



Short Update

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Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: Fighting and displacement, air strikes and SAC indiscriminate shelling, July to September 2022

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District during the period between July and September 2022. Since SAC soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #599 and Infantry Battalion (IB) #590 and #48 returned from Paw Khay Hkoh (Paw Hseh Hkoh) army camp in Mu Traw (Hpapun) District to their base in Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District in early September, fighting happened between them and Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO) and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers more than 15 times. Troop reinforcements were also sent from SAC Light Infantry Division (LID) #77 due to high casualties from the fighting. During the reporting period, SAC soldiers conducted indiscriminate shelling and air strikes in the area several times. As a result of the fighting, shelling, and air strikes, villagers from many villages in Ler Doh Township were afraid and have been displaced from their villages. A female villager from a village in Kyauk S'Yit village tract, Ler Doh Township, was also injured from SAC indiscriminate shelling that was conducted on August 7th 2022.¹

Fighting and displacement

On September 6th 2022, State Administration Council (SAC)² soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)³ #599 and Infantry Battalion (IB)⁴ #590 and #48 left Paw Khay Hkoh (also known locally as Paw Hseh Hkoh) army camp in Mu Traw (Hpapun) District to return to their base in

¹ The present document is based on information received in August and September 2022. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee 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.

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 A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. Most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are understrength 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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Kheh Der village tract⁵ and Kwee Lah village tract in Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District. On September 7th 2022, villagers from Theh Hkee village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township, saw them [SAC soldiers] when they were on their way to their plantations. After seeing the SAC soldiers, these villagers went back to the village and informed other villagers, village leaders, and soldiers of the Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO)⁶. After KNDO soldiers were informed about the presence of SAC soldiers in the area, they went to conduct a security check for villagers in Htoo Hta and Theh Hkee villages, both located in Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township. However, [prior to the security check] villagers from Theh Hkee and Htoo Hta villages fled from their villages as soon as they were informed [by villagers that SAC soldiers were in the area].

Lately [at the time of reporting], SAC soldiers have not been active on the main road in Muh Theh village, Kheh Ka Hkoh village tract, Ler Doh Township, like they had been in the past [prior to the military coup], but instead more active in more remote areas [further from the road]. Due to new troop movement in these areas, villagers from some villages in Kheh Der village tract and Kwee Lah village tract have been displaced from their village [during this reporting period]. On September 8th 2022, villagers from Muh Hkee, Doh Daw Hkee, Kheh Der, Day Baw Hkee, Khaw Htaw Hkee villages in Kheh Der village tract, and Poh Khoh Der village in Kwee Lah village tract, Ler Doh Township, fled from their villages because SAC soldiers who returned from Paw Khay Hkoh army camp in Mu Traw District did not use the main road through Mu Theh village but used the road in the forest that passes through [these other] villages. Moreover, schools run by Karen Education and Cultural Department (KECD)⁷ in Kheh Der village tract had to close down, and villagers from Kheh Der village tract and Kwee Lah village tract have faced transportation and livelihood challenges.

SAC troops [from LIB #599 and IB #590 and #48] had been conducting military operations in Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township since September 7th 2022. From September 7th, they were stationed at a place called Ler Wah Hkoh in Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township and were still there as of September 16th 2022. On September 9th 2022, villagers from Muh Hkee village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township were conducting security checks [in the areas surrounding their village], when the same SAC troops [LIB #599 and IB #590 and #48] fired at them. No villagers were injured. On September 10th 2022, SAC soldiers from the same troops shot dead a buffalo outside of Muh Hkee village that was owned by Muh Hkee's village head, Saw⁸ A---. On September 11th 2022, an armed clash broke out between these SAC troops and KNDO soldiers from Battalion #3 headquarters near Muh Hkee village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township. In retaliation, SAC soldiers fired mortar shells towards the KNDO headquarters [in Kler Lwee Htoo District] and Muh Hkee village.

On September 13th 2022, villagers from Peh Wah Der village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township, and villagers from Law Muh Per village, Law Muh Per village tract, Ler Doh Township fled from their village because they received the news that the SAC troops [LIB #599 and IB #590 and #48] had a plan to go to their village. On September 14th 2022, villagers from Khoh Loo village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township, also had to flee from their village because these SAC troops were heading towards their village from Ler Wah Hkoh, Kheh Der

⁵ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village

⁶ 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.

⁷ The Karen Education and Culture Department is the education department of the Karen National Union. Its main goals are to provide mother tongue education services to rural Karen populations in Southeast Burma/Myanmar, as well as to preserve the Karen language, culture and history. Despite being an important education provider in the region, it is not officially recognised by the Burma government.

⁸ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

village tract, Ler Doh Township. They remain displaced and are seeking refuge in a nearby village in Law Muh Thaw village tract, Ler Doh Township.

Throughout the reporting period, since these SAC troops [LIB #599 and IB #590 and #48] left Paw Khay Hkoh army camp [in Mu Traw District], fighting happened between them and soldiers from KNDO Battalion #3 and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁹ Battalion #7, #8 and #9. Therefore, they [SAC soldiers] faced difficulty returning to their place [unidentified]. At 7:20 am on September 14th 2022, SAC soldiers from Light Infantry Division (LID)¹⁰ #77 from Baw K’Hta army camp which is located outside of P’Deh Kaw village, P’Deh Kaw village tract, Ler Doh Township, were deployed to Ler Wah Hkoh [in Kheh Der village tract] for troop reinforcement because soldiers from LIB #599 and IB #590 and #48 [who were already at Ler Wah Hkoh] suffered high casualties. LID #77 also faced high casualties and their soldiers who were injured were sent back to Baw K’Hta army camp in Baw K’Hta village tract, Ler Doh Township. However, some of the soldiers remained in Ler Wah Hkoh. The commander of LID #77 is Min Tin, who is currently based in Ler Doh Town. This fighting happened more than 15 times throughout the reporting period. Local villagers have been displaced because of the fighting. The difficulties that displaced villagers have been facing include healthcare issues, food shortages and livelihood challenges.

