



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

February 3, 2011 / KHRG #2012-B12

Incident Report: Three villages fined after fighting between Tatmadaw and NSAGs, two villagers arrested, one killed

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to document human rights abuses in Dooplaya District and describes several incidents that occurred in the middle of January 2011. The villager who wrote this report describes the seizure of Tatmadaw supplies by KNLA troops, after which local Te--- villagers were forced to repay the cost of the supplies seized and Sh--- villagers were ordered to pay a fine for the theft. The report describes a third fine levied on Na---village after Tatmadaw troops met and fought with DKBA #999 troops in the Na--- area, as well as the looting of two Na--- villagers' homes after home-owners fled the fighting, the destruction of a third Na--- villager's zinc roof by small arms fire, and the killing of a fourth Na--- villager's pig. The villager who wrote this report also describes the arrest of two other Na--- villagers suspected of being KNLA soldiers, one of whom was subsequently killed. Despite guarantees that the other detained Na--- villager was not a KNLA soldier by the Na--- village head, a monk and one of his relatives, his release was not secured until an additional fine of 300,000 kyat (US \$389.60) was paid.

Incident report | Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District (Received by KHRG in November 2011)

The following incident report 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 Dooplaya District, including four other incident reports and two interviews.²

E--- reported this incident. He was in the [Na---] village during the attack. On January 16th 2011, soldiers from LIB #562 and #563 based at the *Ya Khaing* [Arakan] army camp under control of MOC #5 went to the Waw Lay area. They entered Na--- village and attacked the DKBA *Klo Htoo Baw* army troop.³ Because the fighting happened in that village, the SPDC⁴ army called the

¹ KHRG incident reports are written or gathered by villagers in Dooplaya District who have been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma to document individual incidents of abuse 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 incident reports, villagers are encouraged to document incidents of abuse that they consider to be important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma, 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. As companion to this, a redesigned website will be released in 2012. In the meantime, KHRG's most recently-published field information from Dooplaya District can be found in the Report, "Dooplaya Interview: Saw Ca--, September 2011" KHRG, December 2011.

³ '*Klo Htoo Baw*' translates as 'golden drum' in S'gaw Karen, and is a reference to the traditional drum seen at the centre of the Karen national flag. DKBA forces in Pa'an and Dooplaya districts under the command of Brigadier-

village head [to meet them] and fined the village 150,000 kyat (US \$194.80).⁵ What is more, they arrested two villagers. One was killed and the other one had to replace the drugs [medicine] that the KNLA took away [from Tatmadaw soldiers], costing 300,000 kyat, before he allowed to be set free. He also had to pay the 10,000 kyat motorcycle fee. In total, it cost him 310,000 kyat.

Before the soldiers from LIB #562 and #563 based at the *Ya Khaing* [Arakan] army camp under control of MOC #5 went to the Waw Lay area, first they sent their rations [supplies]. On January 15th 2011, [while they were sending supplies] they arrived at Te--- village and met with the KNLA soldiers and the KNLA soldiers took all the rations [supplies]. So Te--- village had to pay the fine to the SPDC army. The medicine cost 250,000 kyat (US \$324.67), the 20 bags of rice cost about 150,000 kyat (US \$194.80), the Coffee-Mate [cream] cost 12,000 kyat (US \$15.58) and the cans of fish cost 10,000 kyat (US \$12.98). The villagers had to pay [for it all]. They also needed to pay for four viss (6.4kg/ 14.08 lb)⁶ of chicken costing 1,500 kyat. In total the Te--- villagers had to pay 439,000 kyat (US \$570.12) to the SPDC Army.

At midday on January 16th 2011, the Tatmadaw soldiers arrived at Na--- village, where they met DKBA *Klo Htoo Baw* troops and fought with them. None of the soldiers on either side were injured. After the fighting, the SPDC Army called the village head [to meet them] and fined him 150,000 kyat (US \$194.80) because when they entered the village, it resulted in fighting.

