



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

December 14, 2015 / KHRG #15-9-NB1

BGF Battalion #1014 demands forced labour, asserts heavily militarised presence in villages in Hpapun District, June 2015

This News Bulletin describes forced labour and military activities in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District in June 2015.

- On June 12th 2015, the villagers of A--- village, Meh Pree village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District were forced to do unpaid labour by Plah Thoo and Plah Yu Say from Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014. The villagers were ordered to carry water and collect vegetables and firewood for the BGF military camp.
 - On June 14th 2015, the Tatmadaw soldiers from Light Infantry Division (LID) #22 came into B-- village, Kyaw Pah village tract with 35 Tatmadaw soldiers and two BGF soldiers. Since they were travelling through a KNLA restricted area, they were carrying heavy weapons as a display of power. They passed through the village on their way to C--- village, where they heard that the Karen armed groups would be holding a meeting.
-

In June 2015, a KHRG researcher met with a villager from A--- and the villager told him about an incident of forced labour perpetrated by the Border Guard Force (BGF).² On June 12th 2015, a group of BGF soldiers, led by Company Second-in-command Moe Hein, also known by his code name, Plah Thoo, and another soldier by the code name Plah Yu Say³ from BGF Battalion #1014⁴ ordered the villagers from A--- village, Meh Pree village tract, Bu

¹ This News Bulletin was written by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It summarises information from an update provided by KHRG field staff via phone call received by KHRG in June 2015. In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast 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.

² 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.

³ All code names mentioned in this report refer to the names used by the soldiers over their radios (walkie-talkies). KHRG was unable to obtain the given name of code name Plah Yu Say.

⁴ 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.

Tho Township, Hpapun District, to carry water for them and find vegetables and firewood for them, as well as to deliver them to the BGF 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 pay the villagers for their labour. If certain villagers were not free to do this forced work, they had to hire other villagers to go and work in their stead and they had to pay 5,000 kyat (US \$4.49)⁵ to each villager that they asked to replace them.

On June 15th 2015, many Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers were spotted by villagers as they approached D--- village, Meh Pree village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. Their presence frightened the villagers, who worried that fighting would happen between KNLA and BGF soldiers who also come into the village at times. Therefore, the villagers ran into their bomb shelter. Soon after the KNLA soldiers had left, the BGF did in fact come into the village. When they arrived, they pointed their guns at the villagers and asked why they ran and hid in the bomb shelter and told them to come out. The BGF soldiers were led by Company Second-in-command Moe Hein, under Battalion #1014.

On June 14th 2015, Tatmadaw soldiers from Light Infantry Division (LID)⁶ #22 came into B--- village, Kyaw Pah village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. There were 35 Tatmadaw soldiers and two BGF soldiers, for a total of 37 soldiers altogether. They brought artillery with them and they also crossed into the restricted area which the KNLA delimited. They did so because they heard that the Karen armed groups, including the BGF, the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA),⁷ KNLA, Karen Peace Force (KPF),⁸ and KNU/KNLA Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC),⁹ were holding a meeting in C--- village and so they were headed there to demonstrate their presence. As a result of the security concerns posed by the Tatmadaw soldiers' presence near the area where the meeting was set to take place, the Karen armed groups eventually decided to cancel their meeting.

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

⁵ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the June 17th 2015 official market rate of 1,113.80 kyat to the US \$1.

⁶ 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.

⁷ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma/Myanmar at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "[Inside the DKBA](#)," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁸ Karen Peace Force (KPF) was formed in February 1997 after splitting from the KNU/KNLA and surrendering to and signing a ceasefire with the Burmese military government. The KPF controls some administrative areas in Three Pagodas Pass and operates a number of road and river checkpoints in the area of Three Pagodas Pass. Following repeated rejections of Burma/Myanmar government proposals to reform KPF into the Tatmadaw Border Guard, substantial elements have since reformed in the Tatmadaw Border Guard in 2010 while others remain independent.

⁹ The KNU/KNLA Peace Council (also called the Karen Peace Council or KPC), is an armed group based in Htoh Gkaw Ko, Hpa-an District, which split from the Karen National Union (KNU) in 2007 and subsequently refused to comply with orders from the then-SPDC government to transform its forces into the Tatmadaw Border Guard. See: "[KPC to be outlawed if it rejects BGF](#)," *Burma News International*, August 30th 2010.

- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2015,” (August 2015)
- “Explicit threats and the indiscriminate firing of mortars and small arms by BGF soldiers in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, June 2015,” (August 2015)
- “Human rights violations by Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, June to November 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, November 2013 to January 2014,” (June 2015)

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)