



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

June 28th, 2024 / KHRG #23-377+401+402-D1

Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC air strikes and indiscriminate shelling caused casualties, destruction, and displacement, in Hsaw Htee Township (November to December 2023)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Hsaw Htee (Shwegyin) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District during November and December 2023, including air strikes and shelling conducted by the State Administration Council (SAC). In November 2023, the SAC military conducted an air strike near Z--- village and L--- village, in Klaw Thoh Hkee village tract, and Y--- village, in Htee Hkay Loh village tract. In November and December 2023, SAC soldiers also conducted mortar shelling near villages in Th'Hpih Luh (Gway Kone) village tract and Klaw Thoh Hkee village tract. On one occasion, four mortar shells landed in a village causing injuries to a 54-year-old woman, her 7-year-old son, and her 18-year-old daughter. These incidents also caused damages and destruction of villagers' buildings and plantation fields. In consequence, many villagers fled to the jungle to evade harm.¹

SAC air strikes in Hsaw Htee Township

On November 17th 2023, at 5 am, fighting occurred between Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)² forces against State Administration Council (SAC)³ military. A few hours after the fighting, at 9:10 am, two SAC fighter jets conducted air strikes. [First,] a fighter jet dropped two bombs that landed next to Z--- village, Klaw Thoh Hkee village tract⁴, Hsaw Htee Township, and dropped three [more] bombs next to Y--- village, Htee Hkay Loh village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. A second fighter jet conducted air strikes firing Oerlikon [machine guns from the aircraft] for four rounds in total. According to a local villager, these are places where SAC assumed that there would be their enemy [armed resistance forces]. Due to fighting and fighter jets conducting air

¹ The present document is based on information received in November 2023 and December 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 The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

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.

⁴ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

strikes, villagers from Y---, Z---, and L--- villages fled and are hiding in the jungle. There are 49 households, with more than 200 villagers in Z--- village, and 20 households with 91 people in L-- - village. The exact households' number and population of Y--- village is unknown. [These amounts to more than 300 people displaced and hiding in the jungle.]



This photo was taken on November 2023 by a local villager, near Z--- village, Klaw Thoh Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee (Shwegyi) Township. It shows a family from Z--- village hiding in their bunker during an air strike conducted by the SAC. *[Photo: Local villager]*

Indiscriminate shelling by SAC soldiers in Hsaw Htee Township

During the fighting on November 17th 2023, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁵ #351, based in Ler Htaw Thoh army camp, led by Aung Bo Bo Battalion Deputy Commander, shelled six 60mm mortar rounds that landed next to L--- village, and the civilians there had to flee to the jungle. Due to the presence of soldiers from both armies [KNLA forces and SAC], villagers residing in this area have not returned to their villages yet. The primary school, run by the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD)⁶, in L--- village closed [due to the fighting]. Most of the villagers are farmers, bamboo cutters, and daily labourers. Due to fighting, villagers face difficulties to secure their livelihood and food. Currently, as it is dry season, villagers are able to take shelter in the jungle beneath the trees while displaced [as of December 2023]. They face health issues and difficulties to recover, especially for babies and elderly women.



This photo was sent by a local villager in November 2023. It shows L--- villagers, in Klaw Thoh Khee village tract, Hsaw Htee (Shwegyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, displaced in the jungle due to the SAC air strikes and indiscriminate shelling into their village. *[Photo: Local villager]*

On November 24th 2023, around 11:19 pm, SAC LIB #20, based in the army camp in Nyaunglebin Town, shelled approximately eight 120mm mortar rounds into S--- village area, Th'Hpih Luh

⁵ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Burma military 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 2015 Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA). LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

⁶ The Karen National Union's Education and Culture Department is the education department of the Karen National Union. Its main goals are to provide mother tongue education services to rural Karen populations in Southeast Myanmar, as well as to preserve the Karen language, culture and history. Despite being an important education provider in the region, it is not officially recognised by the Myanmar government.

(Gway Kone) village tract, which is under Karen National Union (KNU)⁷ controlled area. Three mortars landed inside S--- village and exploded. Three houses were damaged, as well as [villagers'] belongings in those houses. The owners of the houses are U⁸ G--- and Ma⁹ E---, U H---, and U V--- and Daw¹⁰ K---. The damaged belongings are a water pump, a motorbike, and furniture.

