



Situation Update

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Dooplaya District Situation Update: SAC military activity, displacement, livelihood challenges, travel insecurity and education, March to May 2022

This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik), Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) and Waw Ray (Win Yay) townships, Dooplaya District during the period between March and May 2022. The increase of State Administration Council (SAC) military activity led to the increase of fighting in the district. The SAC military launched air strikes and shelled into civilian areas, resulting in damage to villagers' houses, as well as civilian injury and death. In addition, SAC soldiers also used villagers as their navigators. As a result of the armed conflict, many villagers from Kaw T'Ree Township and Waw Ray Township have been displaced. While some of the displaced villagers sought refuge inside Burma, some fled to Thailand to seek refuge. Villagers have also been facing livelihood challenges as they have not been able to work and the prices of food have increased. In terms of freedom of movement, there has been a lack of security since the military coup and villagers have not been able to travel freely. Due to the unstable situation in the area, some schools have been closed since 2021, and villagers are also not sure whether their children will be able to study for the rest of this year.¹

Increase of State Administration Council (SAC)² military activities

Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township

Due to the increase of SAC military activities [an increased presence of SAC troops and troop movement], fighting increased [between the SAC and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)³ in the area]. On March 25th 2022, fighting broke out in Htee K'Pler village, Su Ka Li (Hkyoo K'Lee) village tract⁴, Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township and two SAC military jets dropped six bombs] there at around 11 am. There were no casualties because the bombs landed outside of the village. At 1 am on March 26th 2022, SAC military jets came a second time and dropped four

¹ The present document is based on information received in May 2022. It was provided by a community member in Dooplaya 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 The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

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

bombs: two bombs were dropped in Aoo Kray Hkee in Su Ka Li village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township and two bombs were dropped in Maw Pah Leh [Meh Naw Aa village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township]. The two bombs that landed in Aoo Kray Hkee village did not hit anyone or any building. Only one of the two bombs that were dropped in Maw Pah Leh exploded. The exploded bomb destroyed five villagers' houses and killed three goats. The owner of one house that was destroyed is named Saw⁵ D---. The house owner was safe from this explosion because he went to get internet [capture a signal] at the top of a hill when the attack happened. He might have been killed if he was at home during the time of the attack.

In April, fighting occurred between KNLA Battalion #18, Column #4 and SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁶ #32 in Klee village [Klee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township]. The fighting began on April 16th and lasted for five days. Fighting lasted for around 30 minutes to an hour each day. Two male villagers were injured from shelling that occurred during the fighting. One of the villagers was injured on his leg and the other villager was injured on his hand. They both received treatment in Noh Poh refugee camp in Thailand. They have now both recovered from their injuries. The SAC military conducted air strikes twice during the two days that fighting occurred [on April 18th and 19th]. Villagers don't know how many bombs were dropped, but they landed outside the village. There were no casualties from the air strikes but two wooden houses were damaged by fragments of the bombs.

Fighting also happened [date cannot be confirmed] between [KNLA] Battalion #103 and SAC troops from Infantry Battalion (IB)⁷ #32 at Maw Pah Leh village, Meh Naw Aa village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. There were no casualties.

Again, on the morning of April 24th 2022, fighting happened [between SAC IB #32 and KNLA Battalion #103] in Kwee Ta Auh village, Su Ka Li village tract [Kaw T'Ree Township]. [There were no casualties.]