Besides that, when the [Na---] home-owners ran away during the fighting, the SPDC soldiers entered the villagers' houses. In S---'s house, [the Tatmadaw soldiers] destroyed one wooden box and they took 40,000 kyat (US \$51.94) and two sweaters. At the teacher Y---'s house, [the Tatmadaw] destroyed one camera and one old pot. In U T---'s house, after the fighting, the SPDC Army fired small arms at the zinc roof of his house so many times that it was destroyed. They also killed Maung O---'s pig, which was about 25 viss (40kg/ 88lb) in weight. They arrested a villager named Maung L---, aged 46 years old, because they accused him of being a KNLA soldier. They beat him, tortured him and took him away. On the way they also arrested one mute villager named W---, aged 19 years old, and took him [with them] when they left Na--- village.

The two villagers were arrested because they [Tatmadaw soldiers] accused them of being KNLA soldiers. The village head and a monk went to visit the base camp where that SPDC Army column stayed. The monk gave his guarantee that they were not KNLA soldiers and the SPDC Army responded to the monk [by saying that] this case was not the monk's responsibility and that the monk should stay on his own side [mind his own business]. On January 17th 2011,

General Saw Lah Pwe (also known as *Na Ka Mway*, or 'moustache') that refused to transform into Tatmadaw Border Guard battalions and, between November 2010 to November 2011, actively resisted government troops have been variously referred to as *Klo Htoo Baw* ['Golden Drum'], DKBA #907, or Brigade #5. See "DKBA Brigade 5 Reaches Ceasefire with Naypyidaw," *The Irrawaddy*, November 4th 2011. For a discussion of the significance of golden drums in Karen culture, see: Jonathan Falla. *True Love and Bartolomew: Rebels on the Burmese border*, Cambridge University Press: 1991.

⁴ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) and *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," *Myanmar Times*, April 4-10th 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the villager who wrote this report and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation of this report.

⁵ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report 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 February 2nd 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 770 kyat. This figure is used for all calculations in this report.

⁶ A viss is a unit of weight equivalent to 1.6 kg. / 3.52 lb.

the SPDC Army killed the villager named Maung L--- in Sh--- village somewhere at the foot of the mountains. The mute villager [named W---] who was still [with the Tatmadaw] was taken to Ht--- village.

After two days they hadn't let him go free yet so the monk who presided over Ht--- village, the Na--- village head and the mute villager's brother, Maung Gy---, came to the base of the SPDC Army column. They guaranteed that this villager was not a KNLA soldier and that he was mute and could not even speak. But what was worse was that the SPDC column commander said that they had to pay back the money for the items that the KNLA soldiers had taken. The total amount of money was 300,000 kyat (US \$389.60) and then a 10,000 kyat (US \$12.98) fee for renting the motorcycle [to carry the supplies]. They brought the medicine back [to the Tatmadaw] and paid the fine, in total costing the village 310,000 kyat (US \$402.59). The SPDC Army then let the mute villager [named W---] go free.

The SPDC Column Commander warned the Ht--- presiding monk. He said don't report this information to anyone. *"If any information is published somewhere I will come back and burn the Na--- village,"* he threatened. This information was given [to me] by the Ht--- monk, who also begged [me] not to tell this information to the government journalists.

W--- can't speak and he lives with his widow mother. They are poor and his mother didn't have money to pay the SPDC army fine [for W--- to be released] so the village head had to take the money from the villagers' ration fund. He has to pay it back in one year without interest.

As well as this, on January 17th 2011, they [the Tatmadaw] entered Sh--- village in Kawkaeik Township and called for the village elder. He was fined 10,000 kyat (US \$12.98) because the KNLA took their rations from Te--- village. The village head did not dare to refuse and had to pay [the Tatmadaw] 10,000 kyat.

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

- "Dooplaya Interview: Saw Ca---, September 2011" (February 2012)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: August 2011 to September 2011" (December 2011)
- "Dooplaya Situation Update: August 2011" (October 2011)
- *Displacement Monitoring: Regular updates on protection concerns for villagers in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts and adjacent areas in Thailand* (October 2011)
- "Village heads negotiate with Tatmadaw, armed groups to forestall human rights threats amid continued conflict in Dooplaya District" (August 2011)
- "Dooplaya Interview: U Sa---, July 2011" (July 2011)
- "Tatmadaw shelling kills one child, injures another in Mae T'Ler village" (June 2011) • "Three villagers killed, eight injured during fighting in Kyaikdon area" (May 2011)

