



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Interview

September 30, 2016 / KHRG #16-20-A1-I1

Dooplaya Interview: Saw A---, November 2015

This Interview with Saw A--- describes events occurring in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. On November 12th 2015 Saw A--- and his brother were physically abused by Kwee Ler Ter camp leaders. His brother was punched in his head and his face. In a separate incident, Saw A--- and two of his family members were also requested to transport the Tatmadaw to another village and did not receive full compensation for their labour.

Interview | Saw A---, (male, 32), B--- village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (November 2015)

The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Dooplaya District on November 13th 2015 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This interview was received along with other information from Dooplaya District, including two situation updates, 103 photographs and two video clips.²

Ethnicity: Karen

Religion: Ta La Koo [Animist]

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill farmer

Position: Villager

What is your name?

My name is Saw A---.

How old are you?

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeast 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 conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

² 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.

I am 32 years old.

Where do you live?

I live in B--- village, C--- section.

What do you do for living?

I am working on a plain farm and hill farm because I cannot do any other work.

What is your religion?

Ta La Koo religion [animist religion].

Can you tell me about the incident that happened to you?

This evening, my older brother came to [pick] me and my two little children up to visit my mother together. I went with my two little children and my brother by bike. They [Tatmadaw army camp leaders] stopped us and pointed a gun at us. We did not know anything and they did not question us [before they pointed the gun at us]. They directly pulled my hair and my two children cried. They [the children] then ran to my brother. They [Tatmadaw army camp leaders] kicked and pushed [my brother] with their gun and he was injured.



This photo was taken on November 13th 2015, in B--- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Dooplaya District. The photo shows Saw A---. Saw A--- and his brother were violently abused by Kwee Ler Ter Tatmadaw army camp leaders when they were on their way to visit their mother. [Photo: KHRG]

Where do the two Tatmadaw live?

They live in Kwee Ler Ter Army Camp. They are camp leaders.

Do you know their name?

Moe Ya Za Pyo from LIB³ [Light Infantry Battalion] #284; he is the Kwee Ler Ter Army Camp Commander.

His name is Moe Ya Za Pyo?

Yes.

Did he point at your brother with his pistol or rifle?

He pointed at him with a pistol. He not only pointed at him; moreover, he pushed [him] with a gun barrel to his head. His head was split and it bled.

Did they stop you before they pointed at you with the gun?

³ A Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties

It occurred at 8:15 pm. I was on a motorbike behind my brother. He has a bit of a mental health condition. I asked him to stop [driving]. After I stopped him I saw he [Moe Za Ya Pyo] pointed the gun at him. After he [Moe Za Ya Pyo] pulled my hair he then went to my brother and kicked him. The motorbike would have fallen over if I had not held on to it. His head was bleeding because he [Moe Za Ya Pyo] pushed him [my brother] with his gun barrel.

Did he [Moe Za Ya Pyo] say anything?

He did not say anything when we were there, but he told [other people] that he waved at us to stop. In reality he did not wave at us to stop. He directly pointed his gun at us. We instantly stopped after we had a gun pointed at us.

So he pointed at you straightaway?

Yes, he pointed at us straight away. He did not wave at us to stop. He violently abused us and said that we did not stop when he was waving.

What did he do?

He pulled my hair.

Did he push you away from the bike?

Yes, he pulled my hair and I fell on the ground. My two children immediately cried, then ran to my brother.

Did he simply pull you down to the ground or did [he do] something bad to you?

He only pulled me down to the ground but my hair was messed up. I thought he wanted to pull off my turban, which was on my head.

Did he release you after [he pulled you hair]?

Yes, he released me. He then went to my brother because my children were crying.

When did they stop you?

Last night; they stopped us at 8:15 pm.

So they stopped you at 8:15 pm?

Yes.

How many times did he push your brother?

He kicked him twice and pushed him with his gun barrel. I did not watch them carefully because I had to amuse [care for] my children.

Where did they go after they pushed him?

