



Incident Report

February 1st 2023 / KHRG # 22-345-11

Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: Disappearance of villagers after being arrested by SAC soldiers, August 2022

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District in August 2022. On separate dates, three villagers were arbitrarily arrested by State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers. No one has seen or heard from them since, so villagers and local leaders assume that the three villagers were also killed by the SAC soldiers who arrested them.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Arbitrary arrest and forced disappearance of villagers
Date of Incident(s)	August 2022
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- village, Kone Ni village tract, ² Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

Victim Information			
Name	Saw ³ Mee Htoo	Saw Maw Kyay Ngay	Saw Maw Kaw Kyaw
Age	50	45	29
Sex	Male	Male	Male
Nationality	Karen	Karen	Karen
Family	Unmarried	Unmarried	Unmarried
Occupation	Farmer	Farmer	Farmer
Religion	Christian (Baptist)	Animist	Christian (Baptist)
Position	Villager	Villager	Villager
Village	A--- village, Kone Ni village tract, Moo Township	B--- village, Noh Nya Lah village tract, Moo Township	C--- village, Way Sweh village tract, Moo Township

¹ The present document is based on information received in 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 A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

³ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #603 and #439	Kyoh Pin Seik army camp	Unknown
Unknown	Unknown	Junta-backed militia ('pyithu sit')	Kyoh Pin Seik army camp	Unknown

Part 2 – Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

The KHRG researcher heard about the arrest, detention, and killing of several villagers and then went to the local villages to collect information. [The researcher discovered during the interviews that the death of the villagers had not been confirmed.]

The researcher heard about the [likely] killing of Saw Mee Htoo from several villagers and interviewed the victim's uncle, Saw D---, and his younger brother, Saw E---, on September 9th 2022 in order to get detailed information about the incident.

The researcher heard about the [likely] killing of Saw Maw Kyay Ngay from villagers from B--- and neighbouring villages. The researcher was later able to speak with the victim's brother-in-law, Saw F---, and the husband of the victim's younger sister, Naw⁴ G---, on September 9th 2022.

On September 9th 2022, the KHRG researcher interviewed Saw Maw Kaw Kyaw's cousin, Saw H---, about his arrest and disappearance. Way Sweh village tract administrator, Saw I---, was also interviewed regarding this case.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The family members of the victims heard about the arrests from other villagers who witnessed these incidents. The Way Sweh village tract administrator also received information from other villagers.

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.

⁴ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

Incident #1

On August 13th 2022, State Administration Council (SAC)⁵ soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁶ #439 and #603 and a junta-backed militia ('pyithu sit')⁷ from Kyoh Pin Seik army camp arrested Saw Mee Htoo [the reason for his arrest is unclear]. The villager, residing in N--- section [section of A--- village, Kone Ni village tract, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District], was on his way to buy some goods from the market. The soldiers regularly patrolled the area near the market, as it is located near the army camp. According to his family, Saw Mee Htoo was an ordinary villager and he did not get involved in the work of any organisation in the village [he was not part of an ethnic armed group (EAG)]. He was just an ordinary farmer. Many villagers and almost all 'pyithu sit' from Kyoh Pin Seik army camp knew him.

Although the victim's younger brother, Saw E---, himself did not see the arrest of his brother by SAC soldiers, villagers from his neighbourhood saw it and told him about what happened. Saw E--- then told his uncle about the incident, but did not dare to go after the SAC soldiers who arrested his brother on the same day. The day after the arrest took place, the uncle [Saw D---] and other relatives of Saw Mee Htoo asked Saw E--- to go and look for his brother. On August 14th 2022, the day after Saw Mee Htoo was arrested, his younger brother went to the army camp to ask about his brother. The younger brother was afraid of SAC soldiers' cruel treatment before going and he took an elderly man with him thinking that the elderly man would make SAC soldiers show more respect to them. When they arrived and asked about his brother, they were told that his brother had already been released. However, when they got home, they could not find his brother. On August 17th 2022, some villagers saw SAC soldiers take two people to Kyoh Pin Seik cemetery and heard some gunshots afterward. As a result, villagers believe that Saw Mee Htoo was killed by SAC soldiers. No one knows why Saw Mee Htoo was arrested and killed. The victim's uncle [Saw D---] does not understand why a person like Saw Mee Htoo, who did not do anything wrong, was killed and he is very dissatisfied by what happened.

