



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Incident Report**

August 27, 2014 / KHRG #13-59-11

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**Hpa-an Incident Report: Stone mining damages  
villagers' fields in Paingkyon Township, March 2013**

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*This Incident Report describes the destruction of farmland belonging to M--- villagers as a result of stone mining in March 2013. The mining work in question was carried out by Border Guard Force Officer (Battalion Commander) Lah Thay without the consent of villagers living in the area. Villagers living in A--- village expressed concerns that should the mining project continue, their farm plots would be completely destroyed.*

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**Incident Report | Paingkyon Township, Hpa-an District (March 2013)**

*The following Incident Report was written by a community member in Hpa-an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local 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 in June 2013 along with other information from Hpa-an District, including one other incident report, one situation update and 319 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

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**Part 1 – Incident Details**

<b>Type of Incident</b>	BGF mining stone and damaging farms
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	March 1 <sup>st</sup> 2013
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	M--- village, Paw village tract, Paingkyon Township, Hpa-an District

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual incidents of abuse 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 incident reports, community members are encouraged to document incidents of abuse that they consider to be important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

<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/Myanmar, 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. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's Website.

Victim Information				
<b>Name</b>	Naw T---			
<b>Age</b>	60			
<b>Sex</b>	Female			
<b>Nationality</b>	Pwo Karen			
<b>Family</b>	Married			
<b>Occupation</b>	Farming			
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist			
<b>Position</b>	Villager			
<b>Village</b>	M---			

Perpetrator Information				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Officer Lah Thay	Battalion Commander	BGF [Border Guard Force] <sup>3</sup> Battalion #1017	Ko Ko	Maung Chit Thu

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

### **1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.**

On April 6<sup>th</sup> 2013, I went to M--- village and met with some of M---'s villagers, including a farm owner who has suffered because of this incident. I asked her about the stone mining occurring beside her farm. She told me that Officer [Battalion Commander] Lah Thay came and mined for stone beside her farm and he did not inform her. She told me that she dares not tell anyone because she worries that people will harm her.

### **2. Explain how the source verified this information.**

Regarding this incident, the female farm owner worries that if BGF Officer [Battalion Commander] Lah Thay continues mining [in the same area] the cliff will completely erode and destroy her farm. Therefore, she told me what she saw and the information is true.

<sup>3</sup> Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry or light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

### **Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident**

**Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.**

The incident happened on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2013, beside M--- village, usually called S--- [by local people]. BGF Officer [Battalion Commander] Lah Thay went to mine stone and rock to sell to road construction [companies]. He hired Burmese people to come and split the stone. He hires them for daily [labour] and pays them per basket. The place which is shown in the photos [below] is located above Naw T---'s farm and is where they started working. If they continue to mine there, the entire cliff will erode and damage [Naw T---'s] farm. *Lay Hkaw Htees* are farms that are located along the bottom of a cliff. Those farms are not owned by one person, instead there are many owners. They [farmers] work on them one [villager] per plot. The other land owners [next to Naw T---'s plot] are also worried, [as their plots were damaged too]. This land owner [Naw T---] tried to report it to the village leaders and the [local] BGF leader whom she knows. She asked people [village elders] to assist her to tell the BGF Officer [Battalion Commander] Lah Thay to consider [the damage done] and provide fair compensation for her farm. However, I have not heard any answer [about whether they will receive compensation] yet. They [villagers] all said that they would find a way to get compensation for their farms [which were damaged]. Moreover, all of the farm owners would gather together and go to the BGF's top leaders. For their security, they will rely on some BGF leaders whom they are friendly with and also the village leaders. They will also inform the [local] monk about the incident. This is one of their strategies when they are suffering from difficult [issues].

### **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

**Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.**

The farm owners allowed us to use this information. The reason is because currently they are not afraid of the armed actors like they were in the past. So they asked us to help them stop this incident [from happening again] or help them receive compensation. Some farm owners have already attended a village agency workshop conducted by KHRG.<sup>4</sup> They will consider it [the incident] and write up a report and share it in future workshops.

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<sup>4</sup> KHRG facilitates village agency workshops at the community level which provide a space for villagers to share their experiences and support their self-protection strategies by gaining knowledge about international human rights standards and available national mechanisms that they can use to claim their rights.



These photos were taken by a KHRG researcher on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2013 in M--- village, Paw village tract, Paingkyon Township, Hpa-an District. They depict the cliff erosion next to Naw T---'s farm plot due to stone mining conducted by BGF Officer Lah Thay. [Photos: KHRG]

Further background reading on the situation in Hpa-an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Hpa-an Short Update: Hti Lon Township, March 2014," (August 2014)
- "Hpa-an Short Update: Don Yin Township, March 2014," (July 2014)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe, Don Yin and Hti Lon townships, April 2014," (July 2014)
- "Negative impacts of dam building and drug use in Paingkyon and Nabu townships, Hpa-an District," (May 2014)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Nabu Township, May 2012," (July 2014)

## Hpa-an District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)