



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

---

### Short Update

January 6<sup>th</sup>, 2022 / KHRG #21-338-D1

---

## Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC troops fired mortars into a village, injuring three villagers, December 2021

---

*This Short Update describes events that occurred in Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District in December 2021. Three villagers (two children and one adult) were injured by mortars that SAC troops fired at their village following a skirmish between the SAC and the KNLA. A few days after this incident, and following another skirmish, SAC troops fired their weapons at a mother and child who were working in their paddy field.<sup>1</sup>*

---

On the evening of December 7<sup>th</sup> 2021, a skirmish occurred near H--- village, Kheh Der village tract<sup>2</sup>, Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District when local [Brigade #3] Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>3</sup> and Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)<sup>4</sup> troops combined forces to attack State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>5</sup> Infantry Battalion (IB)<sup>6</sup> #75 at H--- army camp. Following the skirmish, SAC IB #75, which is led by Battalion Commander Zaw Zaw Naing and based at the army camp south of the village, fired mortars at H--- village. Two of the mortars exploded in the village, injuring three villagers.

The skirmish took place at around 7:05 pm. Children and teenagers were gathering at the church to practice singing and dancing [in preparation to celebrate Christmas] when they heard

---

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in December 2021. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee Htoo 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> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>4</sup> The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

<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> An Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

gunfire around H--- village, causing them to flee and scatter through the village. Following the gunfire, the SAC troops<sup>7</sup> from IB #75 fired two mortars into the village, injuring three villagers.

The three injured villagers are Saw<sup>8</sup> D---, a 25-year-old man; Saw B---, an 11-year-old boy; and Naw<sup>9</sup> C---, an 11-year-old girl. [All three had been at the church and fled at the sound of gunfire.] Saw D--- was struck by shrapnel on his chest, just below his left nipple. Saw B---'s left foot was struck by shrapnel and one of his toes was blown off. Naw C--- was hit by shrapnel on her left thigh, resulting in a minor injury. According to the villager who reported this incident to KHRG, all three injured villagers were initially treated by the local health worker, as there is no clinic or hospital in the village.

On the morning of December 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, SAC soldiers from IB #75 called the H--- village administrator to check on the three injured villagers and asked him and fellow villagers to send those who had been injured to H--- army camp for proper treatment. All three injured villagers were sent to the IB #75 army camp and received treatment there. Both Saw B--- and Naw C--- were able to get [sufficient] treatment at the army camp, as their injuries were not serious [not life-threatening]. SAC soldiers told villagers that Saw D---'s injury was serious and he was in critical condition [due to the location of the injury].

The SAC told Saw D---'s parents that they could not treat him at the army camp due to the severity of his injury, and the fact that the shrapnel was located close to his heart. According to one villager, the victim's parents had two options to treat their son: the first option was to send their son to Ler Doh Town and get treatment at a hospital in the town, while the second option was to send their son to a hospital in a Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>10</sup>-controlled area in Mu Traw District. Ler Doh Town is far from H--- village and transportation to the town is difficult, so the parents decided to send their son to a hospital in a KNU-controlled area of Mu Traw District [the location in Mu Traw is also far from H--- village, but Saw D---'s parents felt safer sending their son to this location]. Saw D--- was transported to the hospital in a hammock carried by other villagers on the evening of December 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, and is currently being treated at the hospital in Mu Traw District.

---

<sup>7</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.

<sup>8</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>9</sup> Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>10</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.



This photo on was taken on the night of December 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, in H--- village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District by a local villager. The photo shows Saw D---, who was injured by shrapnel from a mortar fired by SAC troops from IB #75, being carried in a hammock on the way to a hospital in Mu Traw District for treatment. *[Photo: Local villager]*

One villager reported that they [the villagers] are afraid because the SAC soldiers told them that, if fighting did occur near the village, it would be because the villagers were cooperating with “outsiders” [term used by the SAC, which villagers understood to mean the KNLA and KNDO] to allow the KNLA to attack them [the SAC troops]. The villager also added that the SAC soldiers told them that if they [the SAC troops] were attacked, they would fire at any location they thought the attack was coming from [meaning the SAC soldiers will fire indiscriminately in the direction of the attack, and mortars could land in the village].

A villager also reported that the SAC troops sent more trucks to their army camp at H--- in order to repair the vehicle roads and bring rations to their frontline army camps in the area, though the local KNU and KNLA have strictly forbidden the SAC from doing so. According to the local KNLA soldiers, as of December 14<sup>th</sup> 2021, 51 trucks with about 2,400 sacks of rice, ammunitions and other supplies have been sent to H--- army camp. Four SAC battalions were sent to the area in early December 2021: IB #124, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)<sup>11</sup> #351, LIB #598 and LIB #440. IB #75 was already present in the area, so there are now five SAC battalions [in the area around H---]. Because they [the SAC] have increased troop presence in the area and are conducting more security operations in order to send rations, villagers are in a more difficult situation. Because H--- village is situated beside the vehicle road and surrounded by mountains, villagers are not able to relocate anywhere else.

As of December 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, villagers do not dare go to their paddy farms to harvest and collect [their already] harvested paddy [the whole rice grain, including hulls] because they worry that the SAC troops will fire mortars at their farms. In addition, the SAC troops began conducting more military activities, making the [livelihood] situation even more difficult for local villagers.

### **Second Incident**

Five days after this incident, at around 1:00 pm on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2021, local KNLA and KNDO joined forces and attacked a group of SAC troops to the east of H--- village at L--- Place, when the SAC soldiers were returning to H--- army camp [from security patrol]. Following the attack, at around 2:00 pm, the same SAC troops that were attacked opened fire at a mother and child while the two were harvesting paddy on their farm. The SAC troops used several small arms [small assault rifles] and one M-79 [grenade launcher], which they launched from G--- Place [which is located in between L--- Place and H--- village]. The mother and child managed to run away, so there were no casualties.

---

<sup>11</sup> A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

As of December 14<sup>th</sup> 2021, some villagers have gone to work on their farms, however, they are very cautious because they worry the SAC troops might shoot or fire at them.

Further background reading on the situation of militarisation and human rights violations in Kler Lwee Htoo District in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "[Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: One villager injured, another one missing after being shot at by the Tatmadaw in Moo Township, May 2021](#)", June 2021.
- "[Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: Increased militarisation and fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KNLA prevent IDPs from returning home in Ler Doh Township, March to May 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 examples of our work can be seen online at [www.khr.org](http://www.khr.org).

# Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