Incident #2

On August 14th 2022, Saw Maw Kyay Nyay, a villager with an intellectual disability from B--- village, Noh Nya Lah village tract, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District was also arbitrarily arrested by the same SAC troops from Kyoh Pin Seik army camp that arrested Saw Mee Htoo. The villager had been on his bicycle on his way to A--- village to buy a torch when he was arrested. He has not been seen again since then, which is unusual as he typically returns home shortly after running his errands, according to his family members. Since he has disappeared for a long period of time, it can be certain that he has already been killed, villagers claim. Two villagers, J---'s mother and Naw K---, saw that SAC soldiers tied up and tortured a person when they were on their way back home from their farm. The person who was tied up and tortured by SAC soldiers looked like Saw Maw Kyay Nyay to them but they were afraid and did not dare to look at the person carefully. They came back to the village and told other people about what they saw. [Villagers believe that] he was killed at Kyoh Pin Seik's cemetery that day [August 14th]. Saw Maw Kyay Nyay's brother-in-law reported the incident to the KHRG

⁵ 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 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.

⁶ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, 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.

⁷ *Pyithu sit* translates to 'people's militia,' which is a militia structure into which local civilians are conscripted to serve in village or town militia groups. For further reading on the *pyithu sit*, see "[Enduring Hunger and Repression: Food Scarcity, Internal Displacement, and the Continued Use of Forced Labor in Toungoo District](#)," KHRG, September 2004.

researcher.

Incident #3

On August 12th 2022, Saw Maw Kaw Kyaw, a villager from C--- village, Way Sweh village tract, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, went to visit A--- village. Villagers believe that he was arrested that day. [At the time of the interview], it had been more than a month since he disappeared. Saw Maw Kaw Kyaw, who also has an intellectual disability, went to A--- village to buy items from the market and has not returned since. Local villagers believe that he has been killed already. The Way Sweh village tract administrator, Saw I---, also believes that he [Saw Maw Kaw Kyaw] might have been killed already because it has been over one month since he disappeared. Saw H---, the victim's cousin, reported on the incident based on information he had received from other people in his neighbourhood. [Some villagers suspect that Saw Maw Mae Kyaw was killed on August 17th in the Kyoh Pin Seik cemetery with Saw Mee Htoo].

As a result of these incidents, fear has increased among villagers. Villagers were afraid to stay in the villages [the villages surrounding A--- village], and therefore they all have fled to other places. The villagers have been repeatedly displaced since early July 2022 when fighting took place, including the attack of five of the SAC army camps in Moo Township. Most villagers fled to their plantations outside of their village, however, some fled either to L--- Town or M--- Town in Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, or to refugee camps along the Thai-Burma border. Some local villagers said that they are afraid to see SAC soldiers because SAC soldiers could arrest and kill anyone, including people with intellectual disabilities. After villagers fled from their village, SAC soldiers entered their village and took their belongings, including food. Villagers are now worried about facing food shortages in the coming year because they can now no longer carry out their farming activities during displacement. [At the time of reporting in September 2022, villagers were still displaced.]

Part 4 – Permission for Using the Details

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

The victims' family members, along with the other interviewees, allowed KHRG to use the information they provided for publication. However, they wanted their names to be censored for their safety.

Further background reading on human rights violations and the security situation 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.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: Villagers forced by SAC security forces to get a COVID-19 vaccination without their consent, April 2022”](#), June 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.khrq.org.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

