



Incident Report

March 6th 2020 / KHRG # 20-11-11

Mu Traw District Incident Report: *Physical violence against a villager by Tatmadaw soldiers in Dwe Lo Township, January 2020*

This report describes an incident where Tatmadaw¹ soldiers physically abused and detained a villager in A--- village, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District after fighting broke out between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)² and the Tatmadaw on January 2nd 2020. Since he was threatened severely not to talk or look at the soldiers, he could not shout for help or see the perpetrators' faces. The victim sustained injuries to his face, neck and chest, but could not afford to go to the hospital for treatment.³

Part 1 – Incident Details

| | |
|---|---|
| Type of Incident | Physical abuse and torture |
| Date of Incident(s) | January 2 nd 2020 |
| Incident Location (Village, Township and District) | A--- village, Lay Hpoh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District |

| Victim Information | |
|---------------------------|-----------------------|
| Name | Saw ⁴ Y--- |
| Age | 32 |
| Sex | Male |
| Ethnicity | Karen |
| Family | Married |
| Occupation | Farmer |
| Religion | Buddhist |
| Position | Villager |
| Village | A--- village |

¹ Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

² The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the KNU.

³ The present document is based on information received in February 2020. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons. The parts in square brackets are explanations added by KHRG staff.

⁴ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

| Perpetrator Information | | | | |
|-------------------------|-------|---|---|---|
| Name(s) | Rank | Unit | Base | Commander's Name |
| Naung Htun ⁵ | Major | Military Operations Command (MOC) #8, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #408 | Maw Loh Kloh army camp, K'Ma Moh MOC #1 army camp | Lt. Colonel Aung Naing Htun and Colonel Aung Aung |

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

KNLA Battalion #102, Company #3 Commander Saw D--- contacted a KHRG field researcher to inform him about this incident the morning after it occurred. The researcher interviewed the victim Saw Y--- on January 6th 2020. Since the victim was unable to identify the perpetrators (because they pointed guns at his head and prevented him from looking at them), the KHRG researcher talked to the local KNLA Battalion Commander to obtain information about the Tatmadaw battalion that was involved in the incident. The KHRG researcher also interviewed A---, the local village head, and Saw G---, who was in the village during the incident and who helped the victim. The Joint Monitoring Committee [JMC]⁶ staff person, Saw H---, helped the victim the day of the incident, and was also interviewed by phone.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The primary source, Saw Y---, experienced the incident first-hand. Saw H--- is the JMC staff member who was called to the village after the incident. He also provided assistance to the victim, including getting him released from detainment by the Tatmadaw. Saw G---, the village head, was in the village when the fighting broke out, and was the person who informed the JMC staff member that Saw Y--- had been beaten and tortured by Tatmadaw soldiers. Saw D--- is the KNLA Battalion Commander who was involved in the fighting with the Tatmadaw that broke out earlier in the day.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On January 2nd 2020 at 10:00 AM, fighting broke out between Tatmadaw LIB #408 and KNLA Battalion #102, Company #3 in A--- village, Lay Hpoh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu

⁵ The soldiers who beat and detained the victim could not be identified by the victim, but because Naung Htun was the officer in charge at the time of the incident, he is responsible for the actions of his troop and thus is listed here as a perpetrator.

⁶ The Joint Monitoring Committee was established at the Myanmar state and regional level in late 2015 to monitor signatories' adherence to the October 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. It considers the majority of its monitoring to be based on territorial disputes, but has been slow to respond to complaints over breaches of the NCA code of conduct and lacks a formal complaint mechanism, or any enforcement powers. For more information see, "[Majority of joint ceasefire monitoring committee complaints are territorial disputes](#)," The Irrawaddy, July 2017.

Traw District. The fighting originally broke out because LIB #408 troops trespassed more than 50 yards [45.72 metres] into an area controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU).⁷ The villagers interviewed said that the Tatmadaw soldiers did not have any prior contact with the village head, even though they entered into KNU-restricted area with military ammunition. They said that the fighting broke out because this violated the NCA Code of Conduct.⁸

Saw Y---, a local villager, fled to the end part of the village because he was afraid when he heard the sound of fighting. According to Saw Y---, Tatmadaw soldiers arrested him at 11:00 AM and punched him on his cheeks. Then, the soldiers laid him down on the ground and pointed guns at both sides of his head. He was then kicked with the soldiers' boots twice and hit once with a gun. He was not allowed to call for the village head. He was not allowed to talk.

Saw Y--- was held by the soldiers for three hours. He was beaten repeatedly during those three hours whenever he tried to talk. The Tatmadaw soldiers beat him until he got dizzy and sustained injuries on his head, neck, and chest. Saw Y--- also recalled being held at gunpoint during that whole time: "*When the two villagers were shot, they [the soldiers who were beating him] were called to carry artillery. One of the soldiers went to carry guns and one soldier stayed with me. He still pointed at me on the side of my face with his gun.*"

At 2:00 PM that afternoon, JMC Saw H--- came to A--- village to bring to the hospital two other villagers who had been shot and injured by Tatmadaw soldiers earlier that day.⁹ At that time, local village head Saw G--- told Saw H--- that there was another person [Saw Y---] who had been beaten and tortured by Tatmadaw soldiers. Saw H--- then went to investigate and found Saw Y--- still being detained by the Tatmadaw. He then told the soldiers that Saw Y--- was an ordinary villager, so they released him.

Saw Y--- did not know who beat him. He only knew that it was Tatmadaw soldiers. He believed that [JMC staff] Saw H--- would know who beat him. KNLA Battalion #102, Company #3 Commander Saw D--- told a KHRG researcher that these soldiers were from LIB #408, which was based in the Maw Loh Kloh army camp that day. Naung Htun was the Deputy Battalion Commander responsible for A--- village [and for the actions of LIB #408 at the time of the incident].

At the time of the interview (which was four days following the incident), Saw Y---'s face was still swollen from the beating. He was unable to go to the hospital to have his injuries looked at because he did not have enough money.

Currently, there are no village agency strategies to help villagers protect themselves from this kind of incident. Village head Saw G--- said he was wondering whether to flee to other places or resign from his position because he was afraid (a similar situation took place in 2017). He also said that if the higher leaders cannot arrange anything to resolve this, he will no longer take the position of village head.

⁷ The Karen National Union is the main Karen group opposing the government.

⁸ On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups, a [Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement \(NCA\)](#) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the Karen National Union. It was followed by the adoption of a Code of Conduct by the signatories in November 2015. In February 2018, two additional armed ethnic groups signed the NCA under pressure from the Burma/Myanmar government.

⁹ See KHRG (March 2020), "[Mu Traw District Incident Report: Tatmadaw soldiers shot two villagers in Dwe Lo Township, January 2020](#)".

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

The victim himself said that the information provided can be used.

Further background reading on human rights violations committed by the Tatmadaw in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Southeast Myanmar Field Report: Militarisation, environmental pollution and sexual violence against children, July to December 2019"](#), (February 2020)
- ["Thaon Interviews: Skirmishes between the Tatmadaw/BGF and the DKBA Splinter Group resulting in displacement in Kyeh Htoh \(Kyaikto\) Township, June 2019"](#), (December 2019)
- ["Hpa-an District Interview: Land confiscation by the Tatmadaw in T'Nay Hsah Township, March 2019"](#), (December 2019)
- ["Hpapun Situation Update: Militarisation, extortion and gold mining activities harming villagers in Dwe Lo Township, June to July 2019"](#), (November 2019)

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Myanmar. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at www.khrq.org.

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



Karen Human Rights Group (KHRG)