



News bulletin

August 29th 2008 / KHRG #2008-B7

DKBA soldiers burn down Ler Bpoo village, Pa'an District

On August 26th, DKBA forces operating under Bo Gk'Do, an officer serving with Maung Chit Thoo of DKBA Special Battalion #999, burnt down the village of Ler Bpoo in eastern Pa'an District. Prior to being burnt down, the village had 50 households and a population of approximately 100 villagers. The former residents initially fled to seek shelter elsewhere. Some villagers went to stay with relatives in neighbouring settlements and others to a Buddhist monastery located in a nearby village. On Wednesday, August 27th, DKBA forces ordered the displaced villagers to return to stay at an open field located near the now burnt-down remains of Ler Bpoo village.

On Monday, August 18th 2008, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) officer Bo Gk'Do, who operates under the command of Maung Chit Thoo of DKBA Special Battalion #999, issued an order to the head of Ler Bpoo village situated near the Thoo Mweh (Moei) river in eastern T'Nay Hsah township of Pa'an District. The order reportedly required that the villagers immediately evacuate their homes and relocate elsewhere (although no location was specified at the time) because DKBA soldiers were planning to build a new army camp at the site of Ler Bpoo village. After the village head received the order, he informed the villagers that they would have to evacuate the village. The villagers, however, responded by saying that although they would be willing to relocate eventually, because of the current rainy season conditions, they would not be able to collect the necessary leaves to make thatch shingles in order to build new houses at another location. The villagers therefore said that they would not move at the present time because they were unable to effectively prepare for such a relocation effort.

On Tuesday, August 26th 2008, at about 3:00 o'clock in the afternoon, DKBA soldiers from Special Battalion #999 based at the town of Shwe Gko Gkoh in eastern Pa'an District (along the Thoo Mweh river) marched down directly to Ler Bpoo village and, upon arrival, burnt the village to the ground. According to a Karen Human Rights Group field researcher:

"There were 50 households in Ler Bpoo village and the population was about 100 villagers. When the DKBA soldiers came and burnt down the village, the villagers were not expecting this to happen, so their belongings were burnt together with the houses."

Also included amongst those buildings which DKBA forces burnt down was the Ler Bpoo village monastery. After the soldiers burnt down the village, the villagers no longer had anywhere to stay, so some of the villagers went to stay at Htee Hsah Ra village with their relatives and others went to stay at the town of Myawaddy with their relatives. However, there were about 40 villagers who didn't have any relatives at other locations with whom they could go and stay. They therefore went to stay at a monastery in Chaw Soh village, located near to Ler Bpoo.

After the villagers evacuated to other areas, those DKBA forces involved in the burning of Ler Bpoo reportedly became worried that the details of this event would be passed on. On Wednesday, August 27th 2008, these DKBA forces, therefore, ordered those villagers who had fled to Htee Hsah Ra, Myawaddy and Chaw Soh to return to stay at an open field located near to the now burnt-down remains of Ler Bpoo village. Some of the displaced villagers arrived at this site on Wednesday, August 27th, while others arrived on Thursday, August 28th. However, not all former residents of Ler Bpoo village have gone, or intend to go, to stay at the relocation site. In this case, as the residents of Ler Bpoo had been engaged in the cultivation of corn fields, local DKBA forces will most likely confiscate the fields belonging to those villagers who do not go to stay at the relocation site. Given the precedent in other areas, local DKBA troops stationed at Ler Bpoo will most likely require those villagers living at the new relocation site to do forced labour to build the new army camp at the site of Ler Bpoo village.

For more information on the situation in Pa'an District see the following previously published KHRG reports:

- *Forced labour and extortion in Pa'an District* (August 2008)
- *Update on the KNU/KNLA-PC: Statements by a deserter and a 'retiree'* (July 2008)
- *Child soldiers recruited to support expansion of the KNU-KNLA Peace Council* (May 2007)
- *Forced labour, extortion and festivities: The SPDC and DKBA burden on villagers in Pa'an District* (December 2006)
- *Pa'an District: Land confiscation, forced labour and extortion undermining villagers' livelihoods* (February 2006)

Recent photos from the area are presented in *KHRG Photo Gallery 2008* and *KHRG Photo Gallery 2007*. These and other KHRG reports and maps of the region can be found on the KHRG web site at <http://www.khrg.org>.



Karen Districts



©Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG), 2005

Scale: 1 cm to 22 km
1 in. to 35 miles