



## Situation Update

July 8<sup>th</sup> 2022 / KHRG # 22-71-S1

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## Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC air strikes and indiscriminate shelling into villages in Dwe Lo Township kill three and injure at least 14 civilians, January to February 2022

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*This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Dwe Lo and Bu Tho Townships, Mu Traw District between January and February 2022. In January and February 2022, the State Administration Council (SAC) and the Border Guard Force (BGF) indiscriminately shelled and bombed several villages in Dwe Lo Township, killing three villagers, injuring a further 14, and prompting locals to flee. The attacks also destroyed civilian property, including houses and livelihood areas. SAC forces continued to hunt down perceived opponents. They arbitrarily arrested nine people from Hpapun Town for allegedly leading anti-regime protests. In early February, 16 people fled Hpapun Town and another 6 from a nearby village after they were accused of being connected to People's Defence Forces (PDF).<sup>1</sup>*

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### Mortar shelling

On the night of January 17<sup>th</sup> 2022, State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup> soldiers from Maw Loh Kloh army camp fired mortars into Lay Hpoh Hta village, Lay Hpoh Hta village tract<sup>3</sup>, Dwe Lo Township. At 6:00 pm on January 29<sup>th</sup> 2022, SAC troops and Border Guard Force (BGF)<sup>4</sup> Battalion #1013, which is led by Deputy Battalion Commander Kyaw Win, fired mortar shells from Ka Ser Ther Hpler army camp (Taung Thon Lo army camp) into Htee Law Thee Hta village, Htee Th'Bluh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township. [No villagers were injured in these two incidents.]

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in February 2022. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw 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> 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.

<sup>3</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>4</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.

On February 5<sup>th</sup> 2022, at 3:00 pm, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)<sup>5</sup> #434 fired mortars at Kyaw Hklee Loh village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, injuring one villager. At 3:00 pm on February 12<sup>th</sup> 2022, SAC LIB #341 fired two mortar rounds into Hkler Hkoh village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township. The shelling destroyed two houses and a rice barn, killed a dog, and injured one villager. From 7:15 to 7:30 pm on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2022, SAC LIB #341 fired mortars into Hkler Hkoh village again. The mortar shells landed on Pu Y'Thit monastery and destroyed a clock as well as other property in the monastery.

At around 9:42 pm on February 16<sup>th</sup> 2022, BGF Battalion #1013 from Ka Ser Ther Hpler army camp shelled mortars into Hpway Htaw Roo village, Htee Th'Bluh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township. On February 18<sup>th</sup> 2022, the same battalion fired mortar shells into Hpway Htaw Roo village again, damaging two houses. On February 24<sup>th</sup> 2022, BGF Battalion #1013 also fired mortars into K'Pee Hkee village, Htee Th'Bluh Hta village tract, killing one villager and injuring six or seven others - two of which were critically injured. Twelve houses were also destroyed.

### **Air strikes**

At 1:00 am on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2022, three SAC military jets conducted an air strike (each jet dropping one bomb) on Wah Hka Der village, Meh Thuh village tract, Dwe Lo Township. At around 2:05 am on January 12<sup>th</sup> 2022, two SAC military jets dropped two bombs (total) on Wah Hka Der village again, destroying a Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) clinic and one latrine. This suggests that the SAC targets civilians [rather than legitimate military targets, in violation of international humanitarian law].

At around 1:00 am on February 5<sup>th</sup> 2022, the SAC conducted another air strike on T'Dwee Hkoh village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township. The air strike killed two people (husband and wife), injured six other villagers, and destroyed four houses. At 2:00 am on February 18<sup>th</sup> 2022, three SAC military jets carried out air strikes on Khaw Klah, Htwee Thee Auh, and Ler Ghay Hta villages, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township. The attack destroyed one farm in Khaw Klah village. Villagers can no longer work on that particular farm because of the damage. In Htwee Thee Auh and Ler Ghay Hta villages, the bombs landed on and destroyed local villagers' plantations. The same day at 2:00 pm, the SAC also launched an air strike on Nah Koh Hkee village, Nah Koh Hkee village tract, Dwe Lo Township, damaging the villagers' betel trees and farms.

### **Landmine incident**

At 3:00 pm on February 7<sup>th</sup> 2022, a 31-year-old woman with an intellectual disability from Way Mone village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, was killed in a landmine explosion while she was walking in a forest near her village. [The incident happened near a road that is commonly used by local villagers.]

### **Threats and arrests by the SAC**

On February 6<sup>th</sup> 2022, six people fled from Way Hsar village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, and 13 people fled from Section #2, Hpapun Town [all were accused of being connected to People's Defence Forces (PDFs)<sup>6</sup>, presumably by military informants]. Among

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<sup>5</sup> 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.

<sup>6</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

the six villagers who fled from Way Hsar, four were men and two were women. On February 12<sup>th</sup> 2022, another three people from Section #2 fled from Hpapun Town because the SAC accused them of being connected to the PDF. The SAC also arrested nine people in Hpapun Town [for allegedly leading anti-regime protests], and only one of them has reportedly been released [KHRG was not able to obtain more information regarding this specific case, but the arrests took place during the reporting period].

