



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Papun Situation Update: Dwe Lo Township, February to June 2012

This report includes a situation update submitted to KHRG in June 2012 by a community member describing events occurring in Papun District, during the period of February 2012 to June 2012. Specifically discussed are details about land confiscation by several logging and mining companies, attempted land confiscation by the local authorities, difficulties with securing adequately staffed schools, and it includes details about the Tatmadaw sending rations and bullets, which creates concerns amongst the villagers who fear that fighting will resume in their region. The report shows that villagers are able to hold meetings and voice their opinions regarding the entrance of the mining companies, with specific criticisms against local authorities.

Situation Update | Dwe Lo Township, Papun District (February to June 2012)

The following situation update was written by a community member¹ in Papun 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. This report was received along with other information from Papun District, including 167 photographs.²

**Situation Report
Dwe Lo Township location**

¹ 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 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.

² 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 Situation Update: Northern Lu Thaw Township, March to June 2012," KHRG September 2012.

For Dwe Lo Township's location, it is bordered by Pweh Law Stream in the east, Brigade #3 in the west, Brigade #1 in the north and Lu Thaw Township in the south.

In our Dwe Loh Township, the civilians are living in two stages until now, one is under [Tatmadaw] control and the other is [as] IDP [internally displaced people].

The Burmese Military location

In Dwe Lo Township region, the Burmese Military is based in Meh Way, Hkoo Thoo Hta, Waw Muh, Kay Kaw, Kwee See, Taung Thon Lon, K'Ter Tee, Maw Law Kloh and K'Ma Moh. These are the places where the Burmese Military camps are based. Beginning in 2011 to now, the military camps which withdrew from our [Dwe Lo Township] region are Htwee Thee Uh, Ma Htaw, Sayar Aung Myint, Maw Thay Tha; [they] are not [in our region] anymore.

The Burmese Military Activity

In our region, from Baw Kyoh Traw to the east of Buh Law stream, LID [Light Infantry Division] #44 and the LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] are active and they rotate themselves every six or four months.

To send bullets, like in the past year, they repaired the old vehicle road in Buh Law Traw and they sent vehicles from Nat Kyi to Hkoo Thoo Hta camp. After that, they sent [the bullets] to Meh Way, by motorboat. Because the Karen soldiers do not do any shooting after the ceasefire, they can send [bullets] safely.

As the Burmese Military [still] sends rations and bullets like in the past year, the civilians consider that they [civilians] cannot be happy about the ceasefire. If there are the [military] activities, like the past year, they [civilians] will face the same problem. Some of the civilians are happy because, since the ceasefire was entered, they can travel and trade freely.

Since the ceasefire was entered, the Burmese Military has many plans to organize the civilians in different ways. On May 2012, the Education Coordinator from the Burmese Military ordered the E--- village leader [to a meeting] and he said that "*Now, there is a*

school in your region.” He said that “if there was no school, [I] would build one and send teachers to manage the school.” If we look back to that year [when he sent the teacher] at the teachers he sent, they just taught for two or three months, and after that they rotated out. Therefore, our Karen leaders saw that it is not a correct practice, so they told the Burmese leader that if they said like that [promised teachers], they [the teachers] have to teach until the end of the year and they have to teach Karen subject, with Karen teachers to manage [the school]. Now, we have not heard [back] and we do not know anything related to this plan.

As there are gold mines [in the region], the civilians face many difficulties. Their properties are destroyed. Moreover, the civilians who live in the villages that are set up downstream on the Meh Toh Law River, do not have a chance to drink pure water because the water is polluted. The oil from the machines flow down and the civilians have to go and pipe water in from the mountain, and it is not enough for them to drink or to shower. Moreover, because of the polluted water, the animals, cows and buffalos drink the polluted water, shower with the polluted water, and it causes health problems; even the fish died.

