



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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## News Bulletin

November 14, 2013 / KHRG #13-7-I5

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### **Hpapun Incident Report: Tatmadaw soldiers threaten brickmaker in Bu Tho Township**

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*This Incident Report describes an event that occurred on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 in Hpapun District, when Tatmadaw soldiers threatened a villager from H--- in Meh Klaw village tract to discontinue his brickmaking business. Previously, the Tatmadaw Operations Commander's soldiers from IB #19, LIB #341 and LIB #434 and the villager, S---, all made bricks. However, because S---'s bricks were higher quality and cheaper than those sold by Tatmadaw soldiers, local constructors began to only buy S---'s bricks. The community member reported that S--- was called to the Operations Commander's office and was threatened by the soldiers to stop making the bricks so that his business would no longer be in competition with the soldiers' brickmaking operations.*

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### **Incident report | Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District (December 2012)**

*The following Incident Report was written by a community member 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 in January 2013 along with other information from Hpapun District, including four other incident reports, one situation update and 39 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

### **Part 1 – Incident(s) detail**

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG incident reports are written or gathered by community member in Hpapun District who have been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma 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, 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 categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's redesigned Website.



This photo was taken on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 in H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. The photo shows the brick maker, S---, who described his experience working as a brick maker and being threatened by the Tatmadaw Colonel, Aung Toe. [Photo: KHRG]

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Explicit threat
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	December 29 <sup>th</sup> 2012
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District

Victim Information								
Name	Age	Sex	Ethnicity	Religion	Family	Occupation	Responsible	Village
S---	31	Male	Shan	Buddhist	Yes	Brick maker	No	H---

Perpetrator Information				
Name	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander
Aung Toe	Colonel	No #1 Military Operations Command, Hpapun	Operations Commander's Office No #1 Military Operations Command, Hpapun Town	Headquarter Commander, Eastern headquarter

## Part 2 - Information Quality

### 1. Explain the specific manner how you collected this information.

The problem in H--- village is that the people who have weapons [armed groups] oppress the villagers. The villagers are saying this because of an incident regarding brick making. The Operations Commander's soldiers make bricks and a villager, S---, also makes bricks. S--- sells a brick for 4 kyat and 50 cents [US \$0.0046]<sup>3</sup> but the Operations Commander's soldiers sell one for 5 kyat [US \$.005], so no one buy theirs. So, the Operations Commander's soldiers called S--- to the Operations Command Office and threatened S--- to make him stop making bricks.

### 2. Explain how the source verified information accuracy.

<sup>3</sup> As of October 25, 2013, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 971.99 Kyat to the US \$1.

The community member's father passed away, so he visited his mother and met with S--- in H--- village. While the community member was having a conversation with S---, he learned of this incident. It's the problem that S-- has faced himself.

### **PART 3 – Incident Details**

**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 attach if needed.**

The incident happened on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 and it happened in H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw [Hpapun] District. Hpapun Operations Commander threatened a villager [named] S---, and the reason why they threatened him is described below.

Every building in Hpapun town needs bricks, so the Hpapun Operations Commander's soldiers from IB [Infantry Battalion] #19, LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #341 and LIB #434, with the combination of the Operations Commander's other soldiers, make bricks and sell them to constructors.

This year, 2012, no one in any of the battalions have been making the bricks, so the constructors couldn't obtain bricks anywhere. Therefore, they asked the villagers to make more bricks to sell to them. Therefore, S--- and his younger brother who is called T--- or P--- from H--- village made bricks to sell to the constructors. S--- makes the bricks carefully and with enough heat that is needed to make the bricks, so the bricks are well made and firm. They do not easily break and, moreover, their structure is beautiful. S--- sells a brick for 4 kyat and 50 cents in Burmese currency. The Operations Commander and his soldiers sell a brick for 5 kyat and the quality of their bricks is also not good; the constructors don't buy their bricks anymore and only buy from S---.

When all of constructors only bought the bricks from S---, the Operations Commander, Colonel Aung Toe, and his soldiers couldn't sell the bricks anymore. As a result, on December 29<sup>th</sup> 2012 in the afternoon, one of the Operations Commander's soldiers from the Operations Command Office arrived and beckoned S---, and S--- followed him. When he arrived at the Operations Command office, the soldier threatened S---: *"You should know who you are and the people who are stronger than you or more powerful than you by yourself. If possible, don't ever make bricks again."*

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

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

The information can be used as it is needed.

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

- "Incident Report: Monk orders forced labour for bridge construction, Hpapun District," (October 2013)
- "BGF #1014 Warrant Officer injures villagers and steals property in Hpapun District, January and May 2013," (October 2013)
- "Papun Situation Update: Dwe Lo Township, March 2012 to March 2013," (July 2013)
- "BGF and KNLA grenades injure villagers and their children in Papun District," (July 2013)
- "Incident Report: Villager tortured by Tatmadaw commanders in Papun District, December 2012," (June 2013)