After the incident we quickly drove the motorbike and went away. They themselves stayed behind.

Did they stay behind?

Yes, they stayed behind because we went ahead by motorbike.

Do the [local] chairman and vice chairman know about the incident?

Yes they do.

Did they know it [the incident happened] last night?

Yes they knew it [the incident happened] last night because I went to meet them. I informed them about the incident. We have never experienced it before.

How many armed groups are there in your village?

There are three armed groups: the Tatmadaw, Karen Peace Force⁴ and the DKBA [Democratic Karen Benevolent Army]⁵. They sometimes come to the village. Sometimes the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] also come to our village.

Do they travel freely [to the village]?

Yes they come freely [are not disturbed by any other armed groups].

How long [have the] newly [relocated] Tatmadaw been in here?

They have been here over one month.

Do you know the [number of] Tatmadaw which have relocated?

I do not know.

Do you know the IB⁶ or LIB number?

I also do not know and did not note it down because we do not usually need it.

Have they ever compelled villagers to work for them?

Yes. They asked me [to drop them] by tractor. My sister told them that, at the present time, the road is not good [damaged] to travel by tractor. They said they would provide petrol for us. We dropped them using three tractors: two of the tractors got a flat tire and one of the tractors overturned in the river. It cost many thousands [of kyat]⁷ (1,000 kyat = \$0.79 USD) to fix the tractors.

⁴ 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. Significant parts of the KPF merged with the Burma/Myanmar government military into Tatmadaw Border Guard Force #1023 whilst others remained independent. The independent (non-Border Guard) KPF controls some administrative areas in addition to road and river checkpoints in the area of Three Pagodas Pass. Following repeated rejections of Burmese 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.

⁵ 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.

⁶ An Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the September 9th 2016 official market rate of 1253.10 kyats to US \$1.

Where did they ask you to drop them?

We dropped them at D--- [village] because we could not journey further travelling by tractor.

Did they pay you for patrolling?

They did not pay us immediately. My sister asked them to pay and they then only paid for my tractor, not the other two tractors.

How much did they pay you?

They paid 500 kyat (\$0.39 USD). My sister asked them several times already but they did not pay us. She later went to talk with an operations commander and they paid us.

What did they do when they went there?

They went there to pick up Operations Commanders.

Did they go there to pick up soldiers?

Yes, they went to pick up soldiers from an operations battalion.

When did they ask you to transport them?

I did not note down the date.

Did it happen a few days ago?

It happened when an operations [commander] came here.

How long have they been here?

They have been here more than [one] and half months.

Do you not remember the date?

Yes, I do not remember.

Will you permit me to report the incident about the Tatmadaw pulling and pushing you with the gun?

I wish this incident will not happen in the future, therefore I hope you can help us.

I will send this incident information to above leaders and they will arrange to do something for us. They [Tatmadaw] also had agreed to not commit any violent abuse to the villagers. The incident occurred, so we will let above leaders know the issue.

That will be really great.

Do you want to add anything that I have not asked you? Are there any other problems that you have to face?

It will be very good if the incident does not happen again in the future. The villagers also are not knowledgeable and have very little knowledge, therefore we are full of worry. If Tharamu⁸ can

⁸ 'Teacher'; Karen term used for any teacher, pastor, or any person to whom one wishes to show respect.

help us [to share information] to the leaders we will be so pleased if they care about us [our concern]. I do not have any other issues to say.

Thank you so much for sharing this information with us.

Thank you.

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

- “Dooplaya Interview: Naw A--- February 2016,” (August 2016)
- “Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women’s testimonies from southeast Myanmar,” (August 2016)
- “Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, August to October 2015,” (July 2016)
- “Growing drug use and its consequences in Dooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015,” (May 2016)
- “Dooplaya Photo Set: Road construction and expansion results in destruction of villagers’ plantations in Kyonedoe and Kyainseikgyi townships, December 2014 to July 2015,” (March 2016)

Dooplaya District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)