



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, September to November 2012**

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*This report includes a situation update submitted to KHRG in November 2012 by a community member describing events occurring in Nyaunglebin District, during the period between September to November 2012, including information about Tatmadaw activities, the villagers' situation and the community member's opinion on the Norwegian's pilot project that is underway in the area. It specifically describes Tatmadaw demands for money to operate gold mines, demands for transportation labour from villagers who own tractors, civilian movement restrictions from new travel document requirements, continued resupply efforts, and road repairs during which one vehicle was damaged by a landmine. There are details on a ceremony celebrating the peace that the Burma government and the KNU are building, as centred around the official transfer of a KNU liaison office out of a Burma government building to a separate KNU-dedicated building. According to the community member, police corruption affects the ability of villagers to engage in business activities, such as when a U--- villager, named Ma L---, was required to pay a tax to sell lottery vouchers, and another 600,000 kyat to release her nephew from jail when he was arrested while assisting her with transporting the vouchers. This report also includes information about the Sittaung Bridge opening ceremony, construction for which damaged villagers' land, but they were not given compensation. In response to demands for tractor owners to transport material for the Tatmadaw, villagers did not send rations for them but instead complained to the soldiers about the problems for the villagers. The community member did describe that the overall situation for the civilians has improved since the ceasefire, but that damage from natural events still cause food security problems.*

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**Situation Update | Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, Nyaunglebin District (September to November 2012)**

*The following situation update was written by a community member 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*

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

along with other information from Nyaunglebin District, including 198 photographs and 6 video clips.<sup>2</sup>

## Introduction

The situation update is [for situations] starting from September 1<sup>st</sup> 2012 to November 11<sup>th</sup> 2012. In the region, there are always things that violate human rights, but they are not obvious. [This report includes information about] money demands, [Tatmadaw] restrictions and causing trouble, Norwegians sending rice to Hkeh Der village tract, opening a bridge (Sittaung Bridge) in Nat Than Kwin and Kwin Chaung Wa, and about transferring the liaison office.

## Money demands

On September 9<sup>th</sup> 2012, until now, they [Tatmadaw] go and demand money for [operating] the gold machines. The civilians used to work for their daily life by mining gold in the Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships region; the LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #264 demands money from the people who mine gold. There are forty gold [mining] machines, and they demand 150,000 kyat (US \$170.07)<sup>3</sup> for each month, and they demand it every month.



The above photo was taken on September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2012 in



The above photo was taken on October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2012 in

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<sup>2</sup> 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 2013. In the meantime, KHRG's most recently-published field information from Nyaunglebin District can be found in the report, "Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Township, November 2012 to January 2013," KHRG, April 2013.

<sup>3</sup> As of March 25<sup>th</sup> 2013, all conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 882 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.

Ler Doh Township. It shows people from V--- village region using water in order to expose ore. One man can be seen using a basket to remove ore from the worksite prior to sending it to be processed. *[Photo: KHRG]*

Hsaw Htee Township, and it shows the environmental destruction that occurred as a result of gold mining activities in the area. This area appears to be of a leaching pad where chemicals are poured over crushed ore and the runoff is filtered. In the background can be seen a short covering for equipment. *[Photo: KHRG]*

### **Movement restriction and causing troubles**

On September 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, in U--- village tract, a U--- villager, Ma L---, who sells three-digit lottery [vouchers], arranged with the U--- Police Station so that she gives [lottery] taxes to a local police officer, Chan Nyein Win. With the permission of the police officer and giving the policemen the tax, Ma L--- sells lottery on commission for Ma N---'s lottery centre. However, on the day of opening the three digit lottery, September 16<sup>th</sup> 2012, Ma L--- asked her nephew, P---, to go and transport [the vouchers].

As his aunt asked him, Maung P--- went and took the lottery vouchers from Nga Htway Sok village. On the way back, a local police officer, Zaw Min Oo, waited [for him] and arrested him. [They] arrested Maung P--- and detained him in U--- police station; his aunty, Ma L---, reported about this [to the community member]. When his aunt, Ma L---, learned that Maung P--- was arrested, she went and explained [the situation], but the U--- Police Station asked for 600,000 kyat (US \$680.27). After they received 600,000, they set Maung P--- free. This event is an injustice. If the authorized policeman had not given permission, the villagers would not have done illegal work. The villagers do the work because the policemen give permission and take taxes. However, they fabricated [a case] and arrested him like this, so it is an injustice. For this information, Ma L--- gave me [the community member] the information, which means that the victim herself let me know this information.

On October 13<sup>th</sup> 2012, the LIB #590, its Company #4 Company Commander Aung Ko Ko, said that if W--- villagers are going to travel and work, they have to make a recommendation letter and carry the recommendation letters. If a guest comes and travels [stays] in the village, they [villagers] have to submit the overnight guest list [to the authorities].

On October 23<sup>rd</sup> 2012, Ler Doh Operations Command Commander Hla Htway asked the villagers [owning] vehicles to send rations to Muh Theh military camp. The villagers complained to them and did not send their things, because the villagers have to work on their own work of sending wood and bamboo to the Pee Pleh area. Therefore, the Ler Doh Company Commander, Hla Htway, does not allow the villagers to go [to Pee Pleh],

and it causes problems for the villagers to work on their own work. For this information, the car owner [named] M--- gave [it to] me.



