



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Short Update**

January 7, 2016 / KHRG #15-56-D1

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## **Hpapun Short Update: Bu Tho Township, May and June 2015**

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*This Short Update describes events occurring in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, in May and June 2015, including maiming due to a landmine explosion, forced labour, and military activities.*

- Saw A---, a 40-year-old villager from B--- village, Hkaw Poo village tract, Bu Tho Township, stepped on a landmine reportedly planted by the KNU between Y--- forest and Z--- forest while he was hunting on May 16<sup>th</sup> 2015. He was subsequently hospitalised and had his leg amputated.
  - On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2015, a group of Border Guard Force (BGF) soldiers from Battalion #1014 ordered the villagers of C--- village, Meh Pree village tract, Bu Tho Township, to help them with general camp support such as carrying water and collecting vegetables and firewood.
  - Thirty-five Tatmadaw soldiers from Light Infantry Division (LID) #22 and two other BGF soldiers came into D--- village, Kyaw Pah village tract, Bu Tho Township, on June 14<sup>th</sup> 2015. They were carrying heavy weapons with them while crossing the KNLA delimited territory to show off their presence, since they heard there was a Karen armed groups meeting taking place at the time in E--- village.
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## **Short Update | Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District (May and June 2015)**

*The following Short Update was received by KHRG in June 2015. 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.<sup>1</sup>*

### **[Biographical information of villager injured by landmine:]**

**Name:** Saw A---

**Age:** 40 years old

**Village:** B--- village

**Family:** Has five children, two female and three male

**Landmine injury location:** [Somewhere] Between Y--- [forest] and Z--- [forest]

**The distance between where the incident happened and his hill farm is:** 150 yards

**Landmine incident date:** Four in the evening, it was on Saturday (May [16<sup>th</sup>] 2015)

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma/Myanmar to document individual human rights abuses 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 situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

When he was first injured by the landmine, people did not dare to go and get him [from the location where he was injured]. Later on he was taken to Hpapun [Ka Tin Ta Ya] Hospital at 6 pm and he arrived at Hpapun Ka Tin Ta Ya Hospital [shortly] after 11 pm. His leg was amputated at 1 am in the morning on Monday. When he was taken to the hospital there were 20 villagers who accompanied him to the hospital. In the evening, after his leg was amputated, the Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers came to him and brought him some juice and snacks in a hand basket and they said, *“That was not our landmine, if it were our landmine you’d already be dead.”* I also asked Saw F---’s [Saw A---’s]<sup>2</sup> wife and she said that it was a KNU [Karen National Union] landmine.<sup>3</sup> She also said that she heard two other landmines had exploded after her husband was injured. She told me that another six landmines have been planted, as well. I asked her why and she replied that she doesn’t know. He [Saw A---] went to somewhere between Y--- [forest] and Z--- [forest] with a gun for [the purpose of] hunting and he still remembers that when he was injured, he was bleeding and his dog was licking his blood. Beside the location where he got injured by the landmine there is a road that Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers travel [on frequently]. There is a mountain and a valley between the road and the place where the landmine was planted and [he] did not know who planted the landmine. He [Saw A---] said he was injured by the landmine because he did not know the landmine was there.

I questioned him on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2015, in the evening, at 4:30 pm, and he was saying that he has been staying in the hospital for [the past] three weeks. Currently, he is still in Ka Tin Ta Ya hospital. It was his left leg that was injured by the landmine.



The above photo was taken on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 at 5:26 pm in Hpapun Ka Tin Ta Ya Hospital, Hpapun Town, in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. The picture shows Saw A---, 40 years old, who lives in B--- village, Hkaw Poo village tract, Hpapun District. He was hospitalised after stepping on a landmine while out hunting between Y--- forest and Z--- forest. [Photo: KHRG]

<sup>2</sup> Saw F--- is the alias of Saw A---, the villager who stepped on the landmine.

<sup>3</sup> KHRG is unable to verify claims regarding which armed group may or may not have planted landmines.

I met with villagers from C--- village and the villagers told me about forced labour ordered by the BGF [Border Guard Force].<sup>4</sup> On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2015, a group of BGF soldiers [led by code name]<sup>5</sup> Plah Thoo [Company Second-in-command Moe Hein] and Plah Yu Say,<sup>6</sup> under BGF Battalion #1014<sup>7</sup> ordered the villagers from C--- village, Meh Pree village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, to go and work (carry water, find vegetables and firewood) for them in their camp. Five villagers had to go and work in the camp for three days and then another five villagers had to replace them after three days. The BGF did not give any money to the villagers [for their labour]. [Some] villagers had to hire people to go and work [in their stead] if they were not free and they had to pay the villagers [they hired] 5,000 kyat (US \$4.28)<sup>8</sup> per day.

On June 15<sup>th</sup> 2015, many KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] soldiers were [seen] coming into G--- village, Meh Pree village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, and the villagers were frightened because they worried that fighting would happen between the KNLA and the BGF. Therefore, they ran into their bomb shelter. Then [later that day], the BGF came into the village and pointed at the villagers with guns and asked why they ran to hide in the bomb shelter and told them to come out. The BGF soldiers were led by Plah Thoo, under Battalion #1014.

On June 14<sup>th</sup> 2015, the Tatmadaw soldiers from LID [Light Infantry Division]<sup>9</sup> #22 came into D--- village, Kyaw Pah village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. There were 35 Tatmadaw soldiers and two BGF soldiers, 37 soldiers altogether, and they also brought heavy weapons with them. They also crossed [into] the [KNLA] delimited area.<sup>10</sup> They did it because they heard that the Karen armed groups were holding a meeting in E--- [village and they wanted to demonstrate their presence].<sup>11</sup>

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

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<sup>4</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 Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and 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.

<sup>5</sup> Code names in this report refer to the aliases soldiers use over their radios (walkie-talkies).

<sup>6</sup> Plah Yu Say is also a radio (walkie-talkie) code name, however KHRG was unable to determine the real identity of this particular soldier, who is serving under Company Second-in-command Moe Hein.

<sup>7</sup> KHRG has received numerous reports of human rights violations committed by soldiers from Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014, including killing, torture, violent abuse, explicit threats, arbitrary taxation and demands and land confiscation. For more information, see [“Human rights violations by Border Guard Force \(BGF\) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014,”](#) KHRG, July 2015.

<sup>8</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the July 31<sup>st</sup> 2015 official market rate of 1,167 kyat to the US \$1.

<sup>9</sup> Light Infantry Division (Tatmadaw); commanded by a brigadier general, each with ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, "search and destroy" operations against ethnic insurgents and narcotics-based armies. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, (three battalions each and one reserve), one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units.

<sup>10</sup> As per the 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and the Burma/Myanmar government, the Tatmadaw are only allowed to operate and travel up to 50 yards from either side of roads that connect their army camps through KNLA territory, and only within a 150 yard radius around their own army camp.

<sup>11</sup> This incident was previously reported by KHRG in a News Bulletin, see. [“BGF Battalion #1014 demands forced labour, asserts heavily militarised presence in villages in Hpapun District, June 2015,”](#) KHRG, December 2015.

- “BGF Battalion #1014 demands forced labour, asserts heavily militarised presence in villages in Hpapun District, June 2015,” (December 2015)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2014 to January 2015,” (October, 2015)
- “Fighting between Tatmadaw and KNLA soldiers leads to violent abuse and displacement of villagers in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, October 2015,” (October 2015)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, April 2014 to February 2015,” (September 2015)
- “Hpapun Incident Report: Villager killed by Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1013 in Bu Tho Township, March 2015,” (September 2015)

## Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)