



Incident Report

January 26th 2024 / KHRG # 23-343-11

Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC forcing villagers to act as human shields in Noh T’Kaw Township, October 2023.

This Incident Report describes events occurring in Noh T’Kaw Township, Dooplaya District. On October 8th 2023, Light Infantry Division (LID) #44 and local Infantry Battalion (IB) #284 and #32 conducted an operation in Noh T’Kaw Township and arrested three villagers in order to use them as human shields, including a mentally disabled person. The arrested villagers were provided with only three packs of MAMA [Instant noodles] for each person to eat within three days.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Table with 2 columns: Incident Detail, Description. Rows include Type of Incident (Use of human shields), Date of Incident(s) (October 8th 2023), and Incident Location (A--- village, T’Hka Kloh village tract², Noh T’Kaw Township, Dooplaya District).

Table with 4 columns: Category, S---, T---, U---. Rows include Name, Age, Gender, Ethnicity, Marital Status, Occupation, Religion, and Position.

¹ The present document is based on information received in March 2023. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee 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.

Village	A--- village	A--- village	A--- village
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Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	Light Infantry Division (LID) ³ #44, local Infantry Battalions (IB) ⁴ #284 and #32	Temporary operation	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

A KHRG researcher first heard about this incident from local villagers. The KHRG researcher talked to the village authority and later conducted an interview with one of the victims.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

KHRG researcher conducted an interview with one victim to make sure this information is accurate.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On October 8th 2023, the State Administration Council (SAC)⁵ Light Infantry Division (LID) #44 and local Infantry Battalions (IB) #284 and #32 conducted an operation in Noh T’Kaw Township, Dooplaya District, and arrested some villagers they encountered in A--- village, T’Hka Kloh village tract, in order to use them as human shields. A villager named S--- was arrested when he was looking after the cattle, and two other villagers [named T--- and U---]

³ A Light Infantry Division (LID) of the Tatmadaw is commanded by a brigadier general, and consists of ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, search and destroy operations against ethnic insurgents. They were first incorporated into the Tatmadaw in 1966. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, three battalions each and one reserve, one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units. Each division is directly under the command of the Chief of Staff (Army).

⁴ An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most 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 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

⁵ 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.

were arrested while working on their farms. One of the arrested villagers, U---, has a mental disability and is also mute. SAC soldiers usually ask [force] villagers to travel with them in order to deter attacks from resistance armed groups.

One of the victims, S---, explained: *“At first, I thought that people were doing something [on his pasture land outside A--- village], so I went there to have a look. When I reached there, there were SAC soldiers. The soldiers came towards me. I told them I was a herder. [Then,] the SAC soldiers said: ‘We request you to accompany us for a while’. I [had] tied my cattle with rope so the calves were scattered [grazing around]. I told the soldiers that I would release my cattle [first so they could all graze in the pasture land], but the SAC soldiers did not allow me to do so. The SAC soldiers asked [to] me which village the way goes. I told them the road was not going anywhere [not connecting any village]; the track was only for cattle. The SAC soldiers asked me to accompany them and direct the way for them.”*

One of the arrested villagers was forced to carry a backpack estimated to weigh five viss [8.16 kg/18 lbs]. The arrested villagers were provided only three packs of MAMA [Instant noodles] for each person for three days. The SAC soldiers gave a pack of rice to Saw⁶ S---, but Saw S-- - dared not to eat it because [he believed] it smelled like some kind of drug.

The arrested villagers were released on October 10th 2023. The SAC soldiers thanked them and gave them 10,000 kyat [4.76 USD]⁷. Saw S--- explained [to KHRG that] it is not right to ask villagers to do that job [walk in front of soldiers as human shields], although they are given money [afterwards]. Currently, Saw S--- dared not look after the cattle far from the village.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The interviewed victim gave KHRG permission to use this information.

⁶ Saw is a S’gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person’s name.

⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the January 16th 2024 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.48 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>).

Further background reading on the situation of human shields in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Situation Update: villagers used as human shields, forced labour and navigators; SAC shelling and looting; and forced displacement in Bilin Township \(July 2021 to September 2022\)”](#), January 2024.
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: Killing, house burning, forced portering and use of civilians as human shields, in Ler K’Saw Township, July 2023”](#), December 2023
- [“Shadow of Death: Use of civilians as human shields by the State Administration Council \(SAC\) in Southeast Burma since the coup”](#), July 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 Myanmar. 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.

Dooplaya (Southeastern Karen State) District



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