



## Incident Report

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2024 / KHRG # 23-316-12

## Mu Traw District Incident Report: SAC soldiers shot a villager who was herding cattle, September 2023

*This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, in September 2023. On September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, at around 2:30 pm, State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers shot E---, a 51-year-old villager from A--- village in Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township. The incident occurred when he was returning from gathering his cows from a field in Way San village. Due to the injury, he was hospitalised for 23 days. Local villagers are afraid to work on their farmlands as SAC soldiers conduct shelling into villagers' farmlands when attacked by local armed groups. Villagers do not want SAC soldiers to operate in their area in order to safely work and secure their livelihood.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	SAC shot a villager
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	September 2 <sup>nd</sup> 2023
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	A--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Victim Information	
<b>Name</b>	E---
<b>Age</b>	51 years old
<b>Gender</b>	Man
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Shan
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single
<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist
<b>Position</b>	Villager

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<b>Village</b>	A--- village, Meh Klaw village tract <sup>2</sup> , Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District
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<b>Perpetrator Information</b>				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Company/Battalion/Division</b>	<b>Based at</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Unknown	Soldier	Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) <sup>3</sup> #341	Hpapun	[Strategic commander's name is] unknown

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

### **1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.**

On the evening of September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2023, a KHRG researcher received information through instant messaging system [in Karen language, *Law Plee*] from a local leader that a villager named E---, living in A--- village, had been shot by a State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>4</sup> soldier from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #341 in Way San village. On September 26<sup>th</sup> 2023, the KHRG researcher met with E---'s brother, named O---, and conducted an interview with him.

### **2. Explain how the source verified this information.**

The source, who is the victim's brother, was informed about the incident and took his brother to the hospital.

## **Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident**

### **Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.**

On September 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, at around 2:30 pm, SAC soldiers shot E---, a 51-year-old villager from A--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District. He was returning from gathering his cows that were pasturing in a field in [Way San] village when the incident occurred. SAC LIB #341 is based east of the Way San village's monastery entrance, and another group of soldiers is also stationed at the [village's] gas station.

On the day of the incident, E--- and his friend were on their way to the field when they had to pass by the SAC soldiers who were guarding the area. Since his friend knows [some of] the

<sup>2</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

<sup>3</sup> 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.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

[SAC] soldiers, E--- asked him to come along. Upon arriving at the gas station, they [the villagers] asked the soldiers there to inform the other SAC soldiers [stationed further] that they would go and grab the cows. The soldiers responded that they would inform the other group. E--- then went to gather his cows. While returning from getting his cows, the SAC soldiers [located near the monastery entrance] shot a bullet at them with a K-3 [assault rifle] that penetrated E---'s left shoulder. As soon as he was injured by the shot, SAC medics took care of him by tending to his wound.

After his wound was tended to, he was sent back to the village. From there, E--- was taken by motorcycle to Bhyu Ha Hospital, an SAC-run hospital, by O---'s daughter [E---'s niece]. Since E--- is single, his brother and nieces took care of him while he was hospitalised. He stayed in the hospital for 23 days and was discharged on September 25<sup>th</sup> 2023. However, he was advised to follow up on [the healing of] his wound once a week at the hospital.

At first, the SAC soldiers who shot E--- denied that they had shot him, and blamed Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>5</sup> soldiers [for the shooting]. However, the friend who accompanied E--- confirmed that [it was] the SAC soldiers [that] had shot E---. Later, just to hide their actions, the SAC soldiers told their commander that they [E--- and his friend] did not inform them of anything [that they would come to get their cows in the field]. Then, the Strategic Commander [in Burmese language, *Bhyu Ha Moo*] agreed to take all responsibility for E--- [’s treatment]. Although the commander provided everything [medical costs] that was necessary for the treatment, the family members had to take care of him and send him food.

At the hospital, there is a separation of areas [based on gender] which means only men are allowed to take care of [and visit] male patients and women to take care of female patients. [Hence,] E---'s brother could visit him at any time at the hospital. E---'s brother explained [to KHRG]: *“I cannot say or do anything about it [what has happened]. It happened and we just let it be. I don't see it to be right. I felt upset. I don't know what to say. If we talk about it [the incident], we will have to worry for ourselves and [the safety of] other villagers. If not, somehow, the SAC soldiers will put us into trouble [investigation or punishment on villagers].”*

The SAC soldiers guarding security on A--- village and Way San Road always keep rotating, so it is hard to know who the commander is. Nowadays, the SAC does not disclose their name and they do not cooperate with village heads. In A--- village, villagers are afraid to work on their farmlands and they cannot work peacefully. [Generally,] When they [SAC soldiers] are being attacked, they [SAC] conduct shelling into villagers' farmlands. Regarding this situation, O---, the victim's brother, expressed: *“Villagers cannot work on their farmlands or hill fields peacefully as they are afraid of SAC shelling. Even herding is hard because there is no [safe] place for herding. When the KNLA snipers attacked them [SAC], they [SAC] fired mortars into the village. Villagers had to flee. There are a lot of things to worry about and be afraid of.”* He added: *“After the military coup, we were not able to work peacefully. Most villagers go to K'Mah Moh [Town] to buy food and other things, but it's difficult to travel [due to travel restrictions]. [The army allows villagers to travel by the water route only once every two months,] so, when travelling by waterways is not possible, the villagers [have to] use the land route [to get to the town to buy food and other things]. We cannot travel like before.”*

A--- village has 120 households, and villagers work on farms, hill fields, and plantations. Some villagers raise cows, while others sell food purchased from the town. Villagers have to work in fear of SAC's attack while they are working to secure their livelihood. Villagers expressed that they want the SAC soldiers to stop patrolling in [locally-defined] Karen State, so that they are able to travel and work with no disturbances.

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<sup>5</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

## **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 and the victim allowed KHRG to use the information.

Further background reading on the human rights situation in Mu Traw District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Mu Traw District Incident Report: SAC soldiers fatally shot a villager while he was fishing on his boat, September 2023”](#), January 2024
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: SAC air strikes, arrest of villagers, and indiscriminate shelling causing casualties, and landmine explosion, March 2022 to February 2023”](#), January 2024.
- [“Mu Traw District Incident Report: Two villagers injured by landmine explosions, February 2023”](#), December 2023
- [“Mu Traw District Incident Report: An SAC sergeant sexually abused a 7-year-old child in an army camp, March 2023”](#), November 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](http://www.khrq.org).

