



## Incident Report

March 16<sup>th</sup> 2023 / KHRG # 23-35-I1

## Taw Oo District Incident Report: A female villager died in a landmine explosion in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, January 2023

*This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District in January 2023. On January 13<sup>th</sup> 2023, at 11:50 am, a female villager stepped on a landmine planted by the State Administration Council (SAC) on a public road near A--- village, Than Moe Taung village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District, on her way back from gathering wood nearby. The victim died following the landmine explosion. The landmine was planted by SAC soldiers following clashes that took place on November 26<sup>th</sup> 2022 between SAC and the combined forces of the People's Defence Forces (PDF) and Northern Than Taung Peace Group in the area.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Landmine explosion
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	January 13 <sup>th</sup> 2023
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	A--- village, Than Moe Taung village tract <sup>2</sup> , Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

Victim Information	
<b>Name</b>	Daw <sup>3</sup> B---
<b>Age</b>	68 years old
<b>Sex</b>	Female
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Karen
<b>Family</b>	Married

<sup>1</sup> 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.

<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> Daw is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

<b>Occupation</b>	Housewife
<b>Religion</b>	Christian
<b>Position</b>	Villager
<b>Village</b>	A--- village, Than Moe Taung village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

<b>Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)</b>				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Unknown	Unknown	SAC from MOC 6, LIB #605	Nay Pyi Daw	Captain [removed for security reasons]
Unknown	Unknown	SAC from MOC 6, LIB #605	Nay Pyi Daw	Major [removed for security reasons]

## **Part 2 – Information Quality**

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

On January 17<sup>th</sup> 2023, a KHRG researcher went to the incident place to collect the information from the victim's son.

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

The information provider is the son of the victim, who was involved in the process of picking up and cremating the victim's corpse.

## **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.**

At about 11:50 am on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2023, Daw B---, a villager of A--- village located in Than Moe Taung village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, stepped on a landmine on Than Moe Taung road when she was returning from collecting wood [nearby]. Her left leg was completely blown off [below the knee], and she sustained severe injuries to her right leg, her left arm and her face. Villagers heard the explosion, but did not dare to go near [the incident place because it was an area restricted by State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>4</sup> soldiers. The victim died before other villagers could arrive to provide help].

<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.

Around 3:30 pm [on the same day], the son of the victim, Saw<sup>5</sup> C--- [who was staying in a nearby plantation field], received a phone call from SAC soldiers. They notified him that one villager was injured by a landmine explosion. Saw C--- and three of his friends returned to the village from the plantation field. When they arrived to the [SAC] army camp [located in the village], the soldiers did not immediately allow them to continue on their way. [The villagers believed the SAC soldiers did so in order to check the incident area and search the victim's corpse before the villagers arrived]. After the soldiers checked the incident area, they called the four villagers to pick up the victim's body. It was Daw B's--- corpse.

The four villagers believed that Daw B's--- body's position was modified [by SAC soldiers] at the incident location [to make her body presentable]. Daw B's--- son, Saw C---, blamed the SAC for having planted landmines on a public road [near the village]. The SAC soldiers didn't respond to him [and his accusation]. Saw C--- believes his mother bled to death and that she could have been saved if the SAC had notified him earlier, because her body was still warm when the villagers arrived.

[SAC soldiers from Military Operations Command (MOC)<sup>6</sup> 6, LIB<sup>7</sup> #605 later admitted to local villagers that they planted the landmine following clashes that happened in November 2022 in the area]. On November 26<sup>th</sup> 2022, fighting broke out in A--- village between SAC from A--- village and the combined forces of the People's Defence Force (PDF)<sup>8</sup> and Northern Than Taung Peace Group [*Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*]<sup>9</sup>. [The fighting lasted around three hours.] In addition, SAC air force camp control under Southern Command headquarters conducted air strikes into A--- village. [An unknown number of] injuries and deaths were reported due to the air strikes. [After the fighting,] villagers fled [to other places] and [local] shops were closed. [Following the clash, SAC soldiers repaired their army camp and planted more landmines in the area, including in locations further away from their camp and on villagers' land]. Two to three days after the fighting, SAC soldiers notified villagers not to use Than Moe Taung road and restricted access to it. They informed villagers that landmines were planted [on the road]. [Although local villagers stopped using the road, the victim's son believes that his mother might have forgotten the warning and restriction due to her advanced age].

## **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

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

<sup>5</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>6</sup> Military Operations Command (MOC) is comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) made up of three battalions each.

<sup>7</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>8</sup> The People's Defence Force (PDF) is an armed resistance established independently as local civilian militias operating across the country. Following the February 1st 2021 military coup and the ongoing brutal violence enacted by the junta, the majority of these groups began working with the National Unity Government (NUG), a body claiming to be the legitimate government of Burma/Myanmar, which then formalized the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

<sup>9</sup> The Northern Than Taung Peace Group, formerly called *Aye Chan Yay A'pweh*, is a government-sponsored militia first formed in 1998, led by U Ko Gyi. 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.

permission was provided.

The victim's son allowed KHRG to use this information.



These photos were taken on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 in A--- village, Than Moe Taung village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. It shows Daw B's--- corpse after she stepped on a landmine on January 13<sup>th</sup> 2023 near A-- village. The landmine was planted by SAC troops following armed clashes in the area. [Photos: Local villager]

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

- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: One villager was killed and three villagers injured in SAC air strikes in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, November 2022”](#), March 2023.
- [“Taw Oo District Situation Update: Deliberate shooting of two villagers, military activity, including live-fire exercises into villages, fighting, shelling and displacement in Daw Hpa Hkoh and Htaw Ta Htoo townships, February to October 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“Taw Oo District Incident Report: A villager died after he was shot by SAC troops in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, December 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“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.

## 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).

# Taw Oo (Toungoo) District



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