Ma E---, her son, and her daughter were severely injured due to the mortar explosion. U G--- and Ma E--- have six children, but only one son and one daughter were in the house during the mortar explosions. The mortar shells landed in front of their house, injuring the three. The 18-year-old daughter named Ma O--- was injured on the left side of her stomach, by shrapnel, leaving her in a life-threatening situation. The 7-year-old son named Maung¹¹ Q--- was injured on the back of his head by shrapnel. 54-year-old Ma E--- was severely injured on her thigh.

Shortly after, an emergency team run by the KNU reached out to help them. Those three injured family members received treatment in an emergency room of a KNU clinic in J--- village, Ain Ba La village tract. After that, Ma O--- was taken to a hospital located at the Thai border by an ethnic organisation and [local] authorities to receive further treatment. The family has been affected also financially after this SAC shelling as they are daily labourers. The family is suffering from trauma and experiencing difficulties due to the injuries caused to the three family members. Currently, Ma E--- and her son Maung Q--- are hospitalised at J--- clinic, and they are receiving treatment [as of November 2023.]



These photos above were taken in November 2023 at a clinic in J--- village, Ain Ba La village tract, in Hsaw Htee (Shwegyi) Township. The photo on the left shows an 18-year-old girl, Ma O---, receiving treatment after being injured on the left side of her stomach and the photo on the right shows her 7-year-old brother, Maung Q---, receiving treatment as he was injured on his head. On November 24th 2023, SAC indiscriminately shelled mortar rounds into S--- village, Th'Hpih Luh village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, that landed near the villagers' house, injuring a mother and her two children. [Photo: KHRG]

⁷ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma/Myanmar 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.

⁸ 'U' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁹ 'Ma' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

¹⁰ 'Daw' is Burmese honorific title for female adults, a married woman or a woman of a higher social position.

¹¹ 'Maung' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

[Since the 2021 coup,] SAC soldiers often deliberately shelled into villages. According to local villagers, SAC soldiers assumed that People's Defence Force (PDF)¹² and KNLA combined forces were present in the village, and so this is the reason why they indiscriminately shelled into [and near] the villages. Villagers are fearful due to SAC indiscriminately shelling. There are approximately a hundred families in S--- village and half of them were displaced to nearby villages or moved to the city.

On December 4th 2023, SAC Infantry Battalion (IB)¹³ #263, based in the army camps in Pein Za Loke Town [located in Bago Region], Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, conducted mortar shelling and four [mortar rounds] landed in M--- village [area], Th'Hpih Luh village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. Then, SAC soldiers from LIB #20, based in [other] army camps in Kler Lwee Htoo District, shelled seven mortar rounds which landed in S--- village, Th'Hpih Luh village tract.

The four mortars that landed in M--- village, damaged Saw¹⁴ R--- and Naw¹⁵ W---'s house and Saw U--- and Naw P---'s house. One of the owners said that mortar shells had landed [inside the village] once before in July [2023]. Fortunately, there were no family members injured. Two [of the four mortar shells] landed in N--- village, on the road in front of the school and damaged the school's [plastic] water storage tank. [Another mortar] landed next to the house owned by a villager named Saw F---, in a farm, and the mortar shrapnel hit Saw F---'s house wall.

Due to the SAC repeatedly shelling in this area [M--- and S--- villages], most of the villagers do not sleep in their houses. They sleep in other villages, where they have relatives, and some sleep at their farm huts, to avoid being injured. Civilians worry that mortar rounds will land on their houses and might injure them, so they remain full of fear.

¹² 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.

¹³ 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 NCA. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

