



Incident Report

November 8th 2023/ KHRG #23-290-291-299-I1

Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: Two villagers killed and two injured by the SAC shelling in Ler Muh Lah Township, July 2023

This Incident Report describes events occurring in Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District in July 2023, including three different instances of indiscriminate shelling by the State Administration Council (SAC) Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #285. The shelling killed two villagers on the spot and injured two other villagers, including a seven-year-old boy.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Villagers injured and killed by shelling
Date of Incident(s)	July 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- village and B--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah township, Mergui-Tavoy district

Victim Information				
Name	Naw ² H---	Saw ³ I---	Maung ⁴ J---	U ⁵ K---
Age	70	7	20	40
Sex	Female	Male	Male	Male
Nationality	Karen	Karen	Bamar	Bamar
Marital status	Married	-	Married	Married
Occupation	Farming	-	Farming	Farming
Religion	Christian	Christian	Buddhist	Buddhist
Position	Villager	Student	Villager	Villager
Village	A--- village	A--- village	B--- village	B--- village

¹ The present document is based on information received in August and September 2022. It was provided by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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 Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

³ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁴ Maung is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁵ U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
SAC ⁶ soldiers	Unknown	LIB ⁷ #285	P'Law Town	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

A KHRG field researcher received the information from local leaders and victims' families.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The information is verified by the victims, their families and local villagers who witnessed the situation.

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 2nd 2023, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #285 based in P'Law Town shelled four rounds of mortars into A--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. Two mortars fell on the football ground, and the other fell next to a villager's house. The exploded shrapnel injured two villagers in the house: Naw H---, 70 years old, and Saw I--, 7 years old. Naw H--- was extensively injured on her thigh and Saw I--- was injured on his leg. According to a villager, Naw H--- almost died, as she was losing a lot of blood after being injured. These two villagers were sent to a hospital in T--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township. T--- village hospital is operated by Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)⁸ and Civil Disobedient Movement (CDM)⁹ members. The shelling also damaged the villagers'

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 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.

⁸ The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

⁹ On February 2nd 2021, healthcare workers at state-run hospitals and medical facilities across Myanmar spearheaded what is being referred to as a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) consisting of labour strikes in protest against the February 1st 2021 military coup. The movement quickly spread to include civil servants from all sectors of the government who are walking off their jobs as a way of non-recognition and non-participation in the

houses and plantations. Villagers were terrified and fled to stream sources [distant from the village, where most villagers have their plantations] because of the mortars shelling by SAC. By the end of August 2023, the villagers in A--- village returned to the village but they were still worried about the potential shelling. Some villagers were afraid to sleep in the village at night. Therefore, they would go and sleep in stream source at night and come back to the village during daytime.



These photos were taken on August 18th 2023, in A--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. The left photo shows the 7-year-old boy Saw I-- who was injured by the shelling of SAC LIB #285 based in P'Law Town. The right photo shows the exploded shell that fell in the village. The shelling injured 2 villagers in total and damaged the villagers' plantations and houses. [Photo: KHRG]

On July 19th, 2022, between 11:00 and 12:00 pm, the SAC LIB #285 based in P'Law Town shelled three rounds of mortars into B--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. This shelling killed a villager named Maung J--, 20 years old, who died on the spot. Before the shelling, Maung J-- was visiting his friend's home. On his way back home, the shelling happened and killed him. The exact time when Maung J-- died is unknown because other villagers were scared and hid under their houses. On the next day, local villagers found out that Maung J-- had died from the extensive wounds caused by the shelling explosion. The SAC LIB #285 based in P'Law Town often shells mortars into the local village, even without skirmishes happening in the area. Therefore, some villagers fled to other places, and some went to stay with their relatives. Some villagers had made a bunker underground and hid there when the shelling happened.

On July 25th 2023, the SAC LIB #285 shelled 7 rounds of mortar into B--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. Due to the shelling, a 40-year-old villager named U K-- was killed. The mortar landed next to his house. He was wounded in the back

military regime. Because of the popularity of the movement, and its seminal role in wider protests across the country, some people have begun using it as a catch-all phrase to include other protest forms like boycotts and pot-banging.

and died. U K-- is a villager who had to work daily for his livelihood. He is survived by his wife and his son. After he passed away, his wife and son faced livelihood challenges, so they moved to stay with their relatives. Due to the shelling incidents, some villagers were terrified and fled to another village to stay with their relatives. The shelling also damaged the villager's house.



KHRG received this photo on September 2nd 2023. This photo shows the villager Maung J--, 20 years old, who was killed by shelling on July 19th 2023 in B--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. *[Photo: Local villager]*



KHRG received this photo on August 31st 2023. This photo shows the villager U K--, 40 years old, who was killed by the indiscriminate shelling of SAC LIB #285 on July 25th 2023, that took place in B--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. *[Photo: 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 victims and their family members allowed KHRG to use the information they provided for publication.

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

- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: Villagers arrested as human shields, and shelling and looting by the SAC in Moo Township”](#), March 2023
- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Situation Update: Two villagers were killed and 17 villagers were injured by SAC’s indiscriminate shelling in Kyeh Htoh Township”](#), December 2022 to February 2023
- [“Why would they target us?”: Exploring patterns of the Burma Army’s retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma](#), 2023
- [“Mu Traw District Short Update: SAC indiscriminate shelling resulting in injured and killed”](#), April 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.khrg.org.

Mergui-Tavoy (Tanintharyi) District

