



## Incident Report

August 31<sup>th</sup> 2022 / KHRG # 22-191-I1

## Dooplaya District Incident Report: Killing of a civilian by unidentified assailant(s), May 2022

*This Incident Report describes a killing case that occurred in Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District. On the night of May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022, unknown armed men entered Saw E---'s house and shot him dead without giving a reason. Although there was a witness to the incident, she could not identify who the perpetrators were because it was dark and she did not feel safe turning on her torchlight. The victim's family members suspect that the perpetrators might be soldiers, but are unsure which armed group. There are several armed groups operating in the area, including the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), People's Defence Force (PDF) and State Administration Council (SAC). The victim's family do not know why he was murdered and local authorities are not carrying out an investigation to get justice. Therefore, it is not only the victim's family members who feel insecure; the other villagers who live near the incident place are also afraid of further incidents.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Killing
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	May 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2022
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	H--- village, Soo K'Lee village tract <sup>2</sup> , Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District

Victim Information	
<b>Name</b>	Saw <sup>3</sup> E---
<b>Age</b>	50
<b>Sex</b>	Male
<b>Nationality</b>	Karen
<b>Family</b>	Married
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist

<sup>1</sup> 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.

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

<b>Position</b>	Villager
<b>Village</b>	H--- village

<b>Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)</b>				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

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

After a KHRG researcher received information about the killing case, he went to the incident place and conducted interviews with three people.

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

One of the three interviewees was a villager who was present in the house and witnessed the victim being killed.

## **Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident**

**Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.**

On the night of May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2022, at about 10:30 pm, while all the villagers were sleeping, the perpetrator(s) entered Saw E---'s house in H--- village, Soo K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District and killed him using a gun, without providing a reason. Daw<sup>4</sup> Y--- [who was also in the house at the time] said she was only aware of one intruder in the house, but it is possible that there was an additional person. She believes the perpetrator was a male soldier in uniform. The man entered the house with a torchlight and rummaged around the house without asking permission from the house owner, Saw E---, to enter the house. It happened while Saw E-- - and Daw Y--- were sleeping in the house. The man [perpetrator] woke them up by shouting, "Hey! Hey!" [While the two were still in bed,] the man told Saw E--- to take him to a goat shed which is not far from his house, so Saw E--- replied, "I don't have any friends with me. [...] I will call a friend to accompany me." The man did not say anything, so they [Saw E--- and Daw Y---] went down [the ladder] from the house to go to the goat shed. [They heard the man follow them.] Daw Y--- came down from the house first and she heard the sound of gunfire once, while she was on the ladder, but she could not see where the bullet was coming from because it was dark. Then, she heard gunfire a second time while she was putting on her flip flops. Saw E--- had descended the ladder and was standing beside her, and then she saw Saw E--- fall to the floor with blood coming from his mouth [he was likely hit by the second bullet]. Therefore, Daw Y--- ran for her life, to escape from the perpetrator(s). Daw Y--- testified that, "It [the bullets] nearly hit me. I think if I didn't [bend down to] put my shoes on, both of us would have been hit. When I looked at [Saw E-- -], he fell down without a word. His mouth was full of his blood. Then, that person [the perpetrator] ran this way and I ran that way [in different directions]. I fell over many times along the way, while I was running. I dared not turn on my torchlight."

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



These photos were taken on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 in H--- village, Soo K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The photos show Saw E---'s corpse and the wounds on his right wrist and left armpit from the bullets. [Photos: KHRG]

It happened during the night and there was a high security risk [in the village], so although Daw Y-- was calling for help from other villagers, villagers were concerned about leaving their houses. The victim's relatives had to wait until they felt secure to retrieve the corpse. They washed Saw E--'s corpse because his body was covered in his blood. They saw that a bullet struck his left armpit [travelled through his body and out through his hip] and through his right wrist. Villagers suspect that although two bullets were fired, only one bullet hit him.

They kept the casing [of the two bullets] and showed the Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA)<sup>5</sup> commander, Lieutenant General Bo<sup>6</sup> Steel, [unknown battalion] asking him whether he would be able to help them with an investigation to identify the perpetrator. According to Daw Y---, *"We took the casing [of the bullets] to Bo Steel and one of his soldiers said there were two guns that were used. [...] He [Bo Steel] asked me, 'Do you know the perpetrator?' I said I did not know or recognise him because it was dark. He said [he thought] they were [from] Kawthoolei [Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>7</sup> or Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)<sup>8</sup>] when he looked at the bullets. He was unable to help any further because we couldn't give him any details [about the perpetrators]."*

Another interviewee, Saw T--- said, *"When we looked at the casing of the bullets, [we found that] they came from two different guns. I collected an AK [AK-47 bullet casing] and an AR-16 [bullet casing], so there might have been two perpetrators. When I looked at the place where he [the victim] was standing and the wound on his arm and armpit, one [of the perpetrators] might have been standing behind him and another one might [have been standing] beside [to one side of] him. The two bullet shells landed in different places."* [Nevertheless, it is difficult to ascertain

<sup>5</sup> In 1994, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) split from the KNLA over religious considerations. In 2010, the majority of DKBA troops transformed into BGFs, but one faction refused and changed its name to Democratic Karen Benevolent Army in 2012. The DKBA signed the NCA on October 15th 2015.

