



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Complaint Letter

March 29, 2014 / KHRG #13-95-CL1

Complaint letter to Kayin State Minister requesting permission to rebuild Taung Na village

The Complaint Letter below was written by former Taung Na villagers and sent to Kayin State Minister U Zaw Min. Taung Na villagers are currently residing in the Nabu village monastery, as their former village was confiscated and used as an army camp by the Tatmadaw for the last two decades. In the letter, the displaced villagers request permission to build a new village to compensate for the confiscation of their old village by the Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalions (LIBs) #548 and #549.

Complaint Letter | Nabu Township, Hpa-an District (October 2013)¹

To:
U Zaw Min
State Minister
Kayin [Karen] State

Subject: Request for permission to rebuild Taung Na village

Regarding the above subject, when [Tatmadaw]² LIB³ [Light Infantry Battalions] #548 and #549 came and built their new army camp, the Taung Na villagers lost their village and currently live temporarily in the Taung Na Taw Ya Monastery.

Because it is not appropriate for Taung Na civilians to live long term on monastery territory and religious grounds, we plead that you give us permission to build a new Taung Na village alongside the road from LIB #548's pagoda to Kwet Thit Bridge.

U B--- (elders of the community, Taung Na village)
Displaced Taung Na villagers (representative)
Na Bu *tent nel* [village tract], Kawkareik Township⁴

¹ This Complaint Letter was submitted to KHRG in October 2013 and is presented here, translated into English exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security. It was received along with one Situation Update and 307 photographs.

² The Tatmadaw is the Burmese state military.

³ Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw); 500 soldiers but most in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers.

⁴ According to the locally-defined Karen districts map, this incident occurred in Nabu Township, Hpa-an District. On the Burma government's map, this same area is known as Kawkareik Township.

Copy

- State Administrator, State General Administrator Department, Kayin State, Hpa-an Town
- State Land Registration Administrator, State Land Registration Department, Hpa-an Town
- Received

This complaint letter regards the T’Nay Hsah [Nabu] villagers [originally] from Taung Na village who live on monastery territory, which they refer to as a “refugee [displaced] settlement” with 38 houses in total. They have requested a permission letter from U Zaw Min [Kayin State Minister] to allow them to set up the location and build the [new] Taung Na village. All of the villagers are Karen people. Twenty years ago, when the military [Tatmadaw] confiscated their houses, lands, plantations and farms, they became refugees [displaced] on the monastery’s territory. They have had to hire [back] their own farms that the military confiscated from them in order to be able to make a living. Currently, the two groups [Tatmadaw battalions #548 and #549] reported in the letter have set up plots for them beside the army camp and they have to pay 50,000 kyat (US \$52)⁵ for one plot of land for a house. One villager reported that, *“There is no way we have to buy our own land for 50,000 kyat for one house [plot of] land. They confiscated a lot of our plantations and farms; they leased [sold] our land and we have to buy our own land. We need to find our friends [local and international supporters] who can help us. If we find them, we will tell them everything about this case.”*

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

- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- “Hpa-an Situation Update: Lu Pleh Township, 2012-2013,” (February 2014)
- “Hpa-an Interview: Saw N---, June 2012,” (October 2013)
- “Incident Report: Two Children Injured From DKBA and BGF Fighting in Hlaing Bwe, April 2013,” (October 2013)
- “Hpa-an Situation Update: T’nay Hsah Township, April 2013,” (October 2013)

⁵ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based at the May 21st 2014 official market rate of 965 kyat to the US \$1.

