



Incident Report

January 22nd 2024 / KHRG # 23-316-11

Mu Traw District Incident Report: SAC soldiers fatally shot a villager while he was fishing on his boat, September 2023

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, in September 2023. On September 16th 2023, E---, a 50-year-old resident of H--- village, in Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District, was shot by State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers based at Toh Meh Hkee place, in Hpapun Town, while he was returning from fishing. E--- went fishing both in the morning and evening due to the current difficulty of securing a livelihood despite the travel restrictions imposed by the SAC in the area.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	The SAC fatally shot a villager
Date of Incident(s)	September 16 th 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	Yunsalin river, close to H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Victim Information	
Name	E---
Age	50
Sex	Male
Marital Status	Married
Occupation	Day labourer
Religion	Muslim
Position	Villager
Village	H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract ² , Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

¹ The present document is based on information received in October 2023. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw 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.

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Rank	Company/Battalion/Division	Based at	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	Hpapun	Toh Meh Hkee place, in Hpapun Town	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

KHRG's researcher conducted an interview with a villager from O--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, on September 26th 2023, and the villager explained about the incident.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

KHRG's researcher investigated and collected information after the incident from a local villager, and had informal conversations with the victim's wife.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

Since the 2021 military coup, the State Administration Council (SAC)³ has imposed a curfew in Hpapun Town [and surrounding areas] from 6 pm to 6 am, prohibiting people from going out during these hours. As a result, no one is out on the road during that time. Villagers have reported that the curfew has made it difficult for them to carry out their daily activities. Amidst the unstable political situation, villagers in H--- village [located near Hpapun Town], Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, are struggling to secure their livelihoods.

On September 16th 2023, at around 6 am, E---, a 50-year-old resident of H--- village, was shot by SAC soldiers based at Toh Meh Hkee place, in Hpapun Town, while he was returning from fishing. E--- lives close to the N--- monastery. Due to the difficulty of securing a livelihood during this time of hardship, he went fishing [on his boat in the Yunsalin river] both in the morning and evening [he would set his fishing net in the water in the evening and retrieve it in the morning].

On that morning, E--- went fishing on his boat to retrieve the fish he had caught in the nets he had laid out the previous evening. As he was on his boat on his way back [to the riverbank], SAC soldiers based at Toh Meh Hkee place, in Hpapun Town, shot him in the chest. Despite being hit, E--- managed to steer his boat almost back to the riverbank before collapsing. His

³ 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.

wife and other villagers saw him fall off the boat and rushed to help, but he had already passed away beside his boat.

E--- has three children, and fishing is one of his jobs to secure his family's livelihood during this difficult situation. Although he knew that the SAC had imposed a curfew, he [probably] thought it was almost 7 am [based on the morning light] and went fishing. After E---'s death, the SAC denied responsibility for the incident and claimed that a Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁴ soldier had shot him. However, villagers living in Hpapun area heard gunshots coming only from Toh Meh Hkee place, where SAC soldiers are based. Local villagers believe that the SAC soldiers killed E---, but they dare not talk about it in front of the SAC as they have been threatened with [retaliatory] action [like arrests, shelling, arson, and so on] if they do.

Since the military coup in 2021, the SAC has been [allegedly] guarding security in Hpapun Town. They have also imposed a curfew from 6 pm to 6 am, during which people are not allowed to turn on lights or make noise.

A villager from O--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, highlights: *"The villagers' living [conditions] are so difficult. They are crying out for not having a meal [rice] to eat due to the travel restrictions [which limit their income generating activities]."* He also talked about how businessmen take advantage of selling [town-bought] rice back in the village. He added: *"I heard that it is 260,000 kyat [124 USD]⁵ for a bag of rice in Hpapun Town. Some villagers who do not have money cannot afford to pay for the rice. These businessmen do not sell the rice by the bowl only a full bag. Only SAC soldiers can pay 260,000 kyat for a bag of rice."*

When asked about his hopes for the future regarding the current situation in his area, the villager stated: *"We hope that the political situation [in Burma] gets better in the future. If not, the situation in Hpapun will worsen, and villagers will be displaced and starve. There will be robbers among them [the SAC will steal from villagers]. SAC soldiers from LIB⁶ #408 and others based in Hpapun Town break into the villagers' houses, and loot their possessions while they are away. People dare not tell them [address the soldiers] even though they witness the situation. I believe there must be a change in the future. If not, things will get worse. Our generation will not taste joy [if there is no change]."*

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The source allows KHRG to use the information.

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

⁴ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Myanmar and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

⁵ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the January 16, 2024 official market rate of 2101 kyats to US \$1. <http://www.xe.com/currency/mmk-burmese-kyat>

⁶ 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.

- ["Taw Oo District Incident Report: Killings, property destruction, and indiscriminate shelling by the SAC in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township"](#), July 2023
- ["Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: SAC indiscriminate shelling, killing, arrests, torture, house burning, and villagers' displacement in K'Ser Doh Township"](#), June 2023
- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Killings, arbitrary arrests, SAC operations, and livelihood, healthcare and education challenges in Moo Township"](#), from July 25th to October 31st 2022
- [Deadly Encounters: Killings of civilians by armed actors in Southeast Burma](#), Briefing Paper, October 2022 - 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.khrq.org.

Mutraw (Hpapun) District

