



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident Report

April 2nd 2021 / KHRG # 21-107-I1

Dooplaya District Incident Report: *Two villagers injured in the explosion of a mortar shell in Kaw T'Ree Township, March 2021*

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Kaw Nweh village tract,¹ Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. On the evening of March 26th 2021, several mortar rounds were fired at A--- village, presumably by the Tatmadaw.² A local villager and his five-year-old son sustained injuries to their legs after one mortar shell exploded in front of their house. Both of them were taken to the hospital for treatment later that day. They were quickly discharged and are now back in their village. Local villagers are worried that fighting might resume in their area, so they dug holes under their houses to take cover whenever shelling or skirmishes occur.³

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Indiscriminate shelling resulting in injuries
Date of Incident(s)	March 26 th 2021
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District

Victim Information		
Name	Saw ⁴ H---	Saw Y---
Age	45	5
Sex	Male	Male
Nationality	Karen	Karen
Family	Married	-
Religion	Buddhist	Buddhist
Village	A--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District	A--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District

¹ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

² Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

³ The present document is based on information received in March 2021. It was provided by a community member in Dooplaya 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.

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

Perpetrator Information (Armed actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's name
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

A KHRG researcher interviewed one of the victims, as well as the local village tract administrator.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The victim experienced this incident first hand.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On March 26th 2021, at 8:30 pm, two villagers were injured in a mortar explosion in A--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. On that evening, local villagers were cutting cow meat together in the same house. They heard the whistling sound of mortar shells flying towards the village while they were returning to their respective houses [after which they took shelter].

Saw H---, a local 45-year-old villager, first heard the sound of a mortar explosion when he was inside his old [wooden] house. He immediately grabbed his five-year-old son, Saw Y---, and ran to his newly-built cement house to take shelter [both houses are located in the same yard]. However, a mortar shell fell in his yard and exploded at approximately five feet [1.5 metres] away from them. Saw Y--- sustained light shrapnel injuries on his left leg, while Saw H--- sustained more serious injuries above his right knee.

Saw H--- recounted the incident to KHRG: *"We were at my old house. When we heard the explosion, we ran to my new house. The two houses are only within a few seconds of each other. When we were running towards the new house, we were hit by shrapnel. [...] I was able to run to the doorstep [of the new house] while my blood was still warm. After my blood cooled down, I could not run anymore [he only started feeling pain after reaching the new house]. I carried my son in my arms until I reached the doorstep."*

The shrapnel tore a hole in Saw H---'s leg, causing him to bleed. He and his son were taken to the Taw Naw [Karen Department of Health and Welfare]⁵ hospital by car right after the incident. According to the local village tract administrator: *"Yes, the incident happened at night time. We tried to find a car but the car owners [local villagers] were too concerned for their security to travel. We eventually found [another] car [driver] and then took the injured persons to the Taw Naw hospital."* Saw H--- got 17 stitches on his right thigh. His son did not require stitches, but medicine was applied to his wounds. They still have to undergo medical check-ups and change their dressing at the hospital regularly.

⁵ The Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) is the health department of the Karen National Union. It was established in 1956 to address the lack of public healthcare resources in rural Southeast Myanmar. It currently operates a network of community-based clinics in the region, but its capabilities remain limited due to funding constraints.

Local villagers do not know for sure who fired the mortar shells, but Saw H--- thinks it was Tatmadaw soldiers: *"I don't think the Karen [Karen National Liberation Army - KNLA]⁶ soldiers did it. It must have been the Tatmadaw because the mortar sounds came from the lower side of the village [an area where Tatmadaw soldiers are usually active]."*⁷ Saw H--- also said that the explosion caused a hole in the ground in front of his house. According to him, the type of ordnance used was a 60 mm mortar shell.

At the moment, there is only a KNLA camp near the village. There used to be a Tatmadaw camp too, but the troops manning it left a few years ago – although Tatmadaw soldiers continue to patrol the area. There is a Tatmadaw base in Kawkaik Town. Due to the tense political situation [aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup],⁸ local villagers are concerned for their security and worried that fighting [between the KNLA and the Tatmadaw] might resume. Therefore, they dug holes under their houses so they can take cover whenever shelling or fighting occurs. Villagers who are assuming leading roles within the Civil Disobedience Movement⁹ have stopped sleeping in their houses [to evade arrest]. Some of them sleep in a hammock in the forest while others sleep in other people's houses.

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 gave KHRG permission to use this information.

⁶ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁷ KHRG's information seems to back up this claim, as we documented several instances of indiscriminate shelling by Tatmadaw soldiers over the last few months. For more information, see the background reading section at the end of this report.

⁸ On February 1st 2021, the Burma Army deposed the democratically elected government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD). The military proclaimed a year-long state of emergency and transferred power to Min Aung Hlaing, the Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's Armed Forces. Based on unproven fraud allegations, the Tatmadaw invalidated the landslide victory of the NLD in the November 2020 General Election and stated it would hold new elections at the end of the state of emergency. The coup d'état occurred the day before the Parliament of Myanmar was due to swear in the members elected during the 2020 election. Elected President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi were detained, along with ministers, their deputies and members of Parliament.

⁹ On February 2nd 2021, healthcare workers at state-run hospitals and medical facilities across Myanmar spearheaded what is being referred to as a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) consisting of labour strikes in protest against the February 1st 2021 military coup. The movement quickly spread to include civil servants from all sectors of the government (administrative, education, medical, transportation, journalism, etc.) who are walking off their jobs as a way of non-recognition and non-participation in the military regime. Because of the popularity of the movement, and its seminal role in wider protests across the country, some people have begun using it as a catch-all phrase to include other protest forms like boycotts and pot-banging.



These photos were taken on March 27th 2021 in A--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District.

The top right photo shows the tail of the mortar shell that fell in Saw H---'s yard and the hole caused by the explosion.

The photos on the left show a tree and a house that were damaged by shrapnel.

[Photos: KHRG]



These photos were taken on March 27th 2021 in A--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District.

They show the injuries sustained by Saw H--- and Saw Y---.

[Photos: KHRG]

Further background reading on the issue of indiscriminate shelling by the Tatmadaw in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Southeast Myanmar Field Report: COVID-19, armed conflict, killings and sexual violence, July to December 2020"](#), February 2021.
- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: The Tatmadaw repeatedly fired large numbers of mortars into civilian areas and burned forests in Lu Thaw Township, January 2020 to April 2020"](#), December 2020.
- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: Militarisation, indiscriminate shelling, displacement and landmine contamination in Bu Tho Township, May to July 2020"](#), December 2020.

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.khr.org.

Dooplaya (Southeastern Karen State) District

