



Incident Report

January 27th 2023 / KHRG # 23-3-11

Taw Oo District Incident Report: A villager died after he was shot by SAC troops in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, December 2022

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District in December 2022. On December 31st 2022 at around 8:30 am, State Administration Council (SAC) troops shot dead a villager near A--- village, Baw Saw Law area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, when he was travelling to Toungoo Town in order to buy food for his family to celebrate New Year's Day. The victim's family was forced to pay a fee to retrieve the victim's body and his motorbike. They did not receive any compensation and, fearing repercussion, did not take any legal action to hold the perpetrators accountable.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Killing
Date of Incident(s)	December 31 st 2022
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	Hton Bo Gyi army camp, A--- village, Baw Saw Law area, Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District

Victim Information	
Name	Saw ² Aung Thu Ya Than (aka Tit Tit)
Age	34
Sex	Male
Nationality	Karen
Family	Married
Occupation	Farmer
Religion	Christian
Position	Villager
Village	B--- section, Leik Tho Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo

¹ The present document is based on information received in January 2023. It was provided by a community member in Taw Oo 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 Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

	District
--	----------

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	SAC LIB #413	Hton Bo Gyi army camp, A--- village, Baw Saw Law area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

On January 1st 2023, I [a KHRG researcher] was able to interview the victim's cousin, as well as a villager from A--- village who was nearby at the time of the incident and assisted the victim. On the same day, I also had a short conversation with the victim's elder brother regarding this case, and with the victim's wife on January 24th.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The villager who provided information, from A--- village, assisted the victim after he was shot and spoke with him prior to his death. The other people who provided information were family members who were familiar with the circumstances prior to and after the death of the victim.

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 December 31st 2022 at around 7 am, Northern Thandaung Aye Chan Yay Group³ attacked State Administration Council (SAC)⁴ [Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁵ #413] at Hton Bo Gyi army

³ *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*, which translates as 'Peace Group', is a government-sponsored militia first formed in 1998, led by U Ko Gyi. It is sometimes referred to as the Northern Thandaung Aye Chan Yay A'Pweh. It has operated mainly out of a base in the upper region of the Kyaung Haung area in Leik Tho Township, Toungoo District near the Kayah State border, but there are also small camps in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. The group previously made a peace agreement with the Tatmadaw in 1998, but since the 2021 military coup, it has engaged in armed conflict with the military junta.

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. Most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are understrength 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.

camp, located near A--- village, Baw Saw Law area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. The fighting lasted about 10 minutes. In response to the clash, SAC LIB #413 soldiers indiscriminately fired mortar shells around A--- village and indiscriminately fired small arms. [No villager was injured as the mortar shells landed and exploded outside the village. No one was hit by the gunshots.]

On December 31st 2022, Saw Aung Thu Ya Than (aka Tit Tit) and his cousin planned to travel to Toungoo Town in order to buy food for their families for New Year's Day. Saw Aung Thu Ya Than lives in B--- section of Leik Tho Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township. His cousin lives in C--- village, close to A--- village, Baw Saw Law area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township. In order to travel together to Toungoo Town, Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's cousin informed him that he would wait for him at one of the local shops beside a road [beyond Hton Bo Gyi army camp]. They planned to meet at the shop so they could travel together to Toungoo Town.

About one hour after the skirmish mentioned above, at around 8:30 am [on December 31st 2022], Saw Aung Thu Ya Than drove a motorbike to meet his cousin at the shop. When he was underway to meet his cousin, he travelled through a SAC checkpoint near Hton Bo Gyi army camp. SAC troops [from LIB #413] hid somewhere [near the checkpoint] just before he passed the checkpoint. Saw Aung Thu Ya Than travelled 15 yards [13.72 meters] beyond the checkpoint before SAC troops [LIB #413] shot him in the lower back. He was yelling for help as he was injured. Then, a villager from one of the houses beside the road [near the incident location] took him to his house, although he did so with fear [of being seen by the SAC]. The house owner asked Saw Aung Thu Ya Than what happened and called a social service organisation from Leik Tho Town over the phone for help in order to transport the victim to a hospital. [According to the villager who found him,] Saw Aung Thu Ya Than was unaware of the skirmish that happened in the army camp that morning. The villager told KHRG that the injury was very serious because the bullet hit the victim's lower back and went out through his belly. Due to the severity of the injury, he died 10 minutes later [after he was shot].

Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's cousin heard the gunfire [when SAC LIB #413 shot his cousin] while he was waiting for his cousin at the shop. He wondered what happened, so he went to A--- village where he found out that Saw Aung Thu Ya Than already passed away.

At around 9 am [on December 31st 2022], two people from a social service [funeral service] organisation from Leik Tho Town arrived [by car] where Saw Aung Thu Ya Than died in order to transport his body to his house in Leik Tho Town. When they prepared to transport him, eight soldiers from SAC LIB #413 and two SAC police officers arrived at the incident place. They did not allow them [the funeral service providers and the victim's relatives who arrived after having been called by the victim's cousin] to transport Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's body to Leik Tho Town. Instead, they [the soldiers and police] asked them to transport his body to Toungoo Hospital in Toungoo Town. When Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's body was sent to Toungoo Hospital, police officers from Police Station #3 in Toungoo Town asked the victim's relatives and people from the funeral organisation to send him to the hospital's morgue for an autopsy. Then, the police asked doctors [from Toungoo Hospital] to perform an autopsy on Saw Aung Thu Ya Than. At around 4 pm [on December 31st 2022], the police told Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's cousin that they [Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's family members] had to pay them 300,000 kyats [USD 142.86]⁶ if they wanted to retrieve his body. Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's family could only bring his body back [to their village] after they paid the police 300,000 kyats.

At around 7 pm on December 31st 2022, Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's body was brought back to his house in B--- section of Leik Tho Town. His family kept him at his house for one night [before the funeral]. At around 9 am on January 1st 2023, the head of police from Toungoo

⁶ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the December 20th 2022 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.48 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>).

Police Station #3 called Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's relatives and family members over the phone and told them that they had to pay 400,000 kyats [USD 190.48] in order to take back Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's motorbike. The police head said that they had to pay 400,000 kyats as a fine because the motorbike was not registered and Saw Aung Thu Ya Than did not have a driving license. Regarding this, Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's elder brother said that he would only take back the motorbike after the villager was buried [to be able to mourn his brother]. [It is unknown whether he got the motorbike back as of January 2023.]

Saw Aung Thu Ya Than was buried in a cemetery in Leik Tho Town on January 2nd 2023. He leaves behind his wife. The couple did not have any children. However, his wife is worried about her future since her husband passed away because she relied on her husband for her livelihood. Fearing repercussion, the victim's relatives did not take any legal action to hold the perpetrators accountable.

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 and cousin gave KHRG permission to use this information. The local villager from A--- village and the victim's family members gave KHRG permission to publish the information they provided.



This photo was taken on January 1st 2023 in Saw Aung Thu Ya Than's house in B--- section of Leik Tho Town, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. It shows the dead body of Saw Aung Thu Ya Than. SAC LIB #413 shot him dead when he was driving on a road on December 31st 2022. [Photo: KHRG]



This photo was taken on December 31st 2022 in A--- village, Baw Saw Law area, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. It shows a picture of Saw Aung Thu Ya Than after he was shot by SAC LIB #413 on December 31st 2022. He died ten minutes after the bullet hit his lower back. [Photo: Local villager]

