



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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## News Bulletin

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### Pa'an Interview: Saw C---, October 2011

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*This report contains the full transcript of an interview conducted during October 2011 in Lu Pleh Township, Pa'an District by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. The villager interviewed Saw C---, a 23-year-old unmarried hill field farmer, who described an incident in which his brother-in-law, Saw A---, 36, was shot and killed by patrolling Tatmadaw soldiers from IB #230 in the E--- area of Lu Pleh Township, Pa'an District. Saw C--- explained that he, his mother Naw G---, two KNLA soldiers who were cooking in the house at the time, and his brother-in-law Saw A--- fled their house when Tatmadaw soldiers entered P--- village and that, as they fled, the soldiers fired at them. According to Saw C---, one of the bullets hit Saw A--- on the right side of his head, killing him immediately. A separate report of this incident written by the villager who conducted this interview, which includes 23 photos taken by the same villager, is available in the bulletin "Incident report: Villager shot and killed in Pa'an District, October 2011" published by KHRG on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2011.*

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### Interview | Saw C--- (male, 23), P--- village, Lu Pleh Township, Pa'an District (October 2011)

*The following interview was conducted by a villager in Pa'an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>1</sup> This interview was received along with other information from Pa'an District, including eight incident reports, seven other interviews, one situation update and 137 photographs.<sup>2</sup>*

**Ethnicity:** Karen

**Religion:** Buddhist

**Marital Status:** Single

**Occupation:** Hill field farmer

**Can you explain to me about the situation in your village in the past and now, like has any fighting happened or is there anything you want to say?**

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma 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, villagers 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.

<sup>2</sup> When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Pa'an District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Pa'an District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Functionally Refoulement: Camps in Tha Song Yang District abandoned as refugees bow to pressure," KHRG, April 2010.

In the morning, at around 8:00 am, people came and shot at us.

**Who came and shot at you?**

The Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers shot at us.

**Do you remember the date?**

It was on a Saturday.

**Can you tell me the date that you noted?**

It was on October 29<sup>th</sup> 2011.

**How did they come?**

They walked here.

**Did they come into your house, or how far from the house were they? And why did they come and shoot at you?**

They came and shot at the *koh per lah* ['green headbands', meaning Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers].

**Why did the *koh per lah* come here?**

They stayed at our house.

**What did they do there?**

They came and cooked.<sup>3</sup>

**Didn't they know the Burmese military was coming?**

They knew.

*Unidentified young woman interjects:* Last night, we already told them the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]<sup>4</sup> would come past [P--- village].

**Did anything happen when the Burmese soldiers came and shot at you? Did anyone get hit?**



This photo of Saw C---, 23, was taken in P--- village on November 16<sup>th</sup> 2011 by the villager who conducted this interview. According to Saw C---, on October 29<sup>th</sup> Tatmadaw soldiers shot at him as he fled his house with his mother, Naw G---, his brother-in-law, Saw A---, and two KNLA soldiers who had been cooking in the house. Saw A---, a 36-year-old father of three, was shot in the head and killed in the incident. [Photo: KHRG]

<sup>3</sup> The villager who conducted this interview later clarified that the KNLA soldiers did not bring their guns with them into P--- village, but were most likely wearing at least some items of their uniform at the time of the incident on October 29<sup>th</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> The villager who conducted this interview and the interviewee used the term *Na Ah Pa* (State Peace and Development Council, or SPDC) to refer to Burmese military authorities. Many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* to refer to military or civilian government officials, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," *Myanmar Times*, April 4-10<sup>th</sup> 2011. Similarly, older villagers may still use the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (State Law and Order Restoration Council, or SLORC) to refer to the Burmese government, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the villager who conducted this interview and interviewee, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this interview.

Yes.

**How [did it happen]?**

Somebody got hit and the [Tatmadaw] soldiers took one ring, six pairs of earrings and 20,000 baht (US \$667).

**Where did the person get hit?**

It [the bullet] hit his ear and a part of his head was blown off.

**He got hit? And then what happened?**

He died immediately.

**Did you know that person?**

Yes.

