



Incident Report

September 19th 2023 / KHRG # Log# 23-107-I1

Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: A villager was killed by SAC soldiers in Hsaw Htee Township, March 2023

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaungleybin) District in March 2023. On March 12th 2023, around 10:00 am, a villager named Saw Be Thein and his two friends returned to their village to check their properties, and on their way out of the village, they ran across SAC soldiers. The SAC soldiers fired at them and Saw Be Thein was shot, while his two friends were able to escape. Two days later, Saw Be Thein was found dead, wearing an ill-fitting soldier uniform, with injuries to his head and wounds on his back.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Shoot-on-sight and killing
Date of Incident(s)	March 12 th 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- village, Inbala village tract ² , Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District

Victim Information	
Name	Saw ³ Be Thein
Age	44
Sex	Male
Ethnicity	Karen
Family [status]	Widower
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Buddhist

¹ The present document is based on information received in March 2023. 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.

Position	-
Village	A--- village, Inbala village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	Light Infantry Division (LID) ⁴ #77, #88, #44, #33, and Infantry Battalion (IB) ⁵ #57, #350, #264, #91, and #20	Shwegyin Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

On March 27th 2023, a KHRG researcher went to the incident's location for documentation and conducted an interview with a villager who found Saw Be Thein's corpse.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

Local authorities and villagers who found Saw Be Thein's corpse reported this issue to a KHRG field researcher

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 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).

⁵ An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most 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. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

On March 12th 2023, the combined armed forces of the State Administration Council (SAC)⁶ Infantry Battalion (IB) #57, #350, #264, #91, #20 and Light Infantry Division (LID) #77, #88, #44, #33 conducted an offensive operation across four village tracts in Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, in a Karen National Union (KNU)⁷-controlled area. On March 13th 2023, at around 10:00 am in the morning, a villager named Saw Be Thein and his two friends, three villagers from A--- village, Inbala village tract, who had returned [on motorbike] to their village [from an internally displaced persons (IDPs) site] to check their home, were on their way out of the village when they ran across SAC soldiers involved in the offensive operation.

The SAC soldiers fired gunshots at them [while the three villagers were on the motorbike], so the three villagers left the motorbike and fled [on foot]. [While fleeing], Saw Be Thein was shot in the back and his two friends escaped. The two friends heard Saw Be Thein cry for help but were too afraid to go back and pick him up, as the place where Saw Be Thein fell was near the [temporary] SAC army camp. Villagers believe that Saw Be Thein did not die on the spot. The SAC troops were stationed near A--- village for two [more] days.

On March 15th 2023, while the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁸ was clearing the area [of possible landmines after the SAC troops left], Saw Be Thein was found dead [outside of A-- village; where he fell after being hit], wearing different clothes, with [bullet] injuries to his head and brain and wounds on his back. The clothes he was wearing when his body was found are not the clothes he was wearing when he was last seen. Saw Be Thein was dressed in an ill-fitting KNLA uniform that was too small for him, since he is big and tall. [KNU] Local authorities [and local villagers] assumed that the SAC arrested Saw Be Thein after he had been shot and was unable to flee. The SAC soldiers changed his clothes and executed him by shooting him in the head.

[As of March 2023,] Saw Be Thein's family members are not living in the village. Saw Be Thein's brother took Saw Be Thein's two daughters with him to the mountains, where he lives.



These pictures were taken on March 15th 2023 on the spot where Saw Be Thein's corpse was found. Saw Be Thein was shot by SAC soldiers while fleeing, outside of A--- village, Inbala village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Local authorities assumed that SAC soldiers executed him after and dressed him in an ill-

⁶ 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.

⁷ The Karen National Union is the main Karen group opposing the government.

⁸ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

fitting KNLA uniform. KHRG received these photos from local authorities on March 17th 2023. [Photos: local authorities]

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The local authorities and villagers who found Saw Be Thein's corpse have allowed KHRG to share this report.

Further background reading on killings in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Deadly Encounters: Killings of civilians by armed actors in Southeast Burma"](#) (October 2022 - April 2023), Briefing Paper
- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: SAC arbitrarily killing of a villager near his farm hut, Moo Township"](#), September 2022
- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: SAC soldiers shot dead a female villager in Moo Township"](#), November 2022
- ["Why would they target us?": Exploring patterns of the Burma Army's retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma](#) 2023 Report

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, 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.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

