



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

June 10, 2015 / KHRG #14-95-S1

Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, June to November 2014

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District between June and November 2014, including land confiscation, militarisation, landmines, and provides an update on education.

- *The Burma/Myanmar government's land utilisation officers cooperated with Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #434 in the confiscation of land, including villages' farms, on August 17th 2014.*
 - *Between September and October 2014, the Burma/Myanmar government took over the Kay Doh area in the Ta La A'Aw Hkoh region for the construction of a dam on the Salween River.*
 - *In November 2014, LIB #341 planned to distribute solar panels to villagers within their area of operation.*
 - *There was a landmine explosion on November 1st 2014 at Klaw Poh Mee Tatmadaw camp in Hkaw Poo village tract. The shrapnel from the landmine hit the eye of a villager's buffalo and blinded it.*
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Situation Update | Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District (June to November 2014)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in November 2014. It was written by a community member in Hpapun 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.¹ This report was received along with other information from Hpapun District, including seven interviews and 36 photographs²

Introduction

[This report covers events] in Bu Tho Township from June until November 2014. As of November 10th 2014, the issue of human rights violations had not been resolved because Burmese soldiers have not ceased their activities and plan many different [operations in Karen areas]. Between September and October 2014 the [key] event that took place was the Burma government taking over the Ta La A'Aw Hkoh region for the construction of a dam in the Kay Doh area [on the Salween River].

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights

² 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.

Main Subject [Land Confiscation]

The State Peace and Development Council's [SPDC]³ military was active from September to October 2014. The battalions that are based in Hpapun [District], such as Infantry Battalion [IB]⁴ #19, Light Infantry Battalion [LIB]⁵ #642, LIB #340, LIB #341 and LIB #434, have been active and the soldiers who are [posted] at the camp's gate [as guards] are armed, which [makes it] frightening for villagers to move around. In addition, on August 17th 2014, LIB #434 and [Burma/Myanmar] government land officers from the Farm Utilisation Department cooperated [with each other] and confiscated land, including villagers' farms.



Both of these photos were taken on August 17th 2014. The photo on the left shows individuals from LIB #434, the government land registration department and villagers from W--- village gathered together to examine military zones which were forcibly confiscated in the past. The land that you can see in this picture was confiscated from Saw A---, who lives in S--- village. He was not informed or consulted by either the Tatmadaw or the government when his land was confiscated. The second photo was taken discreetly when the Burma/Myanmar government's land registration department returned to ask land owners whose land was not included in the confiscation to sign a document in order to protect their land from future confiscation.

In November 2014, LIB #341 planned to go around to villages within arm's reach [under their control] to distribute solar panels. They also requested that village heads tell [them about] anything that they need help with so that they can assist them [villagers]. [Also] in November 2014, an unknown officer [from] LIB #341 asked Saw G---, a villager from W-- village, to hold a tin of milk while the officer acted as if he was giving it to the villager. [The officer] asked his man [a private from LIB #341] to take a photo [of him with Saw G--] but [in the end] he did not give it [tin of milk] to the villager. The villager [Saw G---] said, "I have no idea what he was trying to do."

On November 1st 2014, there was a landmine explosion at Klaw Poh Mee [camp], Hkaw Poo village tract, beside the road. The [shrapnel from the] landmine hit the eye of a

³ In Karen, the Burmese phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) is commonly used to refer to the Burma/Myanmar government or to Burma/Myanmar'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 4-10th 2011.

⁴ Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for garrison duty but sometimes used in offensive operations.

⁵ Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

villager's buffalo and blinded it. The [landmine] explosion took place close to the Burmese [Tatmadaw] temporary camp on the outskirts of Klaw Poh Mee camp and villagers could not identify exactly which [armed] group planted it.

Civilian activity

Civilians in Bu Tho Township mostly do farming and hill farming. In 2014, the thing [animal] that destroyed the paddies were the rats, [while] the paddy [also] did not produce much rice and insects consumed [much of] the rice. The weather was [also] inclement. In a six [month] period [June to November] there was no activity such as military attacks or the [destruction of] property. [However], some villagers who work [on farms] close to the Burma [Tatmadaw] military camp worry, remain afraid and work quickly because the Burma [Tatmadaw] military situation is not like before. [Now], they move around more often with the military tools [weapons] and they are [sometimes] in position [on duty] at night time.

Children and their education

[Most] children are getting the [opportunities] that they are supposed to receive regarding education, but some children no longer have an opportunity [to learn] as they wish because their parents cannot afford further education for them. The reason why they cannot support their children [in further education] is because of livelihood problems.

Conclusion

In this situation update, I [have] mentioned about the armed group situation since November 2014. The armed groups have a different perspective [on the current situation in comparison to local villagers]. Now, mostly the civilians are hoping that the peace will be a real peace.

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

- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, November 2013 to January 2014," (June 2015)
- "Hpapun Interview: Daw A---, July 2013," (May 2015)
- "Villager accused of witchcraft is killed by Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) soldiers, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, November 2014," (May 2015)
- "Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2014," (April 2015)
- "Home guards attacked by Tatmadaw in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District, February 2015," (April 2015)

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



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