



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Doplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi and Kawkareik townships, November to December 2015

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kyainseikgyi and Kawkareik townships, Doplaya District, between November and December 2015. It covers land confiscation, violent abuse and forced labour.

- *The Border Guard Force [BGF] confiscated villagers' land at A--- village, Kawkareik Township and resold it to the Tatmadaw.*
 - *On November 12th 2015, Saw B--- and Saw C--- who live in D--- village, were violently abused by Tatmadaw Camp Commander Mo Hein and Administration Officer Ya Za Pyo from Light Infantry Battalion #284.*
 - *Community members reported that Officer Bo Chit from the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) has not paid villagers who moved logs for him in September in order to build the KNDO camp.*
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Situation Update | Kyainseikgyi and Kawkareik townships, Doplaya District (November to December 2015)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in March 2016. It was written by a community member in Doplaya District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor 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 Doplaya District, including one other situation update, one interview, 103 photographs and two video clips.²

Introduction

[The information] was collected from November to December 30th [2015] in Noh T'Kaw [Kyainseikgyi] and [Kaw T'Ree/Kawkareik] townships. [It] includes Tatmadaw activity, Border

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 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.

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.

Guard Force [BGF]³ activity, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army [DKBA]⁴ activity, Karen National Defence Organisation [KNDO]⁵ activity, [the] civilian situation, healthcare and education.

Tatmadaw activity

On November 12th 2015, in the evening at 8:15 pm, Tatmadaw went to drink alcohol in Kwee Ler Ter village, Noh T’Kaw Township. Saw⁶ B--- and Saw C--- were violently abused by them [Tatmadaw]. Saw B--- is 34 years old and Saw C--- is 32 years old. Their mother’s name is Naw⁷ E--- and [their] father’s name is Saw F---. At 8:15 pm a camp commander from LIB⁸ [Light Infantry Battalion] #284 and an administration officer went to drink alcohol in D--- village. When they came back on their way they saw Saw B--- and Saw C--- on their way to visit [their] mother. Mo Hein and Ya Za Pyo [from Tatmadaw] stopped them on the way. They picked up their gun and hit Saw B--- [on the] left [side of the] face with the gun barrel and also punched him three times. They split his cheek twice. They violently abused the two villagers without questioning them. The Tatmadaw who violently abused villagers are Mo Hein, and he is Kwee Ler Ter permanent camp commander. The other one’s name is Ya Za Pyo and he is an administration officer. They all live together in the same camp.

³ 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.

⁴ The Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) was originally formed in 1994 as a breakaway group from the KNLA. Since its separation from the KNLA in 1994, it was known to frequently cooperate with and support the Tatmadaw in its conflict with the KNLA. The original group underwent major change in 2010 as the majority of the original DKBA was transformed into the BGF, which is under the control of the Burma/Myanmar government, while the rest of the original DKBA formed a smaller splinter group, which is often referred to as DKBA-5 and changed its name in 2012 from the Democratic Karen *Buddhist* Army to the Democratic Karen *Benevolent* Army. Following this major change in 2010, the original DKBA is considered to no longer exist as a distinct entity as it has now been submerged within the BGF. This original DKBA (Buddhist) (1994 – 2010) should not be confused with either the DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present) which was formed as a breakaway group from the original DKBA (Buddhist) (1994 – 2010), or with the DKBA (Buddhist) (2016 – present) which was formed as a splinter group from the DKBA (Benevolent) (2010 – present) in 2016. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see “[Inside the DKBA](#),” KHRG, 1996.

⁵ The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

⁶ Saw is a S’gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person’s name.

⁷ Naw is a S’gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.

⁸ 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.



The above photo was taken on November 13th 2015, in D-- village, Kyainseikgyi Township, Doooplaya District. It shows Saw C--- and Saw B--- [who] live in D--- village, who were violently abused by the Tatmadaw. They are siblings. When they were on their way to visit their parents at 8:15 pm they were unexpectedly abused by Tatmadaw LIB #284 Camp Commander Mo Hein and administration officer Ya Za Pyo. [Photo: KHRG]

BGF activity

Between November and December [2015] the BGF cooperated closely with Tatmadaw and took control [of] more areas in Kaw T'Ree [Kawkareik] Township. They confiscated the villagers' land along [Thai-Burma/Myanmar] border at A--- [village] and sold the land to the Tatmadaw for [them to] build their houses. Burma/Myanmar government troops built a lot of houses and [other] buildings.

