



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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## Situation Update

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### **Doplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014 to February 2015**

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*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyainseikgyi Township, Doplaya District from December 2014 to February 2015, including stone mining, arbitrary taxation, road construction and military activities.*

- *Two rich individuals, Maung Myat and Kyaw Aye, have been conducting stone mining projects in C--- village, destroying a local villager's mango plantation and failing to adequately compensate him for his loss.*
  - *Arbitrary taxation was perpetrated by the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA) in Noh Taw Pla village tract on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2015. DKBA Company Commander Shin Gyi demanded a tax of 50,000 kyat (US \$45.01) per lumber saw and threatened violence against the village leader for non-compliance.*
  - *A road construction company took soil from a villager's land in B— village in order to construct a road, which negatively impacted the villager's livelihood.*
  - *Tatmadaw soldiers from an unknown battalion based on Ka Lee Hkee Mountain cut down trees and bamboo in community reserve forests in order to repair their army camp.*
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### **Situation Update | Kyainseikgyi Township, Doplaya District (December 2014 to February 2015)**

*The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in March 2015. It was written by a community member in Doplaya 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> This report was received along with other information from Doplaya District, including 305 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

#### **Stone mining**

When I went to meet a villager in A--- village, [the villager] said, “*What should we do? If the Chinese continue mining the stone we will not have [any] fresh water [left]. The stone*

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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.

<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/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.

*mining will impact the whole Ya Moo Hta River. Villagers [from A--- village] are using that river as a fresh water [source]. Local leaders planned to dig a well for us but they have not dug the well yet. Stone mining has already started, so what can we do? The development [project] will bring consequences for [the local community]. In our country [Kayin State] these things are happening in our areas [Kyainseikgyi Township].”*



The above photos were taken on February 19<sup>th</sup> 2015 in A--- village, Noh Taw Pla village tract, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. The photos are of new stone mining equipment. A Chinese company has come and built a small factory, but has not yet started mining at full capacity as the project is still in the initial stages. Nevertheless, it will impact the villagers in the future. Although there is little that villagers can do, they will inform the KNU or Burma/Myanmar government about the presence of the Chinese company and their plans for stone mining. [Photos: KHRG]

On February 7<sup>th</sup> 2015, I went to meet a villager in C--- village. The stone that the rich men [Maung Myat and Kyaw Aye] are currently mining is on this villager's [land]. When he [the villager] discovered the stone [deposit], he decided to sell it for 20,000,000 kyat (US \$19,446.56).<sup>3</sup> At that time, Maung Myat and Kyaw Aye told him that he should not sell it. [They said], “*We might do stone mining on that stone [deposit], so if you need money we will give it to you.*” [Later], two companies came to do stone mining [there]. These were the Min Zaw [company] and a Chinese [company]. The Min Zaw [company] told the stone owner that they would give him an amount of [money] each year. They [Min Zaw company] have already been stone mining for four years, but only gave [the land owner] 659,000 kyat (US \$640.74). Therefore, the [land] owner is not happy with what they have done. The stone that [the company] had been mining is on that [land owner's] mango plantation, so the whole mango plantation [is now] destroyed. Some villagers from C--- [village] reported that because of the stone mining [there was] air pollution, but some of them did not report this. The villagers have no unity so [they] could not do anything.

### **Arbitrary taxation**

Human rights violations [occurred] in Dooplaya District, Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] Township, including armed groups demanding taxes in D--- village and E--- village, Noh Taw Pla village tract. [For example], [Battalion Commander] Pa Nyay's Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)<sup>4</sup> Battalion demanded a tax [from] farmers. [Farmers

<sup>3</sup> All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the April 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 official market rate of 1,028.46 kyat to the US \$1.

<sup>4</sup> 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

have to pay] them [DKBA] yearly as well as the mother organisation [KNU], who [also] demands taxation [every year]. The villagers cannot [afford to] pay the tax. [Despite this], the demand [made by the DKBA] forced villagers to [come up with the money for] the tax. The villagers said that they have to pay taxes to the mother organisation as well as the DKBA. [Villagers] only have one harvest [per year] and they have to pay taxes to the people [DKBA and KNU] so they do not have enough for themselves. They [DKBA] limited [the tax] to 5,500 kyat (US \$5.35) per household. [However], they [villagers] do not want to pay [taxes to the DKBA].

The villagers have had conflict in this area [with the DKBA]. On January 17<sup>th</sup> 2015, the person who demanded tax [payment] was DKBA [Company Commander] Shin Gyi. The person who asked him [to collect the tax] is Saw Pee Dah, a platoon commander [from the DKBA]. [Previously], on July 16<sup>th</sup> 2014, the villagers had [also had] a disagreement with the DKBA for demanding the tax. They [DKBA] asked for 100,000 kyat (US \$97.23) in taxes per lumber saw. [When Shin Gyi came to collect the tax, the villagers] asked him for a receipt. He [Shin Gyi] did not have a voucher so he asked for 50,000 kyat (US \$48.61) [in taxes] per lumber saw. They [DKBA] asked the head villager to send the tax to them. If the head villager does not do this they will come and drown the head villager in the water. Shin Gyi is a company commander [in the DKBA].

### Road construction

Road construction negatively affected a villager because they [the road construction company] took the soil from a villager's land to fill the road. Therefore, the land owner was not happy with [what the construction company did]. Realistically, they could take the soil from other places in order to fill the road. They went to take the soil from the villager's land and the villager [was] not happy. The place that they went to take soil from was B--- [village]. The owner of the land [which they took soil from] is [originally] from F-- - village.

### Military activities

On January 16<sup>th</sup> 2015, I came back from F--- village and sat [down] for a rest in a shop in G--- village. I saw the Tatmadaw transporting their food on nine cars. I do not know how many [Tatmadaw] members [were in the cars]. I do not know their battalion number. In the cars was food and weapons.



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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.

The above photos were taken on January 16<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> 2015 in G--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. The trucks were travelling on the road to resupply an army camp. In total, 11 trucks passed carrying rations and ammunition. Both photos were taken covertly after the trucks had safely passed the researcher. The battalion number of the troops is unknown. *[Photos: KHRG]*

The armed group [Tatmadaw] based on the Ka Lee Hkee Mountain has cut down [trees or bamboo] from village reserve forests in the last two months. They used cars for transporting the bamboo [or trees] and many cars were full. The villagers are not willing to tell them [to stop logging because they are afraid]. The bamboo that they cut [was used to] repair their camp, which is on Ka Lee Hkee Mountain. They are gradually repairing their camp.

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

- “Dooplaya Photo Set: Tatmadaw conduct heavy weapons target practice in Win Yay Township, January 2015,” (June 2015)
- “Two separate clashes between armed actors in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, February 2015,” (May 2015)
- “Dooplaya Interview: Naw A---, March 2015,” (April 2015)
- “The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkareik Town road construction threatens villagers’ livelihoods,” (March 2015)
- “Dooplaya Interview: Maung A---, August 2014,” (February 2015)



Dooطلا District



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