



## Situation Update

October 16<sup>th</sup> 2023/ KHRG # 22-429+237-S1

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## **Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Killings, arbitrary arrests, SAC operations, and livelihood, healthcare and education challenges in Moo Township, from July 25<sup>th</sup> to October 31<sup>st</sup> 2022.**

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*This Situation Update describes human rights violations that occurred in Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District during the period between July 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 and October 31<sup>st</sup> 2022. State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers killed three villagers and arrested 17 more. The SAC also shelled villages, injuring villagers, damaging civilian properties and causing villagers to flee. During this period, the SAC increased their military activities and fighting occurred near villages. Local villagers struggled to access healthcare, education and food.<sup>1</sup>*

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### **Introduction**

This Situation Update describes incidents that happened between July 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 and October 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 in Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Villagers in Moo Township encountered fighting caused by State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup> military operations and saw their human rights violated.

### **Indiscriminate shelling of villages**

On August 5<sup>th</sup> 2022, the SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)<sup>3</sup> #599, based in Ton Taw area, shelled three mortar rounds into A--- village, T'Khaw Pwa village tract<sup>4</sup>, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. On August 6<sup>th</sup> 2022, LIB #599 indiscriminately fired artillery weapons, and

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in November 2022. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee Htoo 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 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> A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Burma military 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 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

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

the shells landed on Saw<sup>5</sup> B---'s house and Saw C---'s house, in D--- village, Way Swi village tract, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Villagers fled to the rice paddies because they were terrified and did not dare to live in the village.

On September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2022, LIB #590 based in Yay Aoh Sin [place], Moo village tract, Moo Township, indiscriminately fired artillery weapons into E--- village, Paw Pi Der village tract, Moo Township. The shells landed near Daw<sup>6</sup> F---'s house, an E--- villager, and the shrapnel injured her head. She got three stitches.

On September 10<sup>th</sup> 2022, soldiers from LIB #590 [based in Yay Aoh Sin village] and LIB #599 with its allied troops based in Htee Toh Loh village, Paw Pi Der village tract, Moo Township, were positioned on the road and were checking travelling villagers. The checking process was slowed down when villagers carried lots of food and working [farming] materials. [In one instance recounted by local Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>7</sup> authorities,] Saw H--- and his two friends, who all live in I--- village, Mi Taing Taw village tract, Moo Township, went to Moo Town to purchase rice and carried it on their motorbikes. On their return [from Moo Town], they ran into the SAC's checkpoint located at Htee Toh Loh village road, and they were accused by the SAC of storing food for the Karen National Liberation Army<sup>8</sup> (KNLA) and the People Defence Force<sup>9</sup> (PDF). The village head from I--- village had to testify for Saw H--- and his friends [in order for the SAC to release them]. [The village head was able to vouch for their release.]

### **Killing of villagers by SAC soldiers**

Since the 2021 coup, killings have happened during the SAC's military operations. Three villagers were killed by the SAC between July 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 and October 31<sup>st</sup> 2022 in Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District.

On September 12<sup>th</sup> 2022, Saw J---, a villager from A--- village, T'Khaw Pwa village tract, fled to find shelter at his farm because he did not dare to live in the village. [Instead, he worked on his farm and returned to his [farm] hut [to live there]. [On that day,] SAC soldiers from LIBs #599 and #590, and other reserve soldiers [from unknown battalions], who were stationed in Aaw Law See village, T'Hkaw Pwa village tract, Moo Township, gathered and marched out from Aaw Law See village. Saw J--- was feeding his cat at his farming hut [located outside of Aaw Law See village], when he saw the SAC soldiers from a distance. He was scared that the SAC soldiers would kill him, so he ran [to escape from the SAC]. The SAC fatally shot him as soon as they saw him running.

On September 17<sup>th</sup> 2022, a villager from L--- village, Swa Kuh Aay village tract, Moo Township, named Naw<sup>10</sup> M---, who lived on her farm, returned to the village to collect food. When Naw M--- came out of the village [to return to her farm], SAC soldiers from LIB #351, #590 and #440 were

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

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

<sup>7</sup> The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Burma and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

<sup>8</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

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

shelling mortars indiscriminately outside of L--- village. She was hit [by a shell] and died on the spot.