Air strikes

At 9:10 am on July 29th 2022, an SAC military jet [specific number of military jets is unknown] conducted air strikes in a place called Thaw Too Day, where [KNLA] Battalion #9 operates, and in Kwee Doh, Law Muh Per village tract, Ler Doh Township, where people who participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)¹¹ were staying. On the same day, air strikes were also conducted in a place near Ler Peh Deh, Law Muh Per village tract, Ler Doh Township where displaced villagers stayed. The air strikes hit a big hall that belongs to KNLA Battalion #9. As a result of the air strikes, fear and worry has increased among local villagers, and displaced villagers in Law Muh Per village tract had to move to another place. The air strikes happened at the border of Law Muh Per village tract and Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township. The fighter jets that came and conducted the air strikes returned to their place [base] after conducting the air strikes in these three different places [Thaw Too Day, Kwee Doh and Ler Peh Deh]. However, at 4:25 pm on the same day, SAC military jets came back again to conduct reconnaissance.

At 10:15 am on August 8th 2022, two SAC helicopters conducted air strikes in an area between Peh Thaw village and Lay Pay village in Kyauk S’Yit village tract, Ler Doh Township. The air strikes resulted damage to villagers’ houses, their gardens and plantations. After the helicopters conducted five rounds of air strikes in the area, soldiers from [KNLA] Battalion #9 fired at them and smoke came out of one of the [SAC] helicopters. As a result, the helicopters left and landed

⁹ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

¹⁰ A Light Infantry Division (LID) of the Tatmadaw is commanded by a brigadier general, and consists of ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, search and destroy operations against ethnic insurgents. They were first incorporated into the Tatmadaw in 1966. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, three battalions each and one reserve, one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units. Each division is directly under the command of the Chief of Staff (Army).

¹¹ On February 2nd 2021, healthcare workers at state-run hospitals and medical facilities across Burma/Myanmar spearheaded what is being referred to as a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) consisting of labour strikes in protest against the February 1st 2021 military coup. The movement quickly spread to include civil servants from all sectors of the government who are walking off their jobs as a way of non-recognition and non-participation in the military regime. Because of the popularity of the movement, and its seminal role in wider protests across the country, some people have begun using it as a catch-all phrase to include other protest forms like boycotts and pot-banging.

in the school compound in K'Nyin Kyo village, Kyauk T'Gan Township [in Kler Lwee Htoo District but outside of KHRG's operational area], located on the other side of the P'Reh Loh River. The village is under SAC administration.

On September 14th 2022, two SAC military jets conducted reconnaissance in Kheh Der village tract and Kwee Lah village tract, Ler Doh Township nine times from 11 am to 12:20 pm. Then, at around 4:15 pm on September 14th 2022, two SAC fighter jets conducted an air strike in Ler Bah near Khoh Loo village, Kheh Der village tract, Ler Doh Township. Villagers from Day Baw Hkee, Kheh Der, Htoo Hta, Theh Hkee, Khaw Hta Hkee, Doh Daw Hkee, Muh Hkee, Khoh Loo, Peh Wah Der villages in Kheh Der village tract; Poh Khoh Der village in Kwee Lah village tract; and Law Muh Thaw village in Law Muh Thaw village tract, Ler Doh Township have been displaced because of the air strikes and are still not able to return to their village [at the time of reporting]. In total, there are 1,311 displaced villagers from 11 villages. Displaced villagers have been faced with many difficulties, including food insecurity, as it is currently the rainy season.

SAC indiscriminate shelling

At 5:05 am on August 7th 2022, SAC troops [battalion number unknown] based in Doh Dah village, Kyauk T'Gan Township, which is located on the other side of P'Reh Loh River [close to K'Nyin Kyo village, Kyauk T'Gan Township], fired four mortars into Lay Pay village, Kyauk S'Yit village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Three of the mortar shells landed inside the village and the other one landed at the entrance of the village. Shrapnel from one of the mortar shells injured a 21-year-old villager, Naw¹² B---. The shrapnel entered Naw B---'s house through a hole in the wall and hit her. Naw B--- was injured by fragments of the mortar shells on the right side of her neck. Lay Pay villagers displaced to C--- village, Noh Ghaw village tract, Ler Doh Township. Here [at the displacement site], Naw B--- was treated by Free Burma Ranger (FBR)¹³ medics. Naw B--- has recovered, and Lay Pay villagers have now [as of November 2022] returned to their village.

Further background reading on the situation regarding SAC activities in Kler Lwee Htoo District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Arbitrary taxation, education, health care, SAC activity and indiscriminate shelling, March to June 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers were seriously injured in a landmine explosion in Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, July 2022”](#), November 2022.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: SAC air strikes, shelling and fighting, displacement, insecurity, and livelihood, education and healthcare challenges in Ler Doh Township, February to May 2022”](#), August 2022.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC airstrikes destroyed two houses and resulted in the displacement of villagers in Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, March to April 2022”](#), June 2022.

¹² Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

¹³ Founded in 1997 in response to Tatmadaw offenses, Free Burma Rangers (FBR) is a multi-ethnic humanitarian relief organisation that specialises in providing emergency health care, shelter, food and clothing to civilians in war zones and prioritises assisting IDPs. In addition to their relief activities the FBR also conducts capacity building trainings (sometimes jointly with KHRG), documents human rights violations and advocates regularly on the situation in Burma/Myanmar. There are currently 71 active FBR teams that go on 2-4 missions a year.

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.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District



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