



Incident Report

November 20th 2023 / KHRG # 23-224-I1

Taw Oo District Incident Report: Killings, property destruction, and indiscriminate shelling by the SAC in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township (July 2023)

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District. On July 7th 2023, State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #603, led by Battalion Commander Hein San Htun, attacked People's Defence Force (PDF) soldiers in T'See Ther Mee Lar (Hsel Thon Maing) Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township. After the skirmish, the SAC soldiers shot dead two male villagers in T'See Ther Mee Lar Town. Having killed the two civilians, they burned down five houses and six motorbikes, owned by local villagers in the town. They also conducted indiscriminate shelling. The SAC neither provided compensation nor apologised to the victims and their family members.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Killing, property destruction and indiscriminate shelling
Date of Incident(s)	July 7 th 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	T'See Ther Mee Lar (Hsel Thon Maing) Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

Victim Information		
Name	Saw ² W---	Z---
Age	Unknown	Unknown
Sex	Male	Male
Ethnicity	Karen	Burmese
Marital status	Married	Single
Occupation	Unknown	Unknown
Religion	Christian	Buddhist
Position	Villager	Villager

¹ The present document is based on information documented by a KHRG staff member in July 2023. 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 Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

Village	T'See Ther Mee Lar Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District	T'See Ther Mee Lar Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District
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Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	Light Battalion Infantry (LIB) #603	T'See Ther Mee Lar Town	Battalion Commander Hein San Htun

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

A villager from Taw Oo District who had previously attended a Village Agency Workshop (VAW)³ informed a KHRG staff member about this incident. On July 11th 2023, this villager provided the contact number of his friend who had been in the town when the incident occurred, allowing KHRG to conduct an interview with him over the phone. The villager from the town could provide detailed information about the incident as a friend witnessed the events directly from a hiding place in the town and informed him of the details. On July 13th, KHRG was also provided with one victim's family member's contact number by the villager who had attended the VAW. The KHRG staff member called this family member, Naw A---, the wife of Saw W---, and interviewed her over the phone.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

This information was provided by a family member of one victim and a villager who was in the town at the time, informed by his friend who witnessed the events, and attended the scene afterwards.

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.

On July 7th 2023, at around 2:00 pm, State Administration Council (SAC)⁴ soldiers from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁵ #603, led by Battalion Commander Hein San Htun, attacked People's

³ Conducted at the community level, KHRG facilitates Village Agency Workshops (VAW) across Southeast Burma that provide a space for villagers to share their experiences and strengthen their self-protection strategies, by gaining knowledge about international human rights standards and available national mechanisms that they can use to claim and defend their rights.

⁴ 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.

⁵ 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

Defence Force (PDF)⁶ soldiers in T'See Ther Mee Lar (Hsel Thon Maing) Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District. The fighting lasted for 15 minutes. The SAC soldiers are based in an army camp located in T'See Ther Mee Lar Town. The People's Defence Force also have a base in the town and there are frequent clashes between SAC and PDF soldiers. After this skirmish, the SAC soldiers shot dead two civilians in the local area. These two civilians are Saw W--- and Z---. Saw W--- is ethnic Karen and Z--- is ethnic Bamar. Neither were affiliated with any armed group in the area.

Saw W--- is survived by a wife, three daughters and two sons. His eldest daughter is 14 years old and his youngest son is one month old. His wife is Naw A---, who is 33 years old. Z--- was single. Naw A--- told KHRG: *"He [her husband] told me that he wanted to celebrate our son's birthday on July 8th 2023, but he was killed on July 7th."* Naw A--- said that the incident happened in their house, where her husband was brutally beaten by the SAC soldiers before they killed him. They shot one bullet through his head, killing him instantly. After he was killed, the SAC soldiers burned his house and his motorbike. Z--- was killed when he came back home after buying things at a market.

After they killed these two civilians, they burned down six motorbikes and five houses in the town, owned by local villagers including Saw W---. Three houses from Section 2 and two houses from Section 3 in the town were burned down. After that, they returned to their army camp. Then, at around 3:30 pm on July 7th 2023, they fired four or five rounds of mortar shells into T'See Ther Mee Lar Town. In the late evening of July 7th 2023, other villagers went to retrieve the bodies of the two civilians killed after the SAC soldiers had returned to their army camp. They were both buried on July 8th 2023.

According to the villager from T'See Ther Mee Lar Town, the SAC soldiers killed civilians and destroyed villagers' properties because they wanted to make people feel afraid to join the PDF in the future. For the two civilians who were killed and those whose properties were burned down, Battalion Commander Hein San Htun has not provided any compensation to the victims and their family members. The SAC never apologised for what they did to the villagers. The villager interviewed from T'See Ther Mee Lar Town said that this was the first time the SAC had killed villagers in this town but this was the fifth time that SAC had burned houses there between February and July 2023. The villager interviewed estimated that the SAC had burned down at least 23 houses in the town in the period February to July 2023.

Naw A--- and many other villagers had already fled from T'See Ther Mee Lar Town in February 2023, returning periodically to check on their property. Saw W---'s family members are not able to permanently return home yet because of safety concerns and the unstable situation in the town. Saw W--- had returned to the town temporarily without his family when the incident happened and he was killed. Naw A--- wants to go back home to the town and check on the situation. She told KHRG: *"I want to go back home but my children don't want me to go back. They told me, crying, 'Mom, we are afraid of [SAC] soldiers. Please don't go back home'. [...] Now I don't have a house anymore even though I want to go back home."* As her husband was killed, she faces difficulties to support her five children and the family's livelihood: *"We mainly relied on him for our livelihood. It will be very difficult for me to take care of my children alone. [...] I am just wondering how I can continue to support my children's livelihood. [...] I still cannot forget my husband. Without him, how can I take care of my children alone? [...] And I*

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.

⁶ 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.

don't feel secure now. I am also very worried that [some] people will tell [be suspicious of] me [because] I am the wife of a person whom the SAC soldiers killed.” Currently, she and her family receive no support from any aid organisation. She needs financial support to send her children to school.

She also shared her feelings and perspectives with KHRG: *“As we are villagers, we will never get it [justice]. I don't want to sue them [SAC soldiers]. I just [do not] want to see them anymore. If there is no SAC military, we will have peace in our country. [...] I am angry with them [SAC soldiers] but what can I do? My family members can even get killed at any time.”*



These photos were taken the first week of July 2023 in T'See Ther Mee Lar Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. It shows the body of Saw W---, who was killed by the SAC, as well as burned houses after the skirmish happened between SAC and PDF on July 7th 2023. *[Photos: Local villager]*

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The victim's wife, Naw A---, and the villager from T'See Ther Mee Lar Town gave KHRG permission to use and publish the information.

Further background reading on the situation of human rights abuses in Taw Oo District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Taw Oo District Situation Update: SAC indiscriminate shelling causing death and injury, travel restrictions, and villagers' livelihood, education, and healthcare challenges, from January to March 2023."](#), November 2023
- ["Taw Oo District Situation Update: SAC attacks against civilians, militarisation, development projects, displacement, and education, healthcare and livelihood challenges, July to November 2022"](#), November 2023
- ["Taw Oo District Situation Update: SAC military activities and livelihood, education, and healthcare challenges, September to December 2022"](#), October 2023
- ["In the Dark - The crime of enforced disappearance and its impacts on the rural communities of Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup"](#), November 2023.

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.khrq.org.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District

