



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

## Incident Report

September 5, 2014 / KHRG #14-34-I1

### **Dooplaya Incident Report: Villagers subjected to forced labour and degrading treatment by the Karen National Defence Organisation, March 2014**

*This Incident Report describes the subjection of 17 people to forced labour by Battalion #18 of the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) under the command of officer Wah Lone. After being arrested for cutting bamboo in an area in which the KNDO claimed it was prohibited, the victims were forced to collect firewood without payment for one and a half days, and one of them was tied with rope and forced to walk like a cow.*

#### **Incident Report | Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (March 2014)**

*The following Incident Report was written by a community member 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 2014 along with other information from Dooplaya District, including, nine interviews and 146 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

#### **Part 1 – Incident(s) Detail**

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Arrested by the KNDO [Karen National Defence Organisation] <sup>3</sup> while cutting bamboo.
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	March 4 <sup>th</sup> 2014
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	Meh Tha Raw Hkee, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District

<sup>1</sup> KHRG Incident Reports are written or gathered by a community member in Dooplaya District who has 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.

<sup>3</sup> The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

Victim Information				
<b>Name</b>	U---			
<b>Age</b>	37			
<b>Sex</b>	Male			
<b>Nationality</b>	Karen			
<b>Family</b>	Married			
<b>Occupation</b>	[Refugee] camp security			
<b>Religion</b>	Christian			
<b>Position</b>	Camp security; [position censored for security]			
<b>Village</b>	I--- Refugee camp			

Perpetrator Information				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Officer Wah Lone	Temporary platoon commander	KNDO	Meh Tha Raw Hkee	Major Hser Ka Lu, KNDO

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

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

The event happened like this: the victims arrived at Meh Tha Raw Hkee on March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2014 and cut bamboo, and some were taking a rest. *Bo* [officer] Wah Lone came with six people and arrested them while they were cutting bamboo. They were ordered to work and some people were also tied with rope.

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

Seventeen people suffered this abuse. These people are security men for I--- refugee camp [in Thailand]. So we can say that this is a true incident. O---, the leader of the I--- camp security group also submitted this case to the deputy commander in chief of the KNDO. [The community member who submitted this report conducted an interview with one of the victims, U---].

## **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 in Meh Tha Raw Hkee, Kawkareik Township, Dooطلا District in the area that is controlled by Battalion #18 [of the Karen National Defence Organisation], at 7:00 am on March 4<sup>th</sup> 2014. The problem happened when they [members of the security team from I--- refugee camp in Thailand] went [to Dooطلا District] to cut bamboo for the refugees in I--- refugee camp. There were 17 victims. One of the victims was tied with rope and lead as if he were a cow by a soldier going ahead of him while another soldier followed him holding a gun. U--- is the one who suffered it. The one who ordered it was officer Wah Lone and he said that they [the security team members] had been cutting bamboo in an [area where it was prohibited]. The security team leader, [Saw O---], replied that refugees [from I--- refugee camp sometimes go

there to cut bamboo], so it was not prohibited. They questioned the people who came and cut bamboo, asking if they were spies for the SPDC [Tatmadaw]<sup>4</sup> and if they had come to clean up their place [the local KNDO camp]. Then they arrested them and asked them who their leader was, and B---, [another member of the refugee camp security team] pointed at U---. Then, they [the KNDO officers] tied him [U---] with rope and cocked their guns and told him not to run, otherwise they would shoot him. They made them [all] lie face down for two hours after arresting them and then took them to a hill field and ordered them to collect firewood. They said that they would give them 100 baht (US \$3.12)<sup>5</sup> per day [as pay for working]. They let them eat at 12:00 pm. They had to eat their own rice. They started again at 3:00 pm and the work finished at 4:00 pm. They had to do it for one and a half days but they did not get any pay. All of their machetes were collected at night. They were guarded by the [KNDO] soldiers while they slept. But the 17 people did not say anything and did everything the soldiers asked. They submitted a [complaint] letter to the deputy commander in chief of the KNDO regarding this case. They submitted this case to the human rights group [KHRG] because they worried that the reputation of the KNU [Karen National Union] would be stained because of this person [officer Wah Lone]. Officer Wah Lone also told U--- to publish this case in the KIC [Karen Information Centre News, to imply that he did not care if people knew about it]. [The victims said that] the reputation of our nation would be stained if we have this kind person in us [in our army]. So they want him to be given proper punishment.

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

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

The victims allowed us to use this information and also requested that we publish it in KIC news. They said that they had not been killed by the SPDC soldiers [during the past conflict], and [therefore] now they would be happy to be killed by the KNDO, [a sarcastic challenge to the KNDO]. They requested that we censor their names and photos for their security.

Further background reading on the situation in Dooplaya District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik, Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi townships, March to May 2014,” (August 2014)
- “Dooplaya Interview: A---, September 2013,” (July 2014)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yaw Township, November to December 2013,” (July 2014)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi, Kawkareik and Kyonedoe townships, October 2013 to January 2014,” (July 2014)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Win Yaw Township, November to December 2013,” (July 2014)

<sup>4</sup> In Karen, the Burmese phrase *Na Ah Pa* (State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC) is commonly used to refer to the Burma government or to Burma’s state army, the Tatmadaw. Many Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) continue to use that phrase, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011; see: “[Mission Accomplished as SPDC ‘dissolved’](#),” *Myanmar Times*, April 4-10<sup>th</sup> 2011.

<sup>5</sup> The conversion estimate for the Baht in this report is based on the September 5<sup>th</sup> official market rate of 32.08 Baht to the US \$1.

## Dooطلا District



## Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)