¹⁴ 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

¹⁵ 'Naw' is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

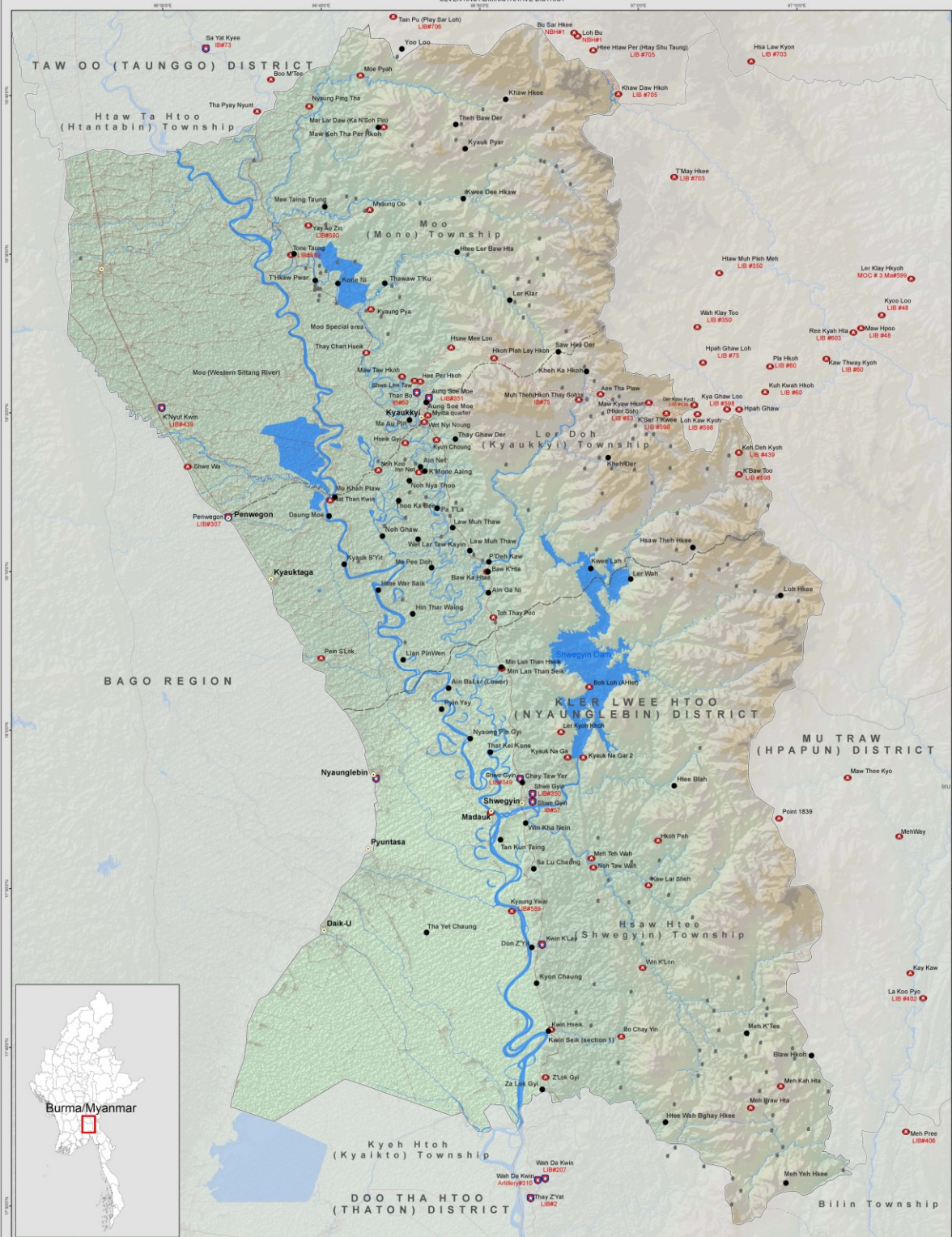
Further background reading on the situation on air strikes and indiscriminate shelling in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC shelling into a village injured two villagers, including a 15-year-old, in Kruh Tuh Township, May 2023.”](#), June 2024.
- [Photo Set: SAC indiscriminate shelling in Southeast Burma, and its impacts on villagers, January 2023 to February 2024](#), June 2024.
- [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC air strikes injured an 11-year-old boy and a pregnant woman, in Kaw T’Ree Township \(November and December 2023\)”](#), May 2024.

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.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District Map



Legend ○ Town ● Village ● Village tract point 🏠 Army Base 🏹 Army Camp 🛣 Major Road 🛤 Sub-Road 🛤 Tatmadaw Road 🌊 Water	Elevation (meter) 🟩 -35 - 15 🟨 15 - 96 🟨 96 - 261 🟨 261 - 493 🟤 493 - 841 🟤 841 - 1,337 🟤 1,337 - 2,016 🟤 2,016 - 5,711	Map ID: KHRG_District_Map_Kler Lwee Htoo Date: 19-Jul-2022 Size: 33.11 X 46.8 inches	