On April 24th, 216 SAC soldiers from battalions that included IB #32, IB #231, LIB #585, 560 and 207 [from [K'Neh Lay, Waw Lay, Thay Baw Boh and Au Kree Hta army camps], travelled to Su Ka Li village [Su Ka Li village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township]. In order to reach Su Ka Li village without being seen and attacked, SAC troops arrested two villagers on April 23rd 2022 whom they saw working on their plantations and used them as navigators. The two people who were arrested are villagers from C--- village [Su Ka Li village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township]. SAC soldiers used these two villagers as navigators for one day and let them go without doing anything to them [like beating them] when they reached Su Ka Li village. Villagers stated that the 216 soldiers who went to Su Ka Li, slept there for two nights, and then some of them [soldiers from Waw Lay army camp] returned to their place. Some of the SAC soldiers engaged in looting, stealing two phones and one solar panel from Su Ka Li villagers. These SAC soldiers also stole villagers' chickens. Villagers are not sure how many chickens were stolen. The soldiers who did not return and stayed behind in Su Ka Li army camp were attacked by KNLA soldiers at 11 am on April 30th 2022. In retaliation, SAC soldiers indiscriminately fired mortar shells [every one or two days for almost a week. Approximately 10 mortar shells were fired each time]. The mortar shells landed outside of the village. No one was hit [injured] by the shelling.

⁵ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁶ 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.

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On April 24th 2022, fighting happened at Yay Nga Koh village [Meh Naw Aa village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township] when SAC soldiers from Kyaikdon [Town], Noh T'Kaw Township came to their friends [were deployed for troop reinforcement] in Htee Hta Baw [Waw Ray Township]. No villagers were injured during the fighting.

Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township

On April 23rd at around 10 am, there was an armed clash in Kwee Ler Ter village [Maw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township] between KNLA Battalion #17, Company #3 and SAC LIB #32. [It lasted for almost an hour.] SAC military jets came to drop [six] bombs again. The bombs landed outside of the village in a villager's plantation field, completely destroying a farm hut. No villagers were injured.

On April 24th, in order to reach Kwee Ler Ter [Maw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township] from Htee Hta Baw smoothly [without being attacked], the group of SAC soldiers from Kyaikdon Town (that were mentioned above) took villagers with them and asked them to take them to Kwee Ler Ter village by using the route along which KNLA soldiers were not present. Villagers were afraid and did not want to go, but they could not refuse. They asked these villagers to be their navigators for one day and then let them go, replacing them with villagers from the next village. They took two villagers from E--- Kyaw Hta village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township to be their navigators. They then let these two villagers go after they reached T'Nay Hpya, Noh Maw Poo village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township. When they left T'Nay Hpya and after they reached F--- village, Hter Wa Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, they took another two villagers there and asked them to take them to G--- village, Hter Wa Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. SAC soldiers let these two villagers go when they reached G--- and took one villager from G--- to take them to Kwee Ler Ter, Maw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township. Although SAC soldiers were initially planning to go to Htee Hta Baw, Noh T'Kaw Township, they had to return to Kyaikdon after they reached Kwee Ler Ter because they were worried about being attacked. Villagers who were taken as navigators were given 10,000 kyats (USD 4.76)⁸ each by SAC soldiers. [The total number of villagers that were used as navigators cannot be confirmed.]

In Noh T'Kaw Township, the SAC military also tried to reinforce their troops in Kyaikdon [army camp] by deploying more soldiers from Seik Gyi to Kyaikdon [army camps]. When SAC soldiers [from Seik Gyi army camp; unknown battalion number] were leaving Ya Ther Ta village, Noh Taw Pla village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, KNLA soldiers attacked them. As a result, they had to retreat and on April 26th 2022, they reached the top of Ka Lee Hkee Mountain [where there is an SAC army camp]. On May 5th 2022, fighting occurred [in an area] between T'Kuh Hkee village in T'Kuh Hkee village tract and Meh K'Taw village, Noh T'Kaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township. Fighting also happened on the eastern side of the area of Taw Naw and Lay Kay Kaw, Kaw T'Ree Township.

Waw Ray (Win Yay) Township

Starting from April 4th 2022, there have been multiple skirmishes in Ta Kon Taing area, Waw Ray Township. Subsequently, SAC soldiers indiscriminately fired [an unknown number of] mortar shells into villages, resulting in the immediate death of one villager and injury to three others, one of whom later died after being admitted to the hospital. A few houses were also damaged, while one was completely demolished. Most of the villagers who live in the villages near the SAC army camp at Ta Kon Taing, fled to seek refuge in other villages that are located far from the SAC army camp. Some villagers fled to B--- area [Hpah Pra village tract, Waw Ray

⁸ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the January 18th 2023 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.48 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>).

