



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

## Incident Report

December 16<sup>th</sup> 2021 / KHRG # 21-299-I1

### Mu Traw District Incident Report: A male villager was injured by a landmine explosion in Dwe Lo Township, September 2021

*This Incident Report describes an event that occurred in Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District in September 2021. Due to the fighting, indiscriminate shelling and landmine contamination in the area, villagers living in A--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District have been displaced for several months. Despite the ongoing risks, several households returned home to A--- village due to the financial challenges of remaining in other villages. At 7:00 am on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2021, one of the villagers who had returned to live in A--- village stepped on a landmine while he was going to collect fish from the gillnets that he had set up in the river near his village. His legs were injured in the explosion, and his right leg had to be amputated. The victim and his wife are not sure which armed group planted this landmine.<sup>1</sup>*

#### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Landmine explosion
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	September 27 <sup>th</sup> 2021
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	A--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, <sup>2</sup> Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District

Victim Information	
<b>Name</b>	Saw <sup>3</sup> B---
<b>Age</b>	47
<b>Sex</b>	Male
<b>Nationality</b>	Karen
<b>Family</b>	Married
<b>Occupation</b>	Casual labourer
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in October 2021. 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.

<sup>2</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>3</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<b>Position</b>	Villager
<b>Village</b>	A--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

### **1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.**

KHRG staff conducted a phone interview with the victim's wife and she provided KHRG with information on this landmine incident.

### **2. Explain how the source verified this information.**

The source is the victim's wife.

## **Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident**

**Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.**

Indiscriminate shelling and continuous fighting between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>4</sup> and State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>5</sup> troops,<sup>6</sup> aligned with the Border Guard Force (BGF)<sup>7</sup>, led to the displacement of villagers living in A--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District for the past three to four months. While many villagers are still staying in other villages, some [about four or five households] have returned to A--- because of financial difficulties.

Saw B---, a 47-year-old man, and his family were among those who returned to A--- village. *"As for us, we have difficulty in the place where we have been displaced. We have no money*

<sup>4</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>5</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>6</sup> Tatmadaw is the term most commonly used in referring to Myanmar's armed forces. 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.

<sup>7</sup> Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw.

*[cannot earn money] while staying in other villages. We have to buy everything. That is why we do not want to stay in another village. So we returned to live in our village,”* stated Naw<sup>8</sup> C---, Saw B---’s wife. Though they were able to return to A---, travel is still being restricted in this area due to ongoing fighting and indiscriminate shelling. Saw B--- is just an ordinary villager who works as a casual labourer, as do many others in his village. After returning to live in A--- village, Saw B--- had no work, so he set up gillnets [to catch fish] in the river every morning to provide for his family [both for his family to eat and to sell].

At 7:00 am on the morning of September 27<sup>th</sup> 2021, Saw B--- stepped on a landmine along the riverbank while he was going to collect fish from the gillnets he set up in the Yunsaling River, which is near his village. As soon as they heard the explosion, Saw B---’s brother-in-law and some other villagers went to the incident location and found that the victim was Saw B---. He [the brother-in-law] then immediately sent Saw B--- to the SAC military hospital located in Hpapun Town.

Due to travel restrictions, they [the villagers] had to rent a boat to send Saw B--- from A--- village to the hospital in Hpapun Town for treatment. The travel [from A--- village to Hpapun Town] took about two hours and they [the victim and his brother-in-law] had to pay 50,000 kyats [USD 28.09]<sup>9</sup> to rent the boat. Naw C---, the victim’s wife, was not allowed to accompany her husband to the SAC military hospital in Hpapun Town [the hospital has a rule that men must be accompanied by men, and women must be accompanied by women]. Instead, the victim’s brother-in-law had to accompany him.

Saw B--- sustained injuries to both legs due to the landmine explosion, and he had to have his right leg amputated. Saw B--- had to stay in the hospital in Hpapun Town for five days. Once there, he did not have to spend much on medical expenses [he only had to pay for the medicine], but he had to pay for transportation fees and food costs [during his travels and at the hospital].

On October 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, the hospital in Hpapun referred Saw B--- to Hpa-an Hospital for further treatment. It was not possible to send him using a land route from Hpapun Town to K’Ma Moh (Kamarmaung) Town [because the road was blocked due to fighting], so they [his family] had to rent a boat going to K’Ma Moh Town. At K’Ma Moh Town, they rented a car to send him to the hospital in Hpa-an Town. At Hpa-an Hospital, he had to spend between 10,000 and 15,000 kyats [USD 5.62 and 8.43] [exact amount unknown] on medicine. Moreover, it cost him over 100,000 kyats [USD 56.18] for another operation [the amputation of his right leg in Hpapun did not go well, so Saw B--- had to undergo another operation in Hpa-an]. Saw B--- spent 18 days recovering at the hospital in Hpa-an.

On October 18<sup>th</sup> 2021, Saw B--- was discharged from the hospital in Hpa-an. The doctor told him to return for a medical check [follow-up] after 15 days. The victim and his family are currently staying in Hpa-an Town.

Saw B--- and his family never attended Mine Risk Education Training in his village, and were only informed about mines when the armed groups told them to avoid prohibited areas. However, they [the armed groups] generally do not tell villagers exactly where they have planted the landmines. Since the incident occurred, Red Cross Myanmar has provided Saw B--- with a small amount of financial support, but it did not cover all of his medical expenses. Later, DanChurchAid (DCA) was able to financially support him [for his remaining medical expenses and associated costs].

<sup>8</sup> Naw is a S’gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.

<sup>9</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the December 15<sup>th</sup> 2021 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.56 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>).

Saw B--- and his wife have three children and are also caring for Naw C---'s mother. His wife despairs at seeing her husband suffering, and she worries for the future of her family.

## **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

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

The source [the victim's wife, Naw C---] has given KHRG permission to use the information she provided.



This photo was taken on September 27<sup>th</sup> 2021 in Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District. It shows Saw B--- being sent to the SAC military hospital located in Hpapun Town. [Photo : KHRG]

Further background reading on the situation on landmine incidents in the Mu Traw District of Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: A man was injured by a landmine explosion in Dwe Lo Township, September 2021,"](#) October 2021.
- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: A 10-year-old boy was injured after stepping on a tripwire that detonated a landmine in Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District, June 2021,"](#) September 2021.
- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: Two villagers were seriously injured as a result of landmine explosions in Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District, June 2021,"](#) July 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 examples of our work can be seen online at [www.khr.org](http://www.khr.org).

# Mutraw (Hpapun) District

