

What was the date you went the third time?

We went on 13th [June].

How many times did you go there?

We went three times, and the incident happened on the third time.

Did you go every day?

No.

When was the first time you went?

I didn't notice the date.

How about the second time?



This photo, taken on June 24th 2012 at T--- camp in Papun District, shows 29 year old Saw K---. While on a truffle finding expedition on June 13th 2012, Saw K---'s friend, Saw N---, was shot and killed by soldiers from Tatmadaw Infantry Battalion #19 operating in the area. Saw K--- described how he and eight others who were accompanying him fled the scene after hearing gun_fire.

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

I also didn't notice.

The third time you went, on the 13th, was that in June?

Yes, it was in June.

How far is from where you were collecting truffles it to the Tatmadaw camp that you went towards?

It would take half an hour to walk.

How far is it from T--- camp to the place where you collect truffles?

We have to take a boat first, and then it takes 40 minutes to the place where we collect truffles.

Do you know the name of the Tatmadaw camp?

It's called Hpah Hkeh Kyo.

What Battalion number stays in the camp?

I don't know that.

Who is the commander?

I also don't know.

When you collected truffles did you go near to the camp?

No, they came around and met us.

So they went to where you were collecting truffles?

They came out of their camp.

Did you see them?

No, but suddenly they shot us.

Did you see them when they shot at you?

Yes, I saw.

Were you close to the person who was shot?

Yes.

How far was he from you?

It would be here to the hospital, so 12 metres.⁵

Did you see the shooting?

Not clearly.

Did you hear gunshots?

Yes, he went ahead of me, and went to the right hand side. After we heard the gunshot, we were scared, so we ran.

How many times did they shoot?

They shot the gun once, then after two or three seconds, there were two more shots. After that, they shot continually with heavy guns and small guns.

Was he hit after the first shot?

Yes.

How many heavy weapons did they shoot?

We heard two heavy weapons being fired.

How did you know that he was shot?

At first we didn't know, but after we had come back and waited for him, and he did not come, then we realised that he had been shot.

Do you know how many Tatmadaw soldiers there were?

⁵ Saw K--- is referring to a nearby hospital in close proximity to where the interview is being undertaken.

It was about five or six.

Did you hear this from other people?

Yes, some people who went to clear the place told me that there were only five or six soldiers.

What was the name of the person who was shot?

His name was Saw N---

What about the other villagers' names?

I don't know; you'll have to ask the security leader [of the T--- camp].

Two of you came back together right?

Yes, myself and one other came back together [to the camp].

Did you stay near each other?

Yes, we did but he was ahead of me a little.

Did you get a lot [of truffles]?

Yes, we got a lot.

How much do you get normally?

We get 20, or over 20 *lay* (20 kg. / 44 lb.)⁶ in a day.

Are they measured by the kilo?

No, we don't measure by the kilo.

How many bags?

We three got one bag between us.⁷

⁶ One *lay* is equal to one kilo. Villagers can sell one *lay's* worth of truffles for approximately 50 baht.

⁷ Saw K--- is inferring here that while picking truffles he had decided to team up with two others.

What about the price?

People buy it for 50 Baht.

For a kilo?

No, for a *lay*.

How much for one *lay*?

Three milk tins⁸ was one *lay*.

At what time did you start out?

At 6:00 am.

What time did you hear the gun shot?

At 7:20 am.

How much time did you have collecting truffles?

Only 20 minutes.

Why do you think they shot this guy?

I don't think for anything.

What did you bring when you went?

We didn't bring anything.

Did you bring a knife?

No.

So what did you bring?

⁸ Unit of volume used to measure paddy, milled rice and seeds.

Only one backpack, the one that the man who died was carrying.

What was in the bag?

It had only a plastic bag inside to carry the truffles.

Did it include a gun or landmine?

No, nothing.

He didn't bring anything, so why did the Tatmadaw shoot him?

I don't know.

Why did you dare to go, as it was not far to the Tatmadaw camp?

The first thing is we have to search for food. The second thing is there is a ceasefire so we thought they would not kill people anymore, so we went. Also, previously we went even nearer to the camp. Maybe they were not out of their camp those times. We had already been there on two different occasions and then the third time the incident happened.

Did they see you when you went the first and the second time?

No.

Did you see them?

No.

Were you close to the army camp the first time you went?

Not really close. We went and we thought we would not dare to go very close.

What do you think? Did they come and wait for you on purpose or did it happen coincidentally?

They came, and waited to shoot at us on purpose.⁹

⁹ For further information reported by KHRG of deliberate attacks on civilians please 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, pp. 24-29.

Why did they go there and wait to shoot you?

I don't know.

What is your opinion about this?

I don't think anything.

Is the army camp very big?

It's not really big; it's small.

How many soldiers are there?

I don't know, and cannot estimate either.

How many times did you wait for him on the way back?

Two times.

After which you came back to the T--- camp [internally displaced persons (IDP) camp] directly?

No, we waited for him on the riverbank until 11:00 am.

So what did you do?

After that we came back to the camp.

Who did you inform when you got back home?

We went to tell the security leader, but he had already been told and had gone to check the place.

How did he know?

He already knew; at 8:00 am he went there.

How did he know?

He knew that the Tatmadaw had shot someone.

Do you know of any other case like this to have occurred?

I have not heard.

What do you think about the ceasefire that the KNU [Karen National Union] is holding?

I don't know and cannot think to help, and have no idea.

Do you ever see the Tatmadaw do good things?

I haven't seen, no.

Do you think that President Thein Sein does good things?

No, I don't, because these things happen. If he did good things nothing like this would happen.

Did you go with only three people, or did any others go with you?

Other people also went with us.

How many?

Ten people.

Did it include men and women?

Yes, four women and six men.

Where were they when the incident happened?

They ran away at the same time as us.

Were there any other people near him or only you?

Yes, and one of my other friends.

Have you had any other problems you want to talk about today?

No.

Do you have anything else you want to say?

No.

How many members are in your family?

I have two children.

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

- “Papun Interview: Saw D---, January 2012,” (July 2012)
- “Papun Interview: Saw Kr---, October 2010,” (July 2012)
- “Papun Interview: Saw T---, December 2011,” (July 2012)
- “Photo Set: Villagers register concerns about proposed Hatgyi Dam,” (June 2012)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, received April 2012,” (June 2012)
- “Sustained Tatmadaw resupply operations in Thaton, Nyaunglebin and Papun during ceasefire,” (May 2012)
- “Incident Report: Killings in Papun District, March 2012,” (May 2012)

