



Short Update

September 30th 2024 / KHRG #23-158-D1

Dooplaya District Short Update: SAC shelling killed a villager and damaged houses in Kruh Tuh Township (May and September 2023).

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh (Kyonedoe) Township, Dooplaya District, in May and September 2023. On May 14th 2023, SAC Infantry Battalion (IB) #97, based in Laing Wah's new army camp, fired 60mm mortar shells into A--- village, Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, and damage a villager's house. SAC soldiers also destroyed the Asian Highway located close to A--- village, impacting villagers' access to healthcare services in towns. On the next day, on May 15th 2023, SAC IB #97 soldiers fired mortar shells again into A--- village, and the shelling explosion burned a villager's house. On September 23rd 2023, SAC soldiers from Military Operations Command (MOC) #12, based at Laing Wah camp, fired rounds of mortar (including 120mm shells) into A--- village again, killing a villager named Saw B---. Due to the shelling, the villagers were facing challenges to continue farming for their livelihood.¹

May 2023: SAC shelling and destruction of civilian infrastructure:

On May 14th 2023, at 7 pm, State Administration Council (SAC)² Infantry Battalion (IB)³ #97 under Military Operations Command (MOC)⁴ #12, based in Laing Wah's new army camp, shelled 60mm mortar shells into A--- village, Raw Keh village tract⁵, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District, and damaged the house of a villager named U⁶ C---.

¹ The present document is based on information received in May and November 2023. It was provided by a community member in Dooplaya 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 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 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.

⁴ Military Operations Command (MOC) is comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) made up of three battalions each.

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 'U' is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

On the same day, May 14th 2023, at 9 am, Infantry Battalion (IB) #343 soldiers, under Military Operations Command (MOC) #19, damaged [by digging up the pavement on] the Asian Highway that is located close to A--- village. The road was dug up to 6 feet deep using a backhoe. According to local villagers, the SAC damaged [dig up] the Asian Highway to stop [armed resistance] soldiers from collecting gate [checkpoint] fees from trucks that travel on that road, as well as to protect themselves from being attacked. After the road was damaged, villagers faced problems in terms of travelling. Nan⁷ D---, a local leader from A--- village, said: *“The damage to the road negatively impacts villagers’ livelihoods. It was very difficult for villagers to send patients to the [hospital in the] city. If the patients are unable to be treated here [at the local clinic], they [patients] have to go to Hpa-An or Mawlamyine [towns]. There is a problem with travelling [now]. I dared not think about it [travelling restrictions].”*

The next day, on May 15th 2023, at 4 pm, the same SAC IB #97 soldiers indiscriminately fired mortar shells again into A--- village, Raw Keh village tract. One of the mortar shells landed on U E---’s house. His house was set on fire by the shell [explosion]. Some villagers [that were still in the village] tried to help to stop the fire, but half of the house was already burned. Fortunately, no villager was injured by the shelling because [many] villagers had already fled from the village to their relatives who live in another township since the previous shelling [May 14th 2023], and they had not returned to the village yet.

The villagers whose houses were damaged by the shelling [during these two days] had to move to their huts in their plantations, which are far from the village, and stay there.

September 2023: SAC shooting and shelling into a village:

On September 23rd 2023, soldiers under Military Operations Command (MOC) #12, based at Laing Wah army camp, fired rounds of mortar (including 120mm shells) into A--- village, Raw Keh village tract. In the morning [time unknown], SAC fired both guns and rounds of mortars into the village. When SAC fired mortar rounds indiscriminately, no fighting was taking place near the village. At about 6 am, a [120 mm] mortar shell landed on Saw B---’s house. Saw B--- was injured on the left side of his neck and head by shrapnel from the mortar shell and killed immediately. Naw⁸ G---, the victim’s sister, explained: *“During the shelling, he was living on the house and cleaning the fishes while his brother-in-law was under the [stilt] house. He was injured on his neck and head by shrapnel from a mortar shell. After he was injured, his brother-in-law called the neighbours, and a health worker came for help. His body was shaking... unable to move... since he was injured on his neck and head... then he died instantly. He was unable to talk anymore... He fainted”.*

After Saw B--- passed away, his family faced many challenges as they mainly depended on him [to secure livelihood]. Currently, his 7-year-old daughter and wife live with an older sister [a relative]. Naw G--- added: *“Without the husband, his wife will struggle... The child is young... only 7 years old... The wife depended on her husband [economically]. [Now,] she lives with an older sister [relative] Without the husband, there are many challenges [for them]. We have to support [the family]”.*

The SAC often deliberately fired mortar shells into villages [in Raw Keh village tract], so the villagers had to flee from their village to their huts in their plantation gardens, while some villagers fled to their relatives in another township. Some villagers returned to the villages when the situation was getting better. In addition, the villagers were facing challenges to continue farming for their livelihood during conflict times. A local leader from A--- village, Nan D---, said: *“Actually, I would like to live and work peacefully as in the past [before the 2021 coup]. It was more comfortable for us to work.”*

⁷ ‘Nan’ is a P’wo Karen title used for women, before their name.

⁸ ‘Naw’ is a S’gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.



KHRG took the two photos at the top and the bottom-left photo were taken on October 2023, at A--- village, Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. The two photos on the top row show trees damaged by the shelling conducted by SAC soldiers under Military Operations Command (MOC) #12, as the SAC fired rounds of mortar into A--- village on September 23rd 2023. The photo on the bottom-right, sent by local villagers, shows Saw B---'s dead body, after he was killed by the SAC shelling of 120mm mortar rounds, on September 23rd 2023, into A--- village. The photo on the left, bottom row, shows an unexploded mortar shell from SAC shelling conducted on September 23rd. [Photos: KHRG/local villager]

Further background reading on the situation of shelling in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers were injured as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township, June 2022”](#), March 2023.
- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Villagers killed as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township, June 2022”](#), February 2023.
- [“Doo Thaya District Incident Report: Rape and killing of two adolescent sisters in Waw Ray Township, April 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“Human, Not for Shield: Attack on civilians in Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo District, April 22nd to May 22nd 2022”](#), December 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.

