



Incident Report

December 22nd 2023 / KHRG # 23-311-I1

Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: A DKBA operation commander tortured three villagers in Hpa-an Township (August 2023)

This Incident Report describes events occurring in Hpa-an Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District, in August 2023. On August 17th 2023, Saw Ta Dah Win, a Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) operation commander, physically punished three villagers from A--- village, Mee Kyain village tract, Hpa-an Township, alleging that these three villagers had blocked a road he was travelling on, as they had put gravel on it.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Torture of villagers by a DKBA operation commander
Date of Incident(s)	August 17 th 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	B--- place, A--- village, Mee Kyain village tract ² , Hpa-an Township, Doo Tha Htoo District

Victim Information			
Name	Saw ³ C---	Saw D---	Saw E----
Age	49 years	23 years	40 years
Sex	Male	Male	Male
Nationality	Karen	Karen	Karen
Family	Married	Single	[Unknown]
Occupation	Daily worker	Daily worker	Daily worker
Religion	Buddhist	Buddhist	Buddhist

¹ The present document is based on information received in September 2023. It was provided by a community member in Doo Tha 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	Villager	Villager	Villager
Village	A--- village	A--- village	A--- village

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Saw Ta Dah Win	Operation Commander	Unknown	Kyain Paw Daw Moo monastery, Kyar Gu place near Kyain village tract and Mee Kayin village tract, Hpa-an Township, Doo Tha Htoo District	Saw Bo Bee

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

On August 18th 2023, a local villager called a KHRG researcher on the phone and informed him about the incident. Then, the KHRG researcher went to meet a local villager and conducted an interview with him.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The information provider is the local villager who informed a KHRG researcher about the incident.

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 August 17th 2023, a Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA)⁴ operation commander tortured three villagers in B--- place, near A--- village, Mee Kyain village tract, Hpa-an Township, Doo Tha Htoo District. These three villagers are Saw C---, Saw D--- and Saw E---. Saw C--- is a 49-year-old villager. Saw D--- is a 23-year-old villager and he is Saw C---'s son. Saw E--- is a 40-year-old villager and he is Saw D---'s uncle. These three villagers live in A--- village and they work as daily workers in order to support their livelihood. They sell gravel. If other villagers want to get gravel, they sell it and put it on the road. The gravel was on the road

⁴ In 1994, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) split from the KNLA over religious considerations. In 2010, the majority of DKBA troops transformed into BGFs, but one faction refused and changed its name to Democratic Karen Benevolent Army in 2012. In 2015, the DKBA Splinter Group split from this faction and reclaimed their original name, Democratic Karen Buddhist Army. It is active in Mu Traw (Hpapun) and Hpa-an districts, and it has not signed the NCA.

for storage. [A DKBA operation commander] complained that the gravel that the villagers kept blocked the road when he saw that these villagers had put a gravel pile on a road as he travelled to B--- place. [The three villagers] apologised to the DKBA soldier and added: “*If you need it, we can remove it*”, but the DKBA soldier did not listen to them, and [instead] beat them.

The DKBA soldier hit Saw C--- one time with his wooden stick and punched his face one time. As a result, his lip was broken. In addition, the DKBA soldier punched Saw D--- three times and hit Saw E--- three times with his wooden stick. The DKBA soldier asked Saw E--- to lie down on the ground when he hit him with the wooden stick. These three villagers had never been tortured before the DKBA soldier came to stay in their area. After the DKBA operation commander physically punished these three villagers, local villagers from A--- village and its neighbouring villages had to be very careful in their daily lives [to avoid facing these issues in the future].

The perpetrator is Saw Ta Dah Win, an operation commander from a DKBA battalion led by Saw Bo Bee. Saw Ta Dah Win tortured these three villagers, and according to local villagers, Saw Ta Dah Win treated villagers from the area badly without showing any respect. This DKBA battalion is from Kaw Law Wah Lu place, Brigade #7, in Hpa-an District.

A senior monk from Kyain Paw Daw Moo monastery, Hpa-an Township, [named] U Nanda Thar Ya invited this battalion to come to meet him. In October 2022, the DKBA battalion led by Saw Bo Bee went to pay their respects to U Nanda Thar Ya. About 50 soldiers from the DKBA battalion went to pay their respects to the senior monk with three cars. After they paid their respects to the senior monk, they did not go back to their place, and stayed in the monastery. They [the DKBA battalion] combined their troops with a small group of DKBA soldiers, formed by U Nanda Thar Ya. Since then, they have been based in Kyain Paw Daw Moo monastery.

U Nanda Thar Ya had formed an unarmed small group of DKBA members at the beginning of the 2021 coup. Currently, the small group of DKBA members have guns in their hands. According to local villagers, Border Guard Force (BGF)⁵, DKBA and *Pyithu sit* [People’s militia]⁶ work together and secretly discuss military affairs in Kyain Paw Daw Moo monastery. Local villagers estimate that there are about 70 or 80 soldiers of DKBA and its combined forces. Local villagers and local leaders think that U Nanda Thar Ya is a person [a powerful, influential and politically motivated monk] whom the SAC rely on, like [they did in the past when] U Thuzana⁷, a senior monk from Myaing Gyi Ngu area (in Lu Pleh Township, Hpa-an District) [was still alive].

⁵ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw.

⁶ *Pyithu sit* translates to ‘people’s militia,’ which is a militia structure into which local civilians are conscripted to serve in village or town militia groups.

⁷ U Thuzana was an influential ethnic Karen Buddhist monk based in Myaing Gyi Ngu who was instrumental in the formation of the DKBA in 1994; see “[Inside the DKBA](#),” KHRG, March 1996. In 1995, KHRG reported that U Thuzana had collaborated with the Tatmadaw, and met with then-Southeastern Commander Major General Maung Hla to obtain weapons and supplies for 4,000 soldiers in his monastery. As a result of the agreement, U Thuzana’s headquarters and main monastery in Myaing Gyi Ngu, in northern Hpa-an District, reportedly developed a reputation as a mystical safe haven for villagers avoiding Tatmadaw abuses. See “[Karen Human Rights Group commentary](#),” KHRG, February 1995. More recently monk U Thuzana had been implicated in forced labour demands and of stoking religious conflict by confiscating land to build Buddhist stupas. See “[Hpapun Field Report, January to December 2013](#),” March 2016, and ‘Chapter 7: Discrimination and Division’ in “[Foundation of Fear: 25 years of villagers’ voices from southeast Myanmar](#),” October 2017, KHRG. U Thuzana died in 2018.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The permission was given by the victims and a local leader to share and publish this information.

Further background reading on the situation on human rights in Doo Tha Htoo District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [*“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.
- [*“Doo Tha Htoo District Situation Update: Killings, landmine injuries, and insecurity in Bilin Township”*](#), January to June 2022
- [*“Doo Tha Htoo District Short Update: House burning and indiscriminate shelling in Kyeh Htoh Township”*](#), January 2023
- [*“Doo Tha Htoo District Short Update: Forcible collection of logs in Hpa-an Township”*](#), July 2022

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.

Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District