DKBA activity

On December 2nd 2015 a clash broke out between [Commander] San Aung and the Tatmadaw in Kaw Moo area. After the clash broke down the [DKBA] came back to Kaw K'Ree Township to collaborate with [the DKBA Commander] Pa Nyain [from Battalion #907], based on [the Thai-Burma/Myanmar] border at Per Kler [village]. [The numbers of] Pa Nyain's [battalion] are increasing so they want to build two more checkpoints in Kyeh Hpa Leh and Htee Moo Kwee. They started assessment [of] the place on December 14th 2015. KNDO, KNU and Karen Peace Force [KPF]⁹ did not allow them to set up the [new] checkpoints. The DKBA said *'we came back [to join our hands with you] [and] over 60 of us had agreed to everything that you had planned. But we want to [set up the checkpoints] for ourselves and if you do not allow us we will fight against every [armed] group we confront'*. They built an army camp in Plaw Hpa Taw [village] and they permanently live there.

Civilian situation

⁹ 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 Burmese military government 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.

Since the ceasefire¹⁰ has taken place the civilians get more opportunities to access freedom of movement, therefore they can earn more living for their livelihood.

Education

In terms of education, Burma/Myanmar government transferred [the KNU schools] in each area to Burma/Myanmar [government] schools, therefore the education situation is improving a little bit.¹¹

Healthcare

Regarding healthcare, Burma/Myanmar government sent medicine and the number of health workers is increasing, so more villagers are able to depend on them [Burma/Myanmar government health workers]. Many villages which are located in local areas try to use herbal medicines.

KNDO activity

On February 2nd 2015 the KNDO built their camp in Meh Tha Raw Hkee [area] and [have been] active over there [until the reporting period]. Officer Bo Chit built [the camp] over there, but the villagers and area responsible people [authorities] did not totally accept them [KNDO] because he [Officer Bo Chit] did not build fellowship with the area responsible people or the indigenous people there. He did everything that he thought [was] good for him and tried to collaborate with a Chinese rich businessman who could support him in terms of money. Later, everything that he did impacted the villagers and area responsible people. [In September he] asked villagers to move logs by elephant for him without paying them. [Regarding] his staff, he sometimes brought them to Myawaddy and Mae Sot towns [and took them] to brothel houses and paid fees for them. Some of them have family and [this] created arguments between their families. [Moreover], some of them violated [their families] and divorced their families. It made the human rights situation worse.

¹⁰ On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups and on-going conflicts in ethnic regions, a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the KNU, see [“Myanmar signs ceasefire with eight armed groups,”](#) Reuters, October 15th 2015. Despite the signing of the NCA prompting a positive response from the international community, see [“Myanmar: UN chief welcomes ‘milestone’ signing of ceasefire agreement,”](#) *UN News Centre*, October 15th 2015, KNU Chairman General Saw Mutu Say Poe’s decision to sign has been met with strong opposition from other members of the Karen armed resistance and civil society groups alike, who believe the decision to be undemocratic and the NCA itself to be a superficial agreement that risks undermining a genuine peace process, see [“Without Real Political Roadmap, Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement Leads Nowhere...,”](#) *Karen News*, September 1st 2015. The signing of the NCA followed the January 12th 2012 preliminary ceasefire agreement between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. For KHRG’s analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the preliminary ceasefire, see [“Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire,”](#) KHRG, May 2014.

¹¹ Burma/Myanmar government schools are funded by the central government and teach a Burmese-based curriculum.



The above photos were taken on September 18th 2015 in Htee Moo Kwee area, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. They show the KNDO camp construction, led by Officer Bo Chit, in Meh T'Raw Hkee area. He asked villagers to move logs in order to build the camp but he did not pay them. The community member included these photos in the report as, although they are outside their reporting period, the effects of the forced labour are ongoing and the situation has not been resolved. [Photos: KHRG]

Conclusion

Tatmadaw activity, BGF activity, DKBA activity, KNDO activity, the civilian situation, education and healthcare situations in Noh T'Kaw and Kaw T'Ree townships are revealed as above.

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

- "Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women's testimonies from southeast Myanmar," (August 2016)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kawkareik Township, August to September 2015," (July 2016)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: Kyainseikgyi and Kawkareik townships, August to October 2014," (July 2016)
- "Dooplaya Incident Report: Killing in Kyainseikgyi Township, March 2015," (May 2016)
- "Growing drug use and its consequences in Dooplaya and Hpa-an districts, between February and December 2015," (May 2016)

Dooplaya District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)