On June --th, 2012, we went to a meeting in Gr--- Village tract and a villager from D--- said, “Now, the companies came in and work, and the land of the civilians are being destroyed.” The villager said, “Why don’t the Karen leaders forbid them? Let’s not talk about forbidding. Now, there are only the rights for the companies and there are no rights for the villagers. In the past, before the companies came to do gold mining, they [the authorities] didn’t ask for any fees when the villagers did gold panning. Now, if the villagers go and pan for gold among the companies, each person has to obtain a recommendation letter for one week. For one recommendation letter, [the villagers] have to give [money] to the village tract authorities, KNDO [Karen National Defence Organization] member and the village tract leader and they ask 10,000 kyat³ (US \$11.49) for one recommendation letter. If [the villagers] don’t take a recommendation letter, the authorities don’t allow [the villagers] to pan gold. If I look at the arrival and gold mining of the companies, if the leaders from the headquarters, from the districts and the townships prohibit them, it will be the best. I hope that the Karen leaders will prohibit [the companies] for us in order not to have the companies’ gold mines in the coming years.”

On June 15th, 2012, when [they] went and held meeting in Meh Way village tract, the E-- villagers named T---, V---, W--- and S--- heard that the companies will come and do gold mining in Meh Way region, so they shouted in front of the leaders not to allow the

³ As of September 11, 2012, all conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 870 kyat to the US \$1. This reflects new measures taken by Burma's central bank on April 2nd 2012 to initiate a managed float of the kyat, thus replacing the previous fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1.

companies to come and do gold mining; they asked the leaders to prohibit [the companies] as much as they can. *“If the leaders give permission, our villagers will face many difficulties.”*

Now, in K'Ter Tee village tract, between L--- and M--- [villages], they [Border Guard] developed a plan to build barracks for the Border Guard soldiers' wives. The Peace Council Chairman, U Soe Myint, sent his people to tell the civilians that he had asked permission from KNU leaders for the land from this place, and he said to the villagers, *“You have to agree with me and you have to sign that the land becomes our land, in order to build the place [barracks]”*. Some of the villagers believed that the KNU gave permission and, for some of the villagers, they signed because they were afraid of them [the authorities]. Then, [the villagers] accepted a small amount of money and they gave the land [away].

As soon as U Soe Myint had this plan, the current Battalion Commander from LID [Light Infantry Division] #102 firmly forbade them to not to build any buildings. The Battalion Commander explained to the civilians, *“U Soe Myint's people came and told a lie to you, that they went and asked permission from the KNU, but none of them went and met [the KNU leaders].”*

Moreover, in our region, the rich peoples' companies, which are U Mya Hpoo Company and Htun Kye Ta Pwint Company, came and do gold mining in the Baw Paw and Meh Htoh streams, so that many of the civilians' land and their plantations were destroyed. For the land and the plantations that are being destroyed, they [companies] gave 700,000 kyat (US \$804.60) for one acre; some of the villagers did not want to sell but they had to sell.

The companies told the civilians that they have asked permission from the Karen leader and as the leader gave permission, and now they came and mine gold in Meh Toh Kloh [stream].

Beginning on February 5th, 2012 to May 10th, 2012, the company owned by U Yeh Htun came and logged in Hkoo Thoo Hta village tract, in Poh Loh Hta region, and the company built a road to send the wood. The villagers' plantations, dog fruit plantations, betelnut plantations, and rubber plantations, were destroyed because of the road that they built. The prices that they gave for the civilians' destroyed plantations, were not full [value].

Furthermore, the people log, and it affects the source of the stream, which the N--- villagers rely on for their drinking water. When the elephants pull the wood, their urine goes into the stream and the water is polluted so that the N--- villagers dare not, and cannot, drink the water from the stream where they used to drink. Therefore, they have to go and take water from the Meh Hkoo Law stream. They said that, because they can't go and take [water] by themselves, they have to carry [it] with carts. The companies come and do logging, and the N--- villagers face difficulty with insufficient water for drinking and for showering.

For this report, because my education is low, if it is not perfect, I ask the leader to advise me.

Further background on the current situation in Pa'an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- Papun Situation Update: Northern Lu Thaw Township, March to June 2012 (September 2012)
- Papun Interview: Saw N---, January 2012, (July 2012)
- Papun Interview: Saw K---, June 2012, (July 2012)
- Papun Interview: Saw D---, January 2012, (July 2012)
- Papun Interview: Saw Kr---, October 2010, (July 2012)
- Papun Interview: Saw T---, December 2011, (July 2012)

