



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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### **Situation Update**

December 20<sup>th</sup> 2022 / KHRG # 22-158-S1

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## **Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC indiscriminate mortar shelling, an attack of a villager by an SAC soldier, People's Defence Force (PDF) activity and a landmine incident, February to April 2022**

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*This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Bu Tho and Dwe Lo Townships, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District during the period between February and April 2022. State Administration Council (SAC) troops indiscriminately fired 68 mm, 81 mm, and 120 mm mortars into several villages in Bu Tho Township, injuring villagers and killing villager's cows. In April, a villager from A--- village, A--- village tract, Dwe Lo Township, was attacked by a soldier from SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #407 at his home during the night. Until April 27<sup>th</sup> 2022, soldiers from the local People's Defence Force (PDF) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) have been able to control the road between Kamarmaung and Hpapun towns. Moreover, on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2022, a villager from B--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, was injured in a landmine explosion and she is currently receiving treatment at Wah Hka Der clinic in Dwe Lo Township. <sup>1</sup>*

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### **State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup> indiscriminate mortar shelling**

On February 17<sup>th</sup> 2022, SAC Infantry Battalion (IB)<sup>3</sup> #19 indiscriminately fired 68 mm and 81 mm mortars into Ma Ka Heh [in Section 2 of Hpapun Town, Bu Tho Township]. The [fragment of a] mortar shell hit and killed Ma<sup>4</sup> C---, a 14-year-old female student in Standard [Grade] 8.

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in May 2022. 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> 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.

<sup>3</sup> An Infantry Battalion (IB) 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.

<sup>4</sup> Ma is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

[Details of where she was hit by the mortar shell cannot be confirmed.] She is the daughter of U<sup>5</sup> D--- (40 years old) and Daw<sup>6</sup> P--- (36 years old).

On April 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, SAC soldiers from SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)<sup>7</sup> #407 launched 120 mm and 81 mm mortars into E--- village, Meh Nyoo village tract<sup>8</sup>, Bu Tho Township. As a result of this shelling, 55-year-old Naw<sup>9</sup> F--- was hit on her left arm, 36-year-old Saw<sup>10</sup> G--- was hit by a fragment of mortar on his waist, 12-year-old Naw H--- was injured on her right arm, and another villager, Naw I---, was injured on her left arm and both of her legs. Naw I--- had to receive treatment at Mae Tao Clinic [in Thailand]. [KHRG cannot confirm whether the other villagers received treatment.] Naw H--- is a fourth-grade [Standard 4] student and Naw I--- is a third-grade [Standard 3] student.

Also, on the evening of April 13<sup>th</sup> 2022, SAC soldiers from LIB #407 launched 81 mm mortars into K--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, killing eight cows in total. One of the owners of [some of] the cows that were killed is named Saw L---, who is 46 years old.



### **A villager attacked by an SAC soldier**

On April 18<sup>th</sup> 2022, a 50-year-old man, Saw M--- from A--- village, A--- village tract, Dwe Lo Township, was attacked by a soldier from [SAC] LIB #407, led by Battalion Commander Zaw Min Htaik. At around 2:00 am on April 18<sup>th</sup> 2022, Corporal Min Zaw from [SAC] LIB #407 entered Saw M---'s house secretly while he was sleeping and hit him on the back of his neck with an iron rod. Because of this, Saw M--- became dizzy. Before he recovered from his dizziness, Corporal [Min Zaw] tried to attack him with a sharp knife that he had brought with him. Although Corporal Min Zaw was trying to stab the parts of Saw M---'s body that could easily lead to death, he failed to do so because Saw M--- was trying to fight back. However, since Corporal Min Zaw repeatedly used his knife to stab Saw M---, Saw M---'s left ear was hit three times and his left hand was hit twice.

<sup>5</sup> U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

<sup>6</sup> Daw is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>7</sup> A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. 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, particularly following the signing of the NCA. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

<sup>8</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>9</sup> Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>10</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

Saw M--- was not able to travel anywhere else to receive treatment, so he went to receive treatment at the [SAC] LIB #407 army camp. After attacking Saw M---, villagers saw that Corporal Min Zaw hurriedly returned to the [SAC #407] army camp and therefore, A---'s village head, Saw N---, went to report this incident to the operations commander [from that army camp]. The operations commander refused to admit that Min Zaw was from their army camp.

### **People's Defence Force (PDF)<sup>11</sup> activity**

Members of the PDF have been fighting in areas controlled by ethnic armed groups against the SAC, who seized power from the publicly [democratically]-elected government, the National League for Democracy (NLD)<sup>12</sup>, on February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021.

[Within the reporting period, ending on] April 27<sup>th</sup> 2022, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>13</sup> together with the PDF in Mu Traw District have been able to control the road between Kamarmaung [K'Ma Moh] and Hpapun towns. SAC troops were not permitted to come up on [use] the road, and SAC soldiers from Hpapun and Kamarmaung towns have been afraid to leave their camp.

### **Landmine incident**

On April 18<sup>th</sup> 2022, a 42-year-old woman, Naw O---, from B--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, stepped on a landmine planted by KNLA soldiers. The upper part of her body, including her chest and her breasts were injured. Naw O--- was admitted to Wah Hka Der clinic in Dwe Lo Township and she is currently receiving treatment there. Although Naw O--- did not lose any limbs, pieces of shrapnel in her chest have not yet been removed [as of April 27<sup>th</sup> 2022].

