



Short Update

July 14th 2022 / KHRG # 22-135-D1

Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: SAC shelling, arbitrary arrest and torture, extortion, and looting, March 2022

This Short Update describes events that occurred in K'Ser Doh (Thayatchaung) Township, Mergui-Tavoy District during March 2022. After the State Administration Council (SAC) Infantry Battalion (IB) #267 fired mortars into K--- village, The Chaung Gyi village tract, Taung Pyauk Taik area, K'Ser Doh Township on March 30th 2022, they entered the village and arrested, tortured and interrogated several villagers. After that incident, villagers there were afraid and went to stay in other places. Villagers also faced extortion and looting by the same SAC battalion.¹

SAC shelling, arbitrary arrest, and torture

At around 4:00 am on March 30th 2022, State Administration Council (SAC)² Infantry Battalion (IB)³ #267 fired mortar shells into K--- village, The Chaung Gyi village tract⁴, Taung Pyauk Taik area, K'Ser Doh (Thayatchaung) Township, which is under Karen National Union (KNU)⁵ control. According to U A---, a village head who was appointed by the National Unity Government (NUG)⁶, the SAC conducted shelling [into the village] because of the opening of an

¹ The present document is based on information received in April 2022. It was provided by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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.

² 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 Burma/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.

³ 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.

⁴ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

⁵ 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 Burma/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.

⁶ The National Unity Government (NUG) was formed by the acting cabinet of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) on April 16th 2021, following the February 1st military coup. U Min Wyint was retained as President, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as State Counsellor, both still under detention by the State

NUG-administered school [no prior warning about the shelling was given, nor were there any threats or warnings about opening a new school]. People who were affected by this were villagers. The shelling was conducted during the time when villagers, who are day labourers, were working in the village.

After the shelling, the SAC soldiers [from IB #267] entered the village. When the SAC soldiers entered the village, they arrested some villagers. According to U B---, who was among the arrested villagers, *“During the interrogation, they tortured me very badly. They asked me questions, punched me, kicked me, and I could not move any part of my body because they tied me tightly. It’s a serious violation of my rights. I escaped the day before they planned to kill me. Is the international community just going to stay and watch while civilians have to go through things like this? Is there no longer anything they can do to help us?”* Due to this kind of SAC military activity, villagers were afraid to stay in their village. Some villagers went to stay in C--- monastery, while others went to stay in D--- village, Kyaw Khay Toh Praw area, K’Ser Doh Township. Some villagers went to stay with their relatives in other places and some stayed in the forest.



This is a photo of U B--- taken on April 6th 2022 in K--- village, The Chaung Gyi village tract, Taung Pyauk area, K’Ser Doh Township. The photo shows the bruise on the left side of U B---’s chin that resulted from the torture inflicted on him by SAC IB #267 soldiers on March 30th 2022. [Photo: KHRG]

SAC extortion

Since March 2022, SAC soldiers at roadside checkpoints have been demanding 450 kyats [USD 0.24]⁷ for each viss [1.6 kg or 3.52 lb] of betel nut that villagers sell [the average selling price of one viss of betel nut is 3,500 kyats (USD 1.89)], and villagers had to give them [SAC soldiers] half a litre of oil when they bought one litre. Villagers had to give whatever they were asked to give out of fear. Due to the extortion and oppression by the SAC military, villagers have been facing many difficulties and challenges.

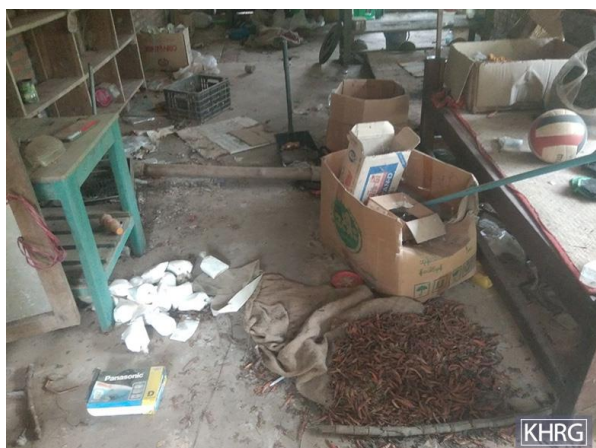
Looting

At 9:00 am on March 26th 2022, SAC soldiers from IB #267 entered Kywe Cha village, The Chaung Gyi village tract, Taung Pyauk Taik area, broke into Ma E---’s shop and stole goods from the shop. Ma E--- saw the looting that happened in her shop from a distance when she came back from her work between 9:00 am and 10:00 am. According to Ma E---, the goods that

Administration Council (SAC) military. The NUG claims to be the legitimate government of Burma/Myanmar, and has sought international recognition as such. The NUG cabinet is composed primarily of lawmakers elected in the 2020 election, along with other key ethnic figures. As the military junta has declared the NUG illegal, it is operating as a government-in-exile. On May 5th 2021, the NUG announced the formation of a "People’s Defence Force" to serve as its armed wing. Further information can be found at the NUG website: <https://www.nugmyanmar.org/en/>

⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the July 12th 2022 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.54 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>).

were taken from her shop were worth more than 200,000 kyats [USD 108.02]. Ma E--- is currently seeking refuge in another place.



These photos were taken on April 7th 2022 and show the inside of M E---'s shop after the looting by SAC soldiers from IB #267 that took place on March 26th 2022. [Photos: KHRG]

Further background reading on SAC activities and human rights violations in Mergui-Tavoy District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Situation Update: Fighting and displacement, property damage, deaths caused by landmine explosion, travel restrictions, and the COVID-19 situation, December 2021 to February 2022”](#), June 2022.
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Situation Update: SAC militia shoots teenage villager, CDM and protester protection, SAC troop movement, arbitrary taxation and livelihood, healthcare and education challenges, March 2021”](#), January 2022.
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Situation Update: Attendance at KECD schools, the Civil Disobedience Movement, COVID-19 and the movement of SAC troops \(March to June 2021\)”](#), September 2021.
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Situation Update: Impact of the military coup on villagers in K’Ser Doh, Ler Muh Lah and Ler Doh Soh townships, February 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 Burma. 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.

Mergui-Tavoy (Tanintharyi) District

