



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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## **Landmine explosion and death of villagers in Papun District**

*This report is based on information submitted by community members in March 2013 describing events occurring in Papun District in February 2013. On February 11<sup>th</sup> 2013, a landmine exploded in K'Ter Tee village tract, Dwe Loh Township, Papun district. A total of five villagers were killed in the explosion; three of whom were under the age of 18. The villagers were hit by the landmine while transporting sand in a car for the Green Hill Company, a company affiliated with BGF Battalions #1013 and #1014. The group who planted the landmine is unknown. While no groups have taken responsibility for the incident, Green Hill Company paid 300,000 kyat (US \$341) to the family of each victim, alongside the manager of the Company, Ko Myo personally contributing 200,000 kyat (US \$227) to each family. This and other landmine incidents received by KHRG between August 2012 and March 2013 were published in a Briefer; see "Landmines shatter peace for villagers in eastern Burma," April 2013.*

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On February 11<sup>th</sup> 2013 at 8:00 am there was a landmine explosion beside the Yone S'Lin River, between K--- village and T--- village in K'Ter Tee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Papun district. Five villagers were hit by the landmine explosion while transporting sand in a car, having been hired to do this by the Green Hill Company<sup>1</sup> manager Ko Myo<sup>2</sup>. Specifically, the villagers were paid by the company to carry sand from a sand bank<sup>3</sup> in H--- village to a Green Hill Company building using villager U M---'s car.<sup>4</sup>

Initially, the company is reported to have claimed that the sand would be used for the building of a school, but later it became clear that the sand was being used for company business, with no benefit to the school. Saw L---, a sand bank owner living in T--- village reported: "Before asking the villagers to carry the sand for them, they [Green Hill company] went to talk with the vice

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<sup>1</sup> Green Hill Company is affiliated with both BGF #1013 and #1014, and also comes under Burma government control.

<sup>2</sup> Ko Myo is a former administrator of K'Ter Tee village and is currently in charge of transporting the sand supplied by the villagers to the Green Hill Company base.

<sup>3</sup> A sand bank is a naturally occurring deposit of sand, often found close to rivers.

<sup>4</sup> This information was included in three unpublished interviews, one incident report and one situation update submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.

village tract leader and the vice village tract leader told them to stop<sup>5</sup> but they didn't, so I think that was how the problems started.”<sup>6</sup> Likewise, T--- village administrator, Saw P---, said, “Before the landmine explosion, Ko Myo, who was a former K'Ter Tee village administrator, went to talk to the KNU [KNLA] who is controlling the area about the carrying of the sand. The KNU leader told Ko Myo to stop it on the day before the explosion [happened], however, Ko Myo didn't [do anything to] stop it.”<sup>7</sup>



These photos were taken on March 2013 in K--- village, K'Taing Tee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Papun District. They show the devastated car that the villagers were driving in when the landmine exploded between T--- village and K--- village. [Photos: KHRG]

Of the five casualties, including the driver, G---, “Three of them were under 18. One was 13 years old while the other two were 14 and 18 respectively,” reported K--- villager, Maung S---. The villager also reported to the community member that three of the victims died immediately in the explosion while one injured villager died on the way to hospital; the fifth victim died in the hospital. Until now, it has not been determined who planted the landmine or the reason why it was planted. A special security unit linked to the government military, the *Sa Ah Pa*, based in K'Ma Maung village, stated that it was the KNLA that planted the landmine, though villagers interviewed remain unsure about who planted it.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The KNU leader is reported to have asked the company to bring a stop to their work because of concerns about its' effect on villagers' livelihoods.

<sup>6</sup> This information was included in an unpublished interview submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.

<sup>7</sup> This information was included in an unpublished incident report submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.

<sup>8</sup> This information was included in an unpublished incident report submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.

None of armed groups are taking measures to provide assistance to the families after the deaths. The Green Hill Company provided 300,000 kyat (US \$341)<sup>9</sup> in compensation to the family of each villager who died. The manager of the company, Ko Myo is also reported to have personally paid 200,000 kyat (US \$227) in compensation to the family of each victim.<sup>10</sup>

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

- “Papun Situation Update: Forced labour in Bu Tho Township, January to February 2013,” (April 2013)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to September 2012,” (April 2013)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2011 to July 2012,” (April 2013)
- “Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, July to October 2012,” (April 2013)
- “Incident Report: Violent abuse in Papun District, October 2012,” (April 2013)

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<sup>9</sup> As of April 12th 2013, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 881 kyat to the US \$1. This reflects new measures taken by Burma's central bank on April 2nd 2012 to initiate a managed float of the Kyat, thus replacing the previous fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1.

<sup>10</sup> This information was included in one unpublished incident report and one interview submitted to KHRG by a community member in Papun District.