Further background reading on the security situation and human rights violations in Mu Traw District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC shelling, displacement of villagers, livelihood challenges, healthcare and education situation, and landmine incidents, April to May 2022"](#), July 2022.
- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: Arrests, threats and physical assault of villagers, mortar shelling, air strikes and a landmine incident in Bu Tho and Dwe Lo townships, December 2021 to March 2022"](#), July 2022.
- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC air strikes and indiscriminate shelling into villages in Dwe Lo Township kill three and injure at least 14 civilians, January to February 2022"](#), July 2022.
- ["Mu Traw District Short Update: SAC troops fired mortars into a village, killing seven villagers and injuring four, March 2022"](#), March 2022.

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<sup>11</sup> The People's Defence Force (PDF) is an armed resistance established independently as local civilian militias operating across the country. Following the February 1st 2021 military coup and the ongoing brutal violence enacted by the junta, the majority of these groups began working with the National Unity Government (NUG), a body claiming to be the legitimate government of Burma/Myanmar, which then formalized the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

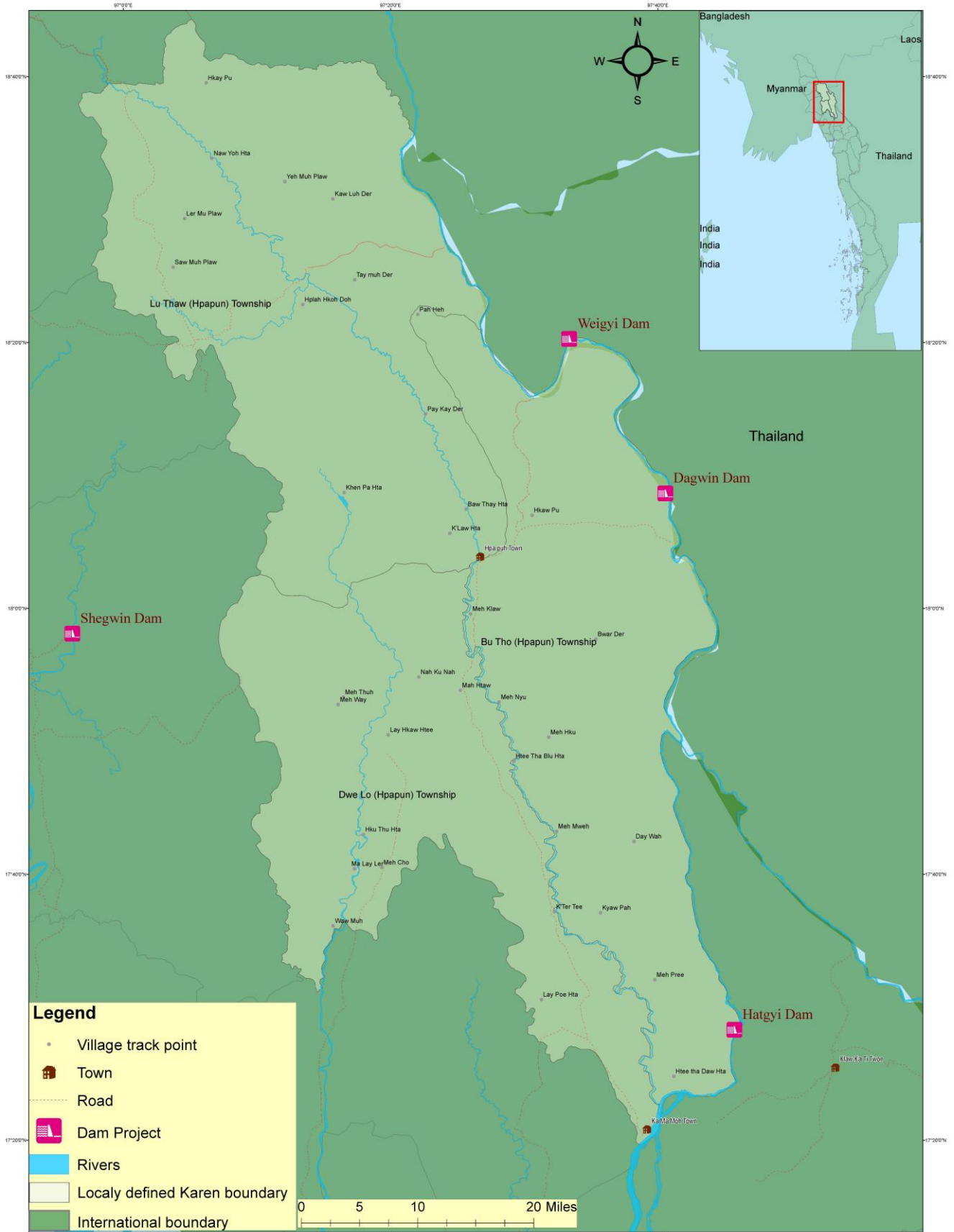
<sup>12</sup> The National League for Democracy (NLD) is the political party that governed Burma/Myanmar from 2016 to January 2021. Led by Aung San Suu Kyi, the NLD won landslide victories in the 2015 and 2020 General Elections. The NLD government was deposed by the Burma Army in the February 2021 coup d'état, after which elected President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi were detained, along with ministers, their deputies and members of Parliament.

<sup>13</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

**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.khrq.org](http://www.khrq.org).

# Mutraw (Hpapun) District



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