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

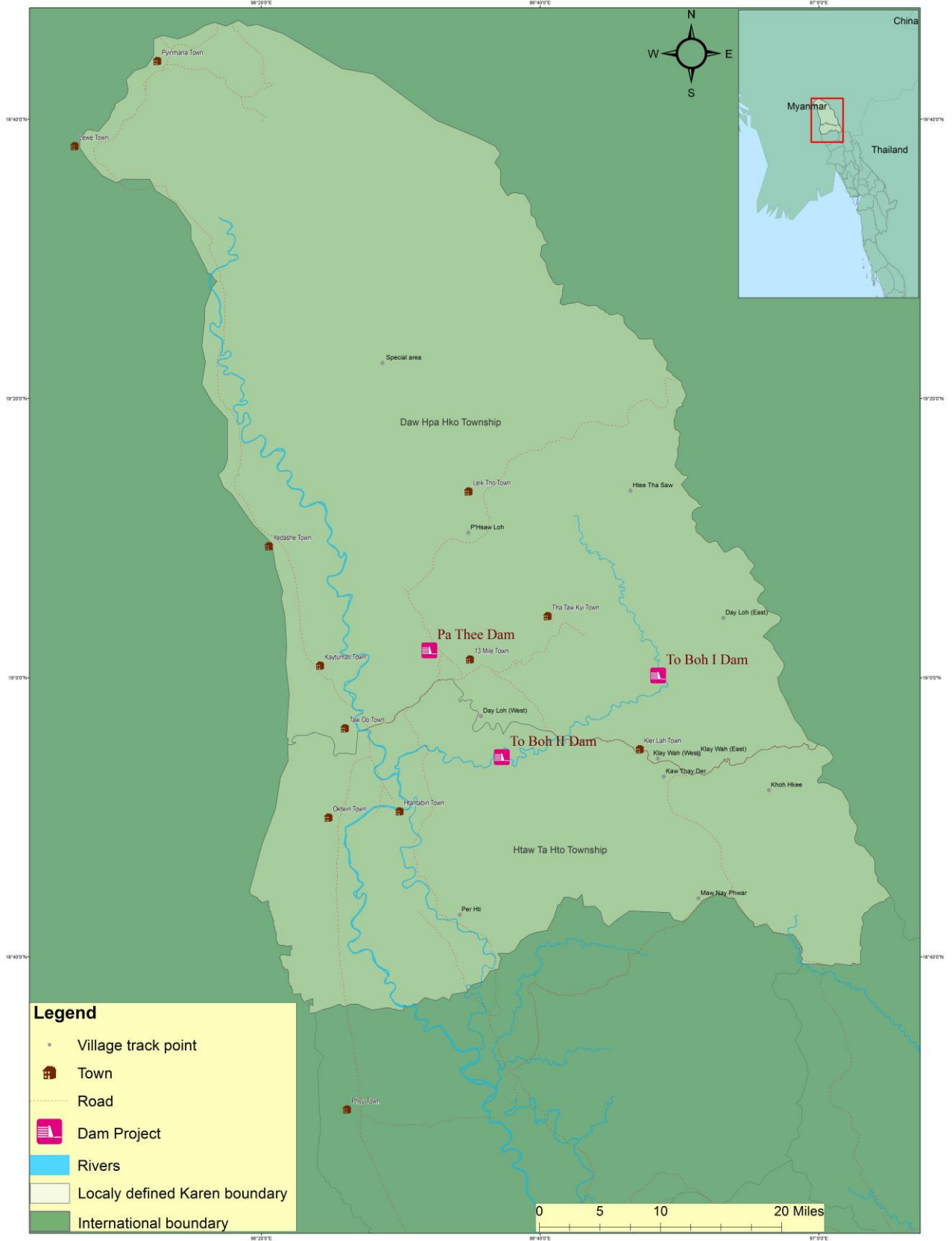
- ["Taw Oo District Short Update: Skirmishes, injuries due to SAC shelling and gunfire, threats against villagers and restriction of freedom of movement in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, December 2022"](#), January 2023.
- ["Taw Oo District Situation Update: Fighting, displacement, killing, and villagers' livelihoods in Htaw Ta Htoo Township, April to July 2022"](#), December 2022.
- ["Taw Oo District Interview: Suspicious death of detainee in police custody in Htaw Ta Htoo Township, November 2021"](#), July 2022.

- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: SAC activities, March to April 2022”](#), May 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.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



KHRG