**What was his name?**

His name was Saw A---.<sup>5</sup>

**Did he have a family?**

Yes, he had three children. His children are very young. None of them can work.

**How many girls and how many boys?**

One girl and two boys.

**How old is the oldest one?**

Six years old.

**Which part of his head was hit?**

The right part of his head.<sup>6</sup>

**How about his arms or legs? Did he get hit there and how many times did he get hit?**

The bullets didn't hit his arms or legs, they only hit his head. [After he was hit], he had only half of his head left.

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<sup>5</sup> According to a separate report submitted to KHRG in November 2011 by the same villager who conducted this interview, at the time of this incident, Saw A--- was staying temporarily at the house in P--- where his mother-in-law, Naw G---, and his brother-in-law, Saw C--- (the interviewee) live, in order to help them to harvest and carry their paddy crop. According to the same report, Saw A---'s wife (the interviewee's older sister) was working in flat paddy fields in the L--- area at the time of the incident.

<sup>6</sup> The villager who conducted this interview noted in a separate report submitted to KHRG that the interviewee's mother, Naw G---, and another witness Saw H---, both thought the bullet had hit the left side of Saw A---'s head. Saw C--- told the villager who conducted this interview that half of Saw A---'s head was "blown off" by the bullet; it is possible that this accounts for witnesses' confusion as to where exactly the bullet hit.

**Did everyone run immediately at that time?**

Yes, we ran immediately.

**Who took the ring, earrings and money?**

The Burmese soldiers.

**How many Burmese soldiers came?**

Seven soldiers. Two stayed over there and five were near the house. Among the five people, two went into the house [after we ran away] and searched it. Three stayed [outside] near the house.

**How far away were they when they came and shot?**

They were very near.

**Were they near the trees or near the bridge?**

They were just here, near the tobacco plantation.

**How about [the two soldiers that stayed] on the hillside?**

Yes, one of them stayed under the lemon tree and one was under the mango tree.

**What did the soldiers take?**

They took six pairs of earrings, one ring and 20,000 baht.

**The 20,000 baht was in Thai currency?**

Yes, it was all in Thai currency, but they also took 10,000 kyat (US \$13).<sup>7</sup>

**How much did the pairs of earrings each weigh?**

Each pair of earrings was one *ba* (approximately 0.163 grams).

**How about their value?**

I don't know the value. She [the interviewee's mother, Naw G---] bought one pair of earrings for 3,000 baht (US \$100).

**Did she buy them recently or did she buy them in the past?**

She bought them a long time ago.

**Can you estimate what they would cost now?**

Now, it would be about 8,000 baht (US \$267) for one pair of earrings.

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<sup>7</sup> All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of November 29<sup>th</sup> 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 770 kyat.

**How about the ring?**

It would cost about 10,000 baht (US \$333).

**Did they take any other things?**

No.

**After they shot at you, how long did they stay here?**

They went away again immediately.

**Did they look after the dead man?**

No, they didn't look after him. They also took a bag of gunpowder.

**They took gunpowder?**

Yes, and they also took one knife.

**How many knives did they take?**

One knife and one bag [of gunpowder].

**Was the dead man's family here during the shooting?**

No.

**Does his family stay here now?**

No.

**Where do they stay now?**

In L--- village.

**What about the distance to get there?**

It takes 30 minutes to walk.

**It's a little far and a little difficult for us [to go there], so I asked you for the information. Do you have anything else that I haven't asked you that you want to tell us?**

No.

Further background on the current situation in Pa'an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Incident Report: Villager shot and killed in Pa'an District," (October 2011)
- "Pa'an Situation Update: September 2011," (November 2011)
- "Pa'an Situation Update: June to September 2011," (October 2011)
- "Pa'an Situation Update: September 2011," (October 2011)

- *Displacement Monitoring: Regular updates on protection concerns for villagers in Dooplaya and Pa'an Districts and adjacent areas of Thailand*, (October 2011)
- "Pa'an Situation Update: April 2011," (September 2011)
- "Pa'an interviews: Conditions for villagers returned from temporary refuge sites in Tha Song Yang," (May 2011)