<sup>6</sup> Bo is a Burmese title meaning 'officer.'

<sup>7</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>8</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.

where the perpetrator(s) were in relation to Saw E--- at the time of the shooting since Daw Y--- stated that it was dark and she herself could not determine where the gunfire was coming from.]



These photos were taken on May 24<sup>th</sup> 2022 in H--- village, Soo K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The left photo shows two of the bullet casings that villagers collected from the incident place. The photo on the right shows the place where Saw E--- was shot by an unknown assailant. [Photos: KHRG]

Two types of guns must have been used during the incident [and thus it is likely that there was more than one perpetrator], but the witness could not clarify how many perpetrators came to the incident place and who the perpetrators were because it was dark and she did not feel safe turning on the torchlight to see who was coming. However, she assumes that the perpetrator [at least one of the perpetrators] was a soldier because she saw that he was wearing a [utility] belt on his waist and that he was Karen because he talked to her in Karen. As Daw Y--- explained, “I don't know how many [gunmen] came. It was dark, so I only saw one. [...] Maybe that person was a soldier, because he had a [utility] belt on his waist.” However, she could not say which armed group the soldier was from because she could not see his badge and there are several types of armed groups in her community: the KNLA, KNDO, People's Defence Force (PDF)<sup>9</sup>, DKBA (Benevolent) and the State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>10</sup>. Another interviewee, Saw Z--- said, “We do not know which [armed] group it was. It might have been a soldier. There are several armed groups [operating in the area], so we cannot guess [which armed group they could be from]. We're not sure if it's yellow [DKBA], black [KNLA/KNDO], or the Burma Army [the SAC]. They might have been soldiers. They are probably not ordinary civilians. If they were ordinary civilians, they might not have [these kinds of] advanced guns.”

Saw E--- was killed unexpectedly. The villagers don't know the reason that he was murdered and local authorities have not taken action to investigate the case. Therefore, it is not only Saw E---'s family members who face security concerns. All of the villagers who live near the incident place also feel insecure and the area is not safe for civilians. The family would like to know the truth and

<sup>9</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>10</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.



want the authorities to take action to reveal the truth, but no local authorities have taken action for them [the family]. No one encouraged the relatives of the victim to report the case and look for the perpetrator. One of the interviewees stated, *“I want to know if it's [Saw E---]'s fault. If it is [his] fault, we can accept it [that he was killed]. We all want to know what happened. [...] I haven't seen anyone [authorities] take responsibility in finding the perpetrator.”*

Since November 2021, H--- villagers and many villagers from other villages in Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District had to displace to the border because of fighting between the KNDO, and the combined forces of the Border Guard Force (BGF)<sup>11</sup> and the SAC. The villagers had been displaced for about six months [at a semi-formal displacement site along the Thai-Burma border]. The month of May was the time to start preparing the land for farming and they were greatly concerned for their livelihoods in the coming years. Therefore, many villagers from different areas returned to their villages to start working on their farms. Saw E--- returned to H--- village, Soo K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, but most of the family stayed at the IDP site due to the high security risk that comes with returning home [as this incident demonstrates]. About 10 days after he returned home, Saw E--- borrowed corn seed from other villagers and also bought petrol in order to prepare his land for farming. [This was shortly before he died.]

As the wife of the victim lost her husband, who was the main breadwinner of the family, she faces livelihood challenges in raising her five young children alone (she has six children, but her eldest son is married). It rained heavily between May 18<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>th</sup> 2022, so the temporary shelters of many internally displaced people (IDPs) were destroyed by flooding from the Moei River, including the shelter of Saw E--- and his family [adding to their current livelihood challenges]. It is also hard for the family to deal with the emotions of losing a beloved family member; and the victims' family members do not feel satisfied with the incident because he was an innocent civilian. The family of the victim expressed sadness that they have lost their family member and wonder what mistakes he could have made that caused his death. The family did not think that he had made any mistakes, as he worked day by day as a farmer.

#### **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

**Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.**

The interviewees gave KHRG permission to use the information for publication.

Further background reading on the escalating violence against civilians in Dooplaya District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Dooplaya District Situation Update: Fighting, indiscriminate shelling, displacement, landmine injuries, travel restrictions and torture, December 2021 to February 2022”](#), June 2022.

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<sup>11</sup> 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 ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw.

- [“Dooplaya District Short Update: A woman was killed by mortar shrapnel during indiscriminate shelling by armed groups, February 2022”](#), March 2022.
- [“Dooplaya District Situation Update: Indiscriminate shelling, fighting, forced labour, peace talks, and the COVID-19 pandemic, August to September 2021”](#), February 2022.
- [“Dooplaya District Short Update: Skirmishes between armed groups and indiscriminate shelling result in displacement, casualties and destruction of villagers’ property \(October 2021\)”](#), December 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.khrg.org](http://www.khrg.org).

# Dooplaya (Southeastern Karen State) District



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