



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Landmine death and injuries, old mines continue to make travel unsafe in Pa'an District

This report is based on information submitted to KHRG in November 2012 by a community member describing events occurring in Pa'an District, between August 28th 2012 and November 1st 2012, where one landmine exploded in Htee Klay village tract, one landmine exploded in Noh Kay village tract and one landmine exploded in Htee Kyah Rah village tract. These explosions injured a 21-year-old man named Saw P---, who died, a man of around 40-years-old, named Saw B---, who lost one leg, and an unknown Tatmadaw soldier from Light Infantry Battalion #275, who lost both of his legs. One explosion also destroyed the leg of Saw P---'s cow, when it stepped on the mine that killed him. Based on information from a community trained by KHRG, landmines have been planted by both the Border Guard and the Karen Nation Liberation Army, in Noh Kay village tract, T'Nay Hsah Township, Pa'an District, and in Htee Kyah Rah village tract, the community member reported that landmines have been planted by the Tatmadaw and the Karen National Liberation Army.

Old landmines that remain below the ground surface represent a risk that restricts local villagers' ability to travel safely around Htee Klay village tract,¹ as unexploded landmines can remain armed and explode when one steps on them.

On November 1st 2012, at 7:00 am, a 21-year-old villager named Saw P--- was leading his cow near T--- village in order to let the animal graze, when it stepped on a *taing* bomb.² Because of the impact from the landmine explosion, one of the cow's legs was destroyed. Additionally, Saw P--- was struck by shrapnel on the back his neck, the roof of his mouth and on his stomach; according to the community member who submitted this information, his bowels fell out of his body and he died one hour later.

¹ On January 2nd 2012, the representatives from the KNLA Battalion #101, the DKBA, Border Guard and KPF held a meeting in Htee Klay village tract to develop a plan to remove landmines in the area. In May 2012, KHRG reported that that plan had not been implanted yet. See "Pa'an Situation Update: Nabu Township, September 2011 to January 2012," KHRG, May 2012. Although the plan should have covered the landmine that killed Saw P---, KHRG has no information as to which of these groups, if any, planted the landmine in this incident.

² "Taing bomb" refers to a domestically-manufactured MM-1 Stake fragmentation mine. For more information on the use of the MM-1 mine, see *Uncertain Ground: Landmines in Eastern Burma*, KHRG, May 2012 (Pages 25 and 54); see also *Displacement Monitoring: Regular updates on protection concerns for villagers in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts and adjacent areas in Thailand*, Update No: 74 "Dtaing bomb planted beside villager's plantation in Dooplaya District," KHRG, May 2011.

The KHRG community member reported that, in Htee Kyah Rah village tract, landmines have been planted by different armed groups, such as the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the Tatmadaw.³ These landmines have also injured members of these groups. One such incident occurred on October 31st 2012, at approximately 4:00 pm. An unknown Tatmadaw soldier from LIB #275 stepped on an existing landmine near M--- village, Htee Kyah Rah village tract, T'Nay Hsah Township, Pa'an District, while he was patrolling around. The soldier lost both of his legs from the explosion.

Previously, on September 20th 2012, a man from K--- village, Noh Kay village tract, T'Nay Hsah Township, Pa'an District, also stepped on a landmine. The man, who is 46 years of age and named Saw B---, suffered major damage to one side of his leg and the wound has not yet healed. In Noh Kay village tract area, the KHRG community member reported that, landmines have been planted by the Border Guard and the KNLA.⁴

After villagers in the area became aware of the landmine incidents involving Saw P---, Saw B---, and the unidentified Tatmadaw soldier, local villagers from Htee Klay, Noh Kay and Htee Kyah Rah village tracts reported to the community member that they feel unsafe to travel and remain afraid of hidden landmines remaining in their area.

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

- Pa'an Situation Update: T'Nay Hsah Township, September 2011 to April 2012, (July 2012)
- Villagers return home four months after DKBA and Border Guard clash, killing one civilian, injuring two in Pa'an, (June 2012)
- Photo Set: Villagers register concerns about proposed Hatgyi Dam, (June 2012)
- Forced labour and extortion in Pa'an District, (June 2012)
- Pa'an Interview: Saw Bw---, September 2011, (June 2012)
- Pa'an Interview: Saw P---, April 2012, (June 2012)

³ According to the KHRG community member who provided this information, the landmine that exploded in this incident was very old; additionally, the KHRG community member was unable to confirm who planted it. Thus, this bulletin does not represent that either the KNLA or the Tatmadaw is responsible for this particular landmine, because the researcher was unable to identify all the armed groups in the area.

⁴ Although these groups have used landmines in the area in the past, the KHRG researcher was not able to confirm who planted this particular landmine and this bulletin does not represent that either of these groups are responsible for this incident.

