



## Incident Report

March 5<sup>th</sup>, 2021 / KHRG Log # 21-58-I1

## Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Child seriously injured in a landmine explosion in Thaton Township, January 2021

On January 8<sup>th</sup> 2021, a 12-year-old boy stepped on a landmine in Ta Maw Daw village tract,<sup>1</sup> Thaton Township, Doo Tha Htoo [Thaton] District. His left foot was blown off in the explosion, and he sustained injuries to his right thigh. The victim spent three weeks at a local clinic for treatment, after which he was sent back to his village. This particular landmine was planted by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>2</sup> in response to an increase in Tatmadaw<sup>3</sup> activities in the area.<sup>4</sup>

### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Landmine explosion
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	January 8 <sup>th</sup> 2021
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	A--- village, Ta Maw Daw village tract, Thaton Township, Doo Tha Htoo District

Victim Information	
<b>Name</b>	Saw B---
<b>Age</b>	12
<b>Sex</b>	Male
<b>Family</b>	Single
<b>Position</b>	Schoolchild
<b>Village</b>	A--- village, Thaton Township, Doo Tha Htoo District

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	KNLA Brigade #1, Battalion	Unknown	Unknown

<sup>1</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>2</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>3</sup> Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

<sup>4</sup> The present document is based on information received in March 2021. It was provided by a community member in Doo Tha 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.

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## Part 2 - Information Quality

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

This information was provided by the Karen Women Organisation's (KWO) secretary for Thaton Township.

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

The source provided assistance to the family of the victim after the incident and helped arrange his transportation to the clinic.

## Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

### **Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.**

On January 8<sup>th</sup> 2021 at around 8 am, Saw B---, a 12-year-old boy from A--- village, Ta Maw Daw village tract, Thaton Township, Doo Tha Htoo District stepped on a landmine while collecting *Thay T'way* [Grewia Polygama] bark<sup>5</sup> in a forest three miles [4.83 km] away from his village with a group of older villagers. His left foot was blown off in the explosion. He also sustained injuries to his right thigh.

After the incident, the older villagers carried him back to the village. Later that day, he was sent to the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW)<sup>6</sup> clinic in the Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>7</sup> Thaton District office for treatment. He was discharged from the clinic after three weeks and sent back to his village. Saw B--- is an orphan [his mother died and his father left him]. He now lives with his widowed aunt, but she is struggling with livelihood challenges. The victim did not need to pay any medical fees. He also received financial support from local villagers, township leaders and the KWO. He got 350,000 kyats [USD 248.25]<sup>8</sup> in total.

As it is difficult for his aunt to send Saw B--- back to the clinic, KNU medics have been visiting him in A--- village regularly to monitor his condition. As of March 4<sup>th</sup> 2021, he was recovering well without further complications.

The landmine that caused the incident was planted by the KNLA Brigade #1, Battalion #2 or the affiliated Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO).<sup>9</sup> On January 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, the KNLA informed local villagers that they would plant landmines in the forest. KNLA soldiers warned the villagers again on the evening of January 7<sup>th</sup> and the morning of January 8<sup>th</sup> 2021. According to the KWO secretary for Thaton Township, a group of villagers saw KNLA soldiers

<sup>5</sup> Grewia Polygama bark is used by local villagers to make traditional shampoo. It can be sold for 300 kyats [USD 0.21] per viss [1.6 kg].

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</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>8</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the March 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 official market rate.

<sup>9</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.

in the forest while collecting *Thay T'way* bark the day before the incident.

In late December 2020, the Tatmadaw sent more troops to and increased its patrolling activities in the region following several rounds of fighting with the KNLA in Mu Traw District.<sup>10</sup> This amounts to a violation of Section 5(c) of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA),<sup>11</sup> which states that the signatories must “avoid troop reinforcements in the ceasefire areas other than the provision of administrative support.”

This increased Tatmadaw activity led KNLA Brigade #1, Battalion #2 to plant landmines in order to prevent the Tatmadaw from operating in some areas. [According to a KHRG researcher, Tatmadaw troops are particularly active in the forest where the incident took place.] The planting of new landmines is a violation of sections 5(a) of the NCA and 8(A) of its corresponding Code of Conduct.



This photo was taken in January 2021 at the KNU Thaton District office.

It shows the victim being treated for the injuries he sustained in the landmine explosion.

[Photo: KHRG]

#### **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's aunt allowed KHRG to use this information.

<sup>10</sup> For more information see KHRG, “[Southeast Myanmar Field Report: COVID-19, armed conflict, killings and sexual violence, July to December 2020](#)”, February 2021.

<sup>11</sup> 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 ethnic armed groups signed the NCA under pressure from the Burma/Myanmar government.

Further background reading on the consequences of landmine contamination in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: Militarisation, indiscriminate shelling, displacement and landmine contamination in Bu Tho Township, May to July 2020”](#), December 2020.
- [“Southeast Myanmar Field Report: COVID-19, armed conflict, landmines and sexual violence, January to June 2020”](#), September 2020.
- [“Hpa-an District Situation Update: Landmine contamination, land confiscation, extortion and pollution from mining activities, January to May 2019”](#), March 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.khrg.org](http://www.khrg.org).

# Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District