### **Displacement of villagers**

Due to the SAC air strikes and mortar shelling, some villagers from Ma Hta, Htee Th'Bluh Hta, K'Ter Tee, and Lay Hpoh Hta village tracts, Dwe Lo Township have been displaced. In Bu Tho Township, villagers from Peh Klaw, Meh Nyoh, Meh Hkoo, Meh Mweh, Day Wah, and Kyaw Pah village tracts have also been displaced [KHRG was not able to establish the exact number of displaced villagers].

### **Livelihood challenges**

Villagers from the above-mentioned village tracts have been living in fear and facing livelihood challenges since the beginning of 2022 because they are afraid that the SAC might conduct air strikes on their villages, and that SAC and BGF soldiers from nearby army camps might shell their communities [the villagers remain on permanent alert and are afraid to conduct their daily activities, such as tending to their crops as usual].

Further background reading on the human rights and security situation in Mu Traw District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Mu Traw District Short Update: SAC troops fired mortars into a village, killing seven villagers and injuring four, March 2022"](#), March 2022.
- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: A villager died due to a landmine explosion in Bu Tho Township, January 2022"](#), February 2022.
- ["Mu Traw District Situation Update: Human rights violations including looting, killing, arbitrary arrest and torture, and the burning of houses and villages, April to July 2021"](#), January 2022.
- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: Torture of three villagers in Dwe Lo Township by an SAC officer, August 2021"](#), January 2022.

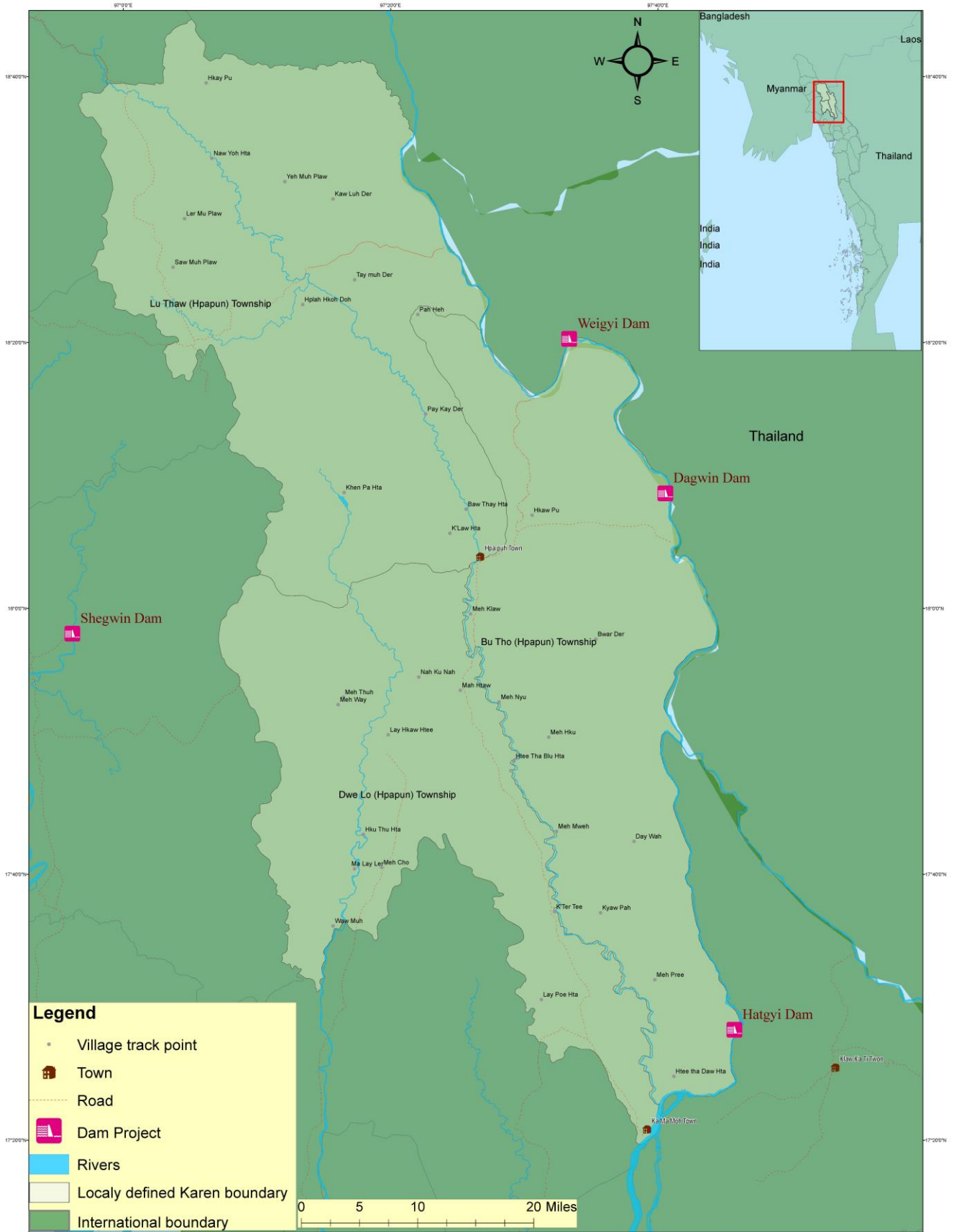
### **About KHRG**

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.khr.org](http://www.khr.org).

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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 Myanmar, which then formalized the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

# Mutraw (Hpapun) District



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