Township] and stayed at the foot of a cave there. There were also a few villagers who decided to stay in their village, no matter what.

Another armed clash happened [on an unknown date] in Kha Laing Ta Kon Taing area [Taw Tee village tract, Waw Ray Township] between KNLA Battalion #16 [and SAC troops from an unknown battalion number (villagers assume that they are from Mawlamyine Town)]. During the clash, the SAC indiscriminately fired around 10 mortars, with the fragments killing one male villager, injuring two villagers, and damaging three houses. The villager who was instantly killed was hit on the head by a fragment. The two villagers who were injured were hospitalised. One of these villagers, who was male, suffered injuries to his pelvic area [his bladder] and was taken to the hospital in Mawlamyine. He later passed away at the hospital. The other injured villager was a 10-year-old girl and was hit by a small piece of fragment on her cheek. She was taken to a Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) clinic in B--- area, Waw Ray Township, and later recovered from her injuries.

Fighting happened [between the SAC and KNLA [unknown battalion numbers] once every one or two days repeatedly between April 27th to May 5th 2022, in Kha Laing Ta Kon Taing area, Waw Ray Township.

Displacement of villagers

Some villagers [in Doolaya District] who were displaced during the period between March 1st and April 9th 2022 [as a result of the SAC activity mentioned above], have not been able to return to their homes yet. Some of them were continuously fleeing and returning to their villages. There are also some villages where villagers still do not dare to return. As a result, informal displacement sites have been set up in some areas on the eastern side of H--- area such as I---, J---, K---, L---, M---, N---, O---, P---, Q--- villages in Kaw T'Ree Township.

Most of the displaced villagers from the western side of Kaw T'Ree Township have sought refuge in R---, S---, T---, U---, V---, W--- in Thailand. There were also some villagers who sought temporary refuge in the forest and inside caves in Burma.

Livelihood challenges

The price of food has increased recently, but villagers don't know the cause of this increase. Some villagers have been complaining that they have not been able to carry on with their livelihood activities because they always have to live in fear. Shopkeepers also said that they have been struggling to sell their goods because they have less customers these days, due to the increase in prices. Villagers are worried that they might face food scarcity and might not be able to afford rice next year if they cannot cultivate their farms this year. Villagers are currently able to sell young betel nut for a good price. Some other goods are also being sold but they cannot be sold for a good price.

Travel insecurity

Since the SAC military took power through a coup, villagers have faced a lack of security when travelling [due to military reinforcements]. From March 1st 2022, more soldiers from the SAC and Border Guard Forces (BGF)⁹ were deployed to Kyaw Hta [Kyaw Hta village tract, Kaw T'Ree

⁹ 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

Township], Kwee Kler [Hter Wa Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township], and Htoh Lwee Wah [Hter Wa Law village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township]. As a result, villagers have had to observe the situation to make sure it was safe to travel before travelling. Villagers don't know the purpose behind the SAC's troop reinforcement.

Education

Regarding education, some schools have been closed since 2021 due to the unstable situation and therefore villagers have been facing difficulties accessing education. This year, 2022, villagers are not sure whether their children will be able to return to school.

Further background reading on indiscriminate shelling into villages and other human rights violations in Dooplaya District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Dooplaya District Interview: 16-year-old boy killed by mortar explosion following SAC shelling, March 2022"](#), November 2022.
- ["Dooplaya District Incident Report: Killing of a civilian by unidentified assailant\(s\), May 2022"](#), August 2022.
- ["Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC shot at villagers, resulting in the death of two villagers in Kaw T'Ree Township, April 2022"](#), August 2022.
- ["Dooplaya District Situation Update: Fighting, indiscriminate shelling, displacement, landmine injuries, travel restrictions and torture, December 2021 to February 2022"](#), June 2022.
- ["Dooplaya District Situation Update: Killing, fighting, indiscriminate shelling, air strikes and displacement, March 2022"](#), May 2022.

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.khrg.org.

ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw.

Dooplaya (Southeastern Karen State) District



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