



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

---

**News Bulletin**

March 7, 2013 / KHRG #2013-B7

---

**Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships,  
September to December 2012**

---

*This report includes a situation update submitted to KHRG in January 2013 by a community member, who describes events occurring in Papun District during December 2012. Specific abuses include arbitrary arrest of a villager by a KNLA officer, Border Guard demands for money, labour, and items, religious discrimination by the Border Guard and a Buddhist monk, violent abuse, looting and movement restrictions through road closures. The community member reports how one KNLA Commander named Saw Hpah Mee arrested and violently abused villager Saw M---, as well as shooting one of his cows, while Saw M--- was travelling to trade cows in Bu Tho Township, on the Thailand-Burma border, but was unaware that the road he used was closed. This report also describes how Border Guard Battalion #1014 soldiers arrested a Muslim villager who was selling his cows on the Thai border, and subsequently looted his money, and how Border Guard Battalion #1013 soldiers forced villagers to work for them and restricting them from trading. Also described in the report is a meeting held on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2012, during which a Buddhist monk informed villagers of four rules that were created to prohibit Buddhists from interacting with Muslims, which were distributed by the Border Guard. Villagers then reported this to the KNLA and the Tatmadaw, who subsequently held a meeting regarding the rules and explained that religious discrimination should not happen. Details on the incident are published in "Incident Report: Religious discrimination and restrictions in Papun District, September 2012," KHRG, March 2013.*

---

**Situation Update | Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, Papun District  
(September to December 2012)**

*The following situation update was written by a community member 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.<sup>1</sup> This report was received along with other information from Papun District, including five incident reports and 39 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

---

<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.

<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

## Problems that happened in the country between December 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 to December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012

Problems in the region happened in T--- and Meh Pree village tracts, Bu Tho Township. In Dwe Lo Township, they occurred in S--- and K'Ter Tee village tracts. The problems that occurred between December 4<sup>th</sup> 2012 and December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 were:

- (1) Border Guard (BGF) Battalion #1013 and #1014<sup>3</sup> forced the villagers to do labour, tortured<sup>4</sup> the villagers and also looted villagers' things;
- (2) A group of KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] soldiers tortured villagers and looted villagers' things; and
- (3) A problem related to religion nearly happened in K'Ter Tee village.

Regarding the problems that we have reported, some were caused by the Border Guard, some were caused by the KNLA soldiers, who are the KNU's [Karen National Union's] people, and some were caused by religious leaders who believe in their religion extremely (religious extremist).

---

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, "Incident Report: Religious discrimination and restrictions in Papun District, September 2012" KHRG, February 2013

<sup>3</sup> KHRG received reports on the activities of Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014, which has been active along the border of Papun and Thaton Districts. Battalion #1014 is commanded by Major Maung Chit, which is also sometimes spelled Maw Hsee, whom is allegedly to be a part of an advisory committee that oversaw the 2010 transformation of the DKBA into the BGF, and assumed responsibility for business activities for the group. See "The Situation In Karen State After the Elections," EBO (Euro-Burma Office) Analysis Paper No. 1/2011, April 2011. More recently, on August 5th 2012, the KNLA and BGF #1014 engaged in a fire fight in Mae Seik village, Papun Township, despite the terms of the ceasefire. KNLA and Government's Militia Fight – Four Soldiers Killed Karen News, August 7th 2012. For additional articles discussing abuses perpetrated by Border Guard #1014, see these KHRG reports: "Torture and killing in Thaton District," KHRG, October 2012; "Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, received April 2012," KHRG, June 2012; "Papun Interview: Saw T---, August 2011," January 2012; "Thaton Situation Update: June to October 2011," KHRG November 2011; *All the Information I've Given You, I faced it myself*, KHRG December 2011, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> While the KHRG community member uses the word 'torture' to describe the abuse perpetrated by Border Guard Force and the KNLA soldiers in this report, there is no indication that the soldiers were attempting to extract information from the villagers they were abusing and, therefore, the incidents described in this report are not likely to meet the internationally-accepted definition of torture. However, that the community member chose to use the Karen phrase, 'ta ma er mah ner ta' meaning torture, as opposed to ma p'yweh, meaning 'abuse', or ma na ma hphaw, meaning 'torment' to describe the event, suggests the severity of the incident justifies this classification. The incident regarding violent abuse by the KNLA commander is also described in, "Incident Report: Violent abuse in Papun District, October 2012," KHRG, April 2013.

Why did they create the problems? There was no exact purpose or situation. They have no understanding of the political plan and human rights, so they have committed human rights [violations].

