



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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### **Situation Update**

December 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 / KHRG # 21-195-S1

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## **Doooplaya District Situation Update: SAC interrogation and arbitrary arrest, arbitrary killing, and displacement due to fighting in Noh T’Kaw and Kruh Tuh townships, April to May 2021**

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*This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Noh T’Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) and Kruh Tuh (Kyonedoe) townships, Doooplaya District in April and May 2021. Events include State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers conducting roadside searches, resulting in the interrogation and detention of one villager; the arbitrary killing of a ten-household head; and displacement to Doooplaya District due to fighting in Mu Traw (Hpapun) District.<sup>1</sup>*

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This situation update was collected between April and May 2021 in Doooplaya District. The update includes [State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup>] investigations and interrogations in and around town, arbitrary arrests, killings and displacement due to fighting.

### **Investigations and interrogations in town and arbitrary arrests**

SAC forces<sup>3</sup> have been conducting investigations in and around Seik Gyi Town, Noh T’Kaw Township, Doooplaya District. SAC security forces have searched civilians’ cars, motorcycles and phones on the main road through Noh T’Kaw Township. On May 19<sup>th</sup> 2021, at 8:00 am, a

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in June 2021. It was provided by a community member in Doooplaya 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.

<sup>2</sup> The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup.

<sup>3</sup> The term most commonly used in referring to Myanmar’s armed forces is Tatmadaw. The term has been used by KHRG throughout its reporting history, and most consistently during periods of civilian government. Since the February 1st 2021 coup and the military’s establishment of the State Administration Council (SAC) as the executive governing body of Myanmar, Myanmar’s armed forces have also come to be referred to as the SAC military. KHRG uses the term SAC military in specific reference to the Myanmar military since the February 1st 2021 coup. During previous periods of military rule, KHRG also used the names adopted by the military government in referring to the Tatmadaw (i.e. SLORC [State Law and Order Restoration Council] between 1988 to 1997, and SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] from 1998 to 2011), because these were the terms commonly used by villagers in KHRG research areas.

villager named Saw<sup>4</sup> Y---, a 19-year-old student [enrolled in Grade 11 at a government school] from E--- village, Lay Wah Hka village tract,<sup>5</sup> Noh T'Kaw Township went to buy 14 black shirts in Kyainseikgyi Town. He was buying them with the intention of using them for a dance performance with a group of dancers in his village. On his way back to the village, he was stopped by SAC soldiers. They asked him what he was going to do with the black shirts he bought. They searched through the photos in his phone and took him by car to the Seik Gyi Police Station. When he arrived at the police station, the police officers asked him what he planned to do with the black shirts. [According to Saw Y---,] the police officers did not like to see civilians wearing these black shirts. The police officers also searched his phone, but he has only his personal photos. He had to sleep one night at the police station. On the morning of May 20<sup>th</sup> 2021, he was released after being required to pay [the amount was not stated] the police [it is common for Myanmar police to demand payment for release, even though the person was not charged with a crime]. The payment was made by the E--- village head and his [Saw Y---'s] parents. Later, all the black shirts were returned to him [Saw Y---]. He was able to go home at 7:00 am.

## **Killing**

On April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2021, at about 8:30 pm, a villager named U<sup>6</sup> W---, living in K--- village, Section (8), Kyone Kwel village tract, Kyonedoe Township, Dooplaya District went to answer a knock at his kitchen door. He was shot on sight by an unknown assailant. U W--- was Karen-Buddhist and a ten-household head (another name for a traditional healer). Many people went to him for treatment. He was shot at with six bullet rounds, one of which hit him in the chest [killing him]. He was hit only by one bullet; the others hit the roof of his house. His wife was at home when he was shot by the bullet. At that time, his two grandchildren were watching a movie. After the shooting, they found out that there were four rounds of M16 bullets and two rounds of AK bullets. Later, the Kyone Kwel village tract administrator, U S---, made a phone call to the Karen National Police Force (KNPF)<sup>7</sup> in Kyonedoe Township to inform them of this incident. It was already at night when he phoned the KNPF and it was too far for the police to get to K---village. It was also not easy to travel to the village due to travel restrictions tied to the curfew [imposed by the SAC]. Therefore, U S---phoned the Chaung Na Kwa [SAC] Police Station for help, but the police were afraid to go to the village to investigate the death, and asked him to leave the dead body for the time being. At about 11:00 pm, U S--- sent the corpse to the Chaung Na Kwa Tite Nae hospital, and the [SAC] police officers claimed that these bullets were not theirs. The case remains unresolved, and no further investigation has been made by either the KNPF or the SAC police force. The corpse was taken back to the family home that same night.

## **Displacement from Mu Traw District to Dooplaya District**

On May 15<sup>th</sup> 2021, a family from H--- village, K'Ter Tee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District moved to stay with their relatives in U--- village, Htee Ghu Thaw (Htee Hoo Than) village tract, Kyonedoe Township, Dooplaya District. They moved to live in U--- village because of the fighting and indiscriminate shelling near their village [in Mu Traw District]. Because of the increase in [SAC military] movements, the families [in that area of Mu Traw District] are facing livelihood difficulty. The family from H--- village fled to the forest [in Dwe Lo Township] and had to build temporary dwellings [before eventually fleeing to U--- to stay with family].

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

<sup>5</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

<sup>6</sup> U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

<sup>7</sup> The Karen National Police Force is the law enforcement agency of the Karen National Union. It was established in 1991.

[According to the family,] there has not yet been other displacements [no other families have fled] from H--- village, K'Ter Tee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District. In some other villages in Dwe Lo Township, the villagers from the entire village had to flee. These villages include: I--- village and A--- village in Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township and Mu Traw District. Villagers in some villages were able to remain in the village because the Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>8</sup>/Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>9</sup> protected them from attacks by the SAC military. [The family added that] landmine contamination has continued to pose a major problem for villagers residing in the Dwe Lo Township.

Further background reading on the security situation in Dooplaya and Mu Traw districts in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Dooplaya District Interview: Fighting between SAC troops and other armed groups resulted in villagers' displacement, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District, June 1st 2021"](#), July 2021.
- ["Dooplaya District Interview: Recent fighting and displacement in Kaw T'Ree Township, June 2021"](#), July 2021.
- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: Indiscriminate shelling by the Tatmadaw results in displacement in Lu Thaw Township, December 2020 to February 2021"](#), June 2021.
- ["Mu Traw District Short Update: Skirmishes, indiscriminate shelling by the Tatmadaw and landmine contamination in Dwe Lo and Bu Tho townships, March and April 2021"](#), May 2021.

## 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

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<sup>8</sup> The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma/Myanmar government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Myanmar and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

<sup>9</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

### Dooplaya (Southeastern Karen State) District