On October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2022, the SAC's combined troops of LIB #599 and another battalion (unknown number) were travelling on P'Leh Ku Road, Tat Kone village tract, Tat Kone Township, near a villagers' working area, when KNLA soldiers attacked the SAC which resulted in fighting. During the fighting, villagers fled [the area]. Naw N---, a villager from A--- village, T'Khaw Pwa village tract, Moo Township was also fleeing the fighting when the SAC saw her and shot at her. She died on the spot.

### **Arbitrary arrest of villagers**

On October 4<sup>th</sup> 2022, at night time between 9:00 pm and 10:00 pm, soldiers from LIB #590, based in Yay Aoh Sin, Moo village tract, set foot in Moo Town, and arrested 17 villagers. The names of the arrested villagers are listed below:

1. U<sup>11</sup> O---
2. Daw P---
3. Ko<sup>12</sup> Q---
4. Maung<sup>13</sup> R---
5. Ko S---
6. Pyi T---
7. Daw V---
8. Ko W---
9. Ma<sup>14</sup> X---
10. Ko Y---
11. Ko Z---
12. Ko Aa---
13. Ko Ab---
14. Ma Ac---
15. Ko Ad---
16. Ko Ae---
17. Ko Af---

On October 5<sup>th</sup> 2022, these 17 villagers were sent to LIB #599 base, in Ton Taw village, by LIB #590 soldiers based in Yay Aoh Sin village. [Prior to their arrest,] these 17 villagers had participated in a protest against the SAC. [As explained by a local villager from Moo Township, who also participated in the protest,] the 17 villagers were arrested because the SAC assumed some participated in an anti-coup protest [that took place on March 5-8<sup>th</sup> 2021 in Moo Township] and that some had connections with KNLA and PDF. 14 out of 17 villagers were released on October 27<sup>th</sup> 2022. The three villagers remaining were U O---, a local leader of a KNU-controlled Township [specific position is censored for security reasons], Ko S---, a member of a youth association, and Ko Ab---, a village leader [position is censored for security reasons]. As of July 12<sup>th</sup> 2023, the three villagers had not been released.

### **Healthcare and education challenges**

Villagers from almost every village tract in Plaw area, Moo Township, displaced themselves, as the SAC killed villagers and shelled mortars indiscriminately in the villages. [For this reason], some villagers fled to the city, some fled to the forest, and some fled to any [other] place outside of their village.

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<sup>11</sup> 'U' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>12</sup> 'Ko' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>13</sup> 'Maung' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>14</sup> 'Ma' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

During displacement, villagers got sick as they did not dare to go to clinics in their villages because SAC soldiers were stationed there. Villagers were afraid.

As displaced villagers were not able to return to their villages [while SAC soldiers were stationed there], students who were attending high school, middle school, and primary school did not have access to education. It has become difficult [for students] to attend school [to continue their education].

While villagers were displaced in forests and farms, they encountered difficulties because of a lack of food, such as rice, salt, and chilli. Villagers [also] did not dare to purchase food in the village because SAC soldiers were stationed in their villages. In addition, they worried that the SAC had planted landmines, and they were scared that they would step on a landmine [if they went to the villages]. [During the month of November], it was time for harvesting, yet some rice fields remained unharvested as those rice fields were located near the SAC army camps.

### **Conclusion [Community member's view]**

The brutal suffering of villagers will continue as long as violations of human rights by the SAC are ongoing.

Further background reading on the security and human rights situation in Kler Lwee Htoo District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

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- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: A villager was killed by SAC soldiers in Hsaw Htee Township, March 2023"](#), September 2023
- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Arbitrary arrest, shelling, air strikes and displacement, November 2022"](#), June 2023
- ["Why would they target us?": Exploring patterns of the Burma Army's retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma"](#), June 2023

### **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).

# Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