Firstly, regarding the problem that happened between the KNLA and the villagers, this kind of problem does not happen frequently. This time, we know about that and we feel really sorry for the villager. A P--- villager, Saw M---, said, “*Until now, my hands can't hold things very well because they tied me very tightly.*” [The reason] why they tied him in that way began like this: Starting from K'Ter Tee village (K'Ter Tee village is located at the Papun-K'Ma Moo vehicle road); if we go to the eastern part, we can arrive to Thailand. If we actually go, we have to pass the villages, which are Meh K'Naw village, Htee Baw Koh village, Meh Pree Hkee village and Meh Lah village. Then, we will arrive at Meh Hsee village, which is beside the Khoh Loh *kloh* [Salween River]. If we go across the Khoh Loh *kloh*, we can reach Meh T'Waw region in Thailand. A road is located there.

On the road, black market traders sell cows and buffalos. Beside the road, the ones who travel are the armed groups. Sometimes [they are] the DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army], sometimes the KNLA, and sometimes BGF [Border Guard] travel there. The people who live in that region are mostly KNLA soldiers, under Commander Saw Hpah Mee, and in a group of his people. Saw Hpah Mee is a person from Brigade #5 [KNLA/ Papun District]. He lives beside the roads in Htoh Hkay Koh village, Htee Th'Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Papun] District. While Saw Hpah Mee is there, he does not need any permission from leaders [the KNLA 5<sup>th</sup> Brigade headquarters] and he can do what he wants; he opens [the road] and closes it frequently. Even though he opens and closes the road frequently, he never informs people in advance. Therefore, Saw M--- did not know that Saw Hpah Mee had closed the road when he drove his cows to the Thai border.

While Saw M--- and a herd of his cows arrived in Htoh Say Koh village, Htee Th'Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District, they encountered Commander Saw Hpah Mee. As soon as Saw Hpah Mee met Saw M---, he became angry with Saw M--- and said, “*I have already closed the road and what have you come to do?*” Then, Saw M--- answered that he came because he did not know about that [road closure], but Saw Hpah Mee was not satisfied with that [answer].

Whatever he [Saw M---] said, it did not work and none of us could tell [how to satisfy] him, so Commander Saw Hpah Mee arrested Saw M---. After he arrested him, Saw Hpah Mee punched Saw M---'s face three times. In the evening, Saw Hpah Mee tied

Saw M--- under someone's house. While Saw Hpah Mee tied Saw M---, he went and shot Saw M---'s largest ox to eat. The ox cost 500,000 kyat (US \$584.11).<sup>5</sup> Therefore, Saw M--- not only has to suffer from the people who tortured him, he also had to treat [them with] his big ox.

Another case is related to the Border Guard Battalion #1014 Commander Saw Maung Chit's<sup>6</sup> person, Saw Maw Nee, or Maw Nee Say. This problem happened on November 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012. The problem happened like this: the group [of Border Guard soldiers] under Commander Maung Chit, from Border Guard Battalion #1014, came and lived in Meh Pree village. Therefore, the black market traders who sell cows and buffalos on the Thailand-Burma border have to give taxes to the Border Guard soldiers.

Once, a Muslim man, Saw A--- from K'Ter Tee village, gave 200,000 kyat (US \$233.64) to Commander Saw Nyo Thay as tax in order to go and sell cows in Thailand. *Thara*<sup>7</sup> Saw Maw Nee, or Saw Maw Nee Say, did not know about this case. When Saw A--- sold cows in Thailand, Saw A--- did not go through the Border Guard. For him, [he thought] he did not need to go through [him]. Therefore, he went directly to Thailand border. As soon as *Thara* Saw Maw Nee, or Saw Maw Nee Say, knew about that, he asked Saw A--- to come back at once. When Saw A--- arrived back in Meh Pree village, before he could say anything, Saw Maw Nee punched him several times and demanded 300,000 kyat (US \$350.47). Therefore, we can see that the Border Guard #1014 oppressed people and looted people's money.

The Border Guard #1013 Battalion Commander Saw La Kyeh's people, Commander Saw Htee Theh Htoo and Saw Htoh La, asked the civilians do forced labour. The problems happened on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2012. On the same day, K---'s boat came from W-- village and would go to K'Ma Moo. On the way, it had to pass the K'Ter Tee boat quay first. When K---'s boat stopped along the K'Ter Tee village boat quay, the Border Guard Sergeant Major, Saw Htee Theh Htoo, put Border Guard rations in K---'s boat. After he put it all in, he told them [the boat owner] to go and send the rations to the Meh Pree

---

<sup>5</sup> As of February 13<sup>th</sup> 2013, all conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 856 kyat to the US \$1. This reflects new measures taken by Burma's central bank on April 2<sup>nd</sup> 2012 to initiate a managed float of the kyat, thus replacing the previous fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1.