The above photos were taken on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 and show a villager's truck that transported wood from Ler Doh for sale. According to the community member who took these photos, they were stopped by Ler Doh Operations Commander Hla Htway, at Ler Doh and Pee Pleh areas, because the soldiers had requested that rations be loaded onto the trucks and sent to Muh Theh military camp, but the villagers refused. [Photos: KHRG]

### **Bridge opening ceremony (Sittaung Bridge opening ceremony, Nat Than Kwin)**

On September 29<sup>th</sup> 2012, the national government came and opened the Sittaung Bridge joining Nat Than Kwin and Kwin Chaung Wa, and the ceremony for the bridge was held on this day. The bridge began to be built in 2010, and building this bridge destroyed the villagers' houses (farming places) and [villagers] had to move their houses, but the country government does not give any compensation for the villagers' damages.



The above photos were taken on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 and show the opening ceremony of Sittaung Bridge, which crosses the Sittaung River and joins Nat Than Kwin and Kwin Chaung Wa towns. According to the community member, the leaders who attended the ceremony were Bago Region Minister U Nyan Win, Security and Border Affairs Minister U That Htun, Minister of Electric Power U Baby Ohn, Minister of Ethnic Affairs U Joo Bi Sa Hla, an officer from the regional police and members of the regional supreme legislative body. For the ceremony, Bago Region Minister U Nyan Win gave a speech. The people who attended the ceremony walked on the bridge

following the opening ceremony. [Photos: KHRG]

### Opening a liaison office

Starting from April 7<sup>th</sup> 2012, the KNU and the national government held a meeting and opened a liaison office in Ler Doh,<sup>4</sup> and opened the office (temporarily) in the Solidarity [Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP)] office. On September 29<sup>th</sup> 2012, the Burma government repaired it and transferred it to people in charge of the KNU (liaison Office) and to the KNU Brigade #3.<sup>5</sup> When transferring this KNU (liaison office), it [the ceremony] included the Burma leaders, who were the Security and Border affairs Minister, U That Htun from Bago Division, Bago Division Minister for electric power, U Baby Ohn, Minister of Ethnic Affairs, U Ju Bi Sa Hla, and the Bago Division Senator and Chairman [U Win Tin]. The ones who accepted the office, from the KNU side, were Governor Hser Gay, Governor K’Neh Htoo and the person in charge of communication, Commander Maw Aye Thay. Firstly, they open the ceremony with drums, horns and the Karen culture, [then] Thai cultural dancing. Minister U That Htun gave a speech, and Minister U Ju Bi Sa Hla gave a speech.



The above photos were taken on September 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 and show the ceremony where the KNU liaison office in Ler Doh Township was transferred to KNU leaders. In the ceremony, the Security and Border affairs Minister from Bago Division, U That Htun, and Minister of Ethnic Affairs U Ju Bi Sa Hla addressed those who attended the ceremony. During the ceremony, the government administrators transferred documents and materials to the KNU Brigade #3 leaders. Leaders from both groups also met inside the office and then joined together in conversations over a meal. [Photos: KHRG]

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<sup>4</sup> KHRG previously reported on a May 28<sup>th</sup> 2012 meeting, which also included the Norwegian delegates: Norwegian State Secretary Torgeir Larsen, the Norwegian Ambassador to Thailand, Cambodia and Burma, Katja Christina Nordgaard, and head of the Norway-backed Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI), Charles Petrie. See “Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Moo, Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, January to June 2012,” KHRG, October 2012.

<sup>5</sup> Brigade 3 corresponds to Nyaunglebin District.

### **Tatmadaw activity**

There is no Burma military that is active in the region to attack or to build a new military camp, but they only travel on the road and they rotate frequently. On October 2012, the government who stays in the mountain [area], and set up their camp there, came and repaired the road in Than Boh for [sending] food. They then went to Muh Theh in October with three of their road construction vehicles, including two [Caterpillar] D4's and one [Caterpillar] D7. The D7 was hit by a KNU landmine on the border of Meh Theh [village], Ler Doh Township, in Day Law Plaw area. When their road construction vehicle was hit by a landmine, the Burma military stopped at once, but on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012, they continued forward towards Brigade #5.<sup>6</sup>

### **Civilians' situation and livelihood**

The livelihood of the civilians from K'Ser Klah region is going well. Because there are no Burma military activities, they can travel and work smoothly. In their work, there are only damages caused by nature. In Plaw region, because it has been flooding for two months, a lot of paddy died and the villagers are facing difficulties.

### **Norway Pilot Program**

Starting from August 8<sup>th</sup> 2012, the Norwegian government started to send rice to Kheh Der village tract. After sending [rice] for three months, they then stopped. We have to see what situation is going to happen in the future, for what their project will be in the future.



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<sup>6</sup> Brigade 5 corresponds to Papun District.



The above photos were taken on September 15<sup>th</sup> 2012 during the period when the Myanmar Peace Support Initiative (MPSI) was sending rations, such as the sacks of rice in the bottom right photo, to Muh Theh village. The community member who took these photos reported that during the trip, they repaired part of the road.  
*[Photos: KHRG]*

## **Conclusion**

The above reports are the real things that happened in our region. The Burma military and the people in charge are always corrupt. Currently, because the KNU and the Burma military entered the ceasefire, the civilians can travel freely and the villagers are very delighted for this. The villagers are the ones who have suffered from the conflict for a long time, and because the national government met with the KNU, they are very glad. If there is any difficulty, they go and report to the KNU liaison office.

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

- “Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Township, November 2012 to January 2013,” (April 2013)
- “Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Ler Doh Township, May to July 2012,” (March 2013)
- “Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Moo Township, June to November 2012,” (December 2012)
- “Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Moo, Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee Townships, January to June 2012,” (October 2012)
- “Nyaunglebin Situation Update: Kyauk Kyi Township, July 2012,” (September 2012)

- “Sustained Tatmadaw resupply operations in Thaton, Nyaunglebin and Papun during ceasefire,”(May 2012)