<sup>6</sup> Commander Maung Chit's name is sometimes spelled "Maw Hsee." Commander Maung Chit is not to be confused with Maung Chit Thu, who is a top-tier officer in the Border Guard, while Maung Chit is the commander for Battalion #1014. Maung Chit Thu is part of the intelligence division for the Border Guard and not much is currently known about his actual role in the command structure. In December 2012, KHRG verified that these two names do not refer to the same officer. For more information on Maung Chit Thu's authority, see this KHRG report: "Pa'an Situation Update: June to August 2011," KHRG, October 2011.

<sup>7</sup> *Thara* is a Karen term used for any teacher, pastor, or any person to whom one wishes to show respect.

village boat quay. The Border Guard soldiers asked the people to go and send their rations but they did not give any wages. For this case, the community member<sup>8</sup> himself saw it.



The above photos were taken by a community member on December 5<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Bu Tho Township, Papun District, and show a villager driving his boat that, according to the community member who took these photos, was commandeered to transport rations by Saw Htoh La Thay of the Border Guard Battalion #1013. As can be seen in the top two photos, the boat is being used to transport what appears to be a sack of rice, a container of oil, a basket of vegetables and other goods. [Photos: KHRG]

Another problem was a religious problem that happened on September 10<sup>th</sup> 2012 at Meh Baw Monastery in Hpa-an Town. The monk called a meeting, and in the meeting they made four decisions. The decisions were:

- (1) Prohibition on selling orchards and farms to Muslims.
- (2) Prohibition on Buddhists marrying Muslims.
- (3) Buddhists are not allowed to buy and sell things in Muslims' shops. They have to patronize only Buddhists shops.

---

<sup>8</sup> The community member who wrote this report is referring to himself in the third-person.

(4) Prohibition on Buddhists using their name to buy things for Muslims.

The paper [leaflet] that they distributed arrived in K'Ter Tee village, K'Ma Moo town and Papun town. The Border Guard<sup>9</sup> went and stuck the papers beside the road and on the trees, then they told the villagers about these [rules]. The Muslim people and Buddhists dare not communicate with each other, and a riot nearly happened. The KNU leaders and the (operations commander from) K'Ter Tee village military camp, explained to them [the rules]; the Muslim people and the Buddhists communicate again as in the past.



The photo was taken by a community member on December 9<sup>th</sup> 2012, at H---'s monastery in H--- village, Lay Poh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Papun District, and shows Saw E---, who is a different monk from the one who called the meeting about restrictions on Muslims in Hpa-an town. According to the community member who took this photo, the monk explained the problems he perceived regarding Muslim people, and the four policies that Buddhist people in the area are supposed to follow as ordered by the monastery regarding Muslim people.

[Photo: KHRG]

We also know about a threat [incident that occurred] on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012. The case happened in B--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District. A B--- villager, Saw Y---, trades and sells bricks to the [builders of] brick buildings. The quality of Saw Y---'s bricks are good and he sells them at a cheap price: 45 kyat (US \$0.05) per brick. The [Tatmadaw] Operation Commander Saw Aung Toe's people [soldiers] from Operation Command #1, from Papun Town, also sell bricks. The qualities of the bricks of the operations commander are not good and they are also expensive: one brick for 50 kyat (US \$0.06), so buyers do not buy from the operations commander. Therefore, on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012, Operations Commander Saw Aung Toe asked his soldier to go and call Saw Y--- to come to him, and told him, "*If you compete with the people who are stronger than you and who are bigger than you, one day, what will become of you? If it is possible, don't do your work of trading and selling bricks anymore.*" If we look at the conversation, the words are threatening towards Saw Y---.

---

<sup>9</sup> In a separate incident report, this community member documented testimony from a Saw W---, a Muslim man from M--- village. Saw W--- reported that Company Commander Saw Bah Yoh, from Border Guard Battalion #1013, was responsible for having the leaflets posted. See "Incident Report: Religious discrimination and restrictions in Papun District, September 2012," KHRG, March 2013.

Making these problems disappear is not easy work. There would also be human rights violations in the future. Mostly, the Burmese citizens are always with a dictatorship and they know that what the government does is right and true. They do not know about human rights yet, and therefore, everybody's work always violates each other's rights.

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

- "Incident Report: Religious discrimination and restrictions in Papun District, September 2012," (March 2013)
- "Papun Situation Update: Dwe Lo Township, July to October," (February 2013)
- "Papun Situation Update: Lu Thaw Township, March 2012 to November 2012," (February 2013)
- "Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, June 2012," (October 2012)
- "Villager shot and killed in Papun District," (September 2012)

