



Short Update

February 14th, 2024 / KHRG # 23-407-D1

Taw Oo District Short Update: SAC air strikes killed two villagers, injured three children, and caused property damage in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township (September 2023)

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, in September 2023. On September 10th 2023, the State Administration Council (SAC) conducted air strikes twice in A--- village, Htee Thar Saw village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township. The air strikes killed two villagers, including a 12-year-old child, and injured three other minors. The air strikes also damaged villagers' properties, including houses, a church, a school and plantations. Local villagers fled to safe places in fear of SAC air strikes, facing difficulties during displacement. The villagers have now returned to their village but they are still afraid of further SAC attacks in the future.¹

SAC air strikes in Htee Thar Saw village tract

On September 10th 2023, at 12:20 pm, a State Administration Council (SAC)² fighter jet flew over A--- village, Htee Thar Saw village tract³, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. On the first occasion, the SAC fighter jet dropped bombs on a hill which is located in the eastern part of the village. One of the bombs landed on a church on the hill, damaging the roof of the bell tower and two mirrors.

On the second occasion, later that day, an SAC helicopter conducted an air attack on another hill, which is located in the western part of A--- village, with mounted machine guns and bombs. The air strike damaged 15 villagers' houses on the hill. The church was also further damaged, this time on its walls. The wall of a village school building was also damaged. Among the 15 houses, one was hit by a bomb and bullets from machine gun fire. Five villagers who lived in that house, a woman, named Naw⁴ H---, her three children, and her nephew were hit by the air strike. [Naw H---'s husband was away from the house at that time]. One child, the 12-year-old

¹ The present document is based on information received in December 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.

² 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.

³ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

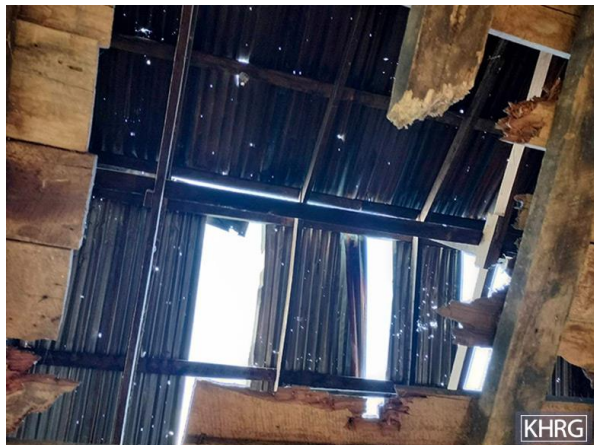
⁴ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

nephew, Saw⁵ B---, was killed on the spot when shrapnel from the bomb hit the back of his head. The other four family members were seriously injured. Naw H--- (45-years-old) was sent to a hospital, where she later died [due to the severity of the injuries]. The other three children are Saw C--- (14 years old), Saw D--- (9 years old) and Naw E--- (12 years old). Saw C--- sustained an injury on his belly, Saw D--- sustained an injury on his leg, and Naw E--- sustained an injury on her shoulder. The family's house was badly damaged on the roof, made of zinc panels, and the walls, made of wood. Villagers cannot live in that house anymore [because of the damage]. The air strikes also damaged betel nut plantations, cardamom plantations and coconut trees, owned by local villagers in A--- village.

Local villagers fled to the forest and plantations for their safety. When the SAC conducted air strikes, some elder villagers stayed in their houses as they were not able to flee. Due to the air strikes, children could not go to school as they fled to a safe place with their parents. Two weeks later, the displaced villagers returned to their village. Some children could then return to school after they returned to the village, however, some of the children were afraid to go to school as they feared air strikes and indiscriminate shelling would happen in the future. Some villagers became sick with seasonal flu when they fled to the forest.

Some People's Defence Force (PDF)⁶ members were staying in A--- village when the SAC conducted these air strikes. These PDF members were staying in the village after they were involved in fighting nearby in Yar Don village, Htee Thar Saw village tract. Fighting did not happen in A--- village but the SAC nonetheless conducted air strikes on this village.

The displaced villagers have returned to their village, however, they are still afraid that the SAC will fire rounds of mortar or conduct air strikes in their village again. The villagers demand that the SAC stops conducting attacks in their village.



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

⁶ 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.



These four photos were taken on December 12th 2023 in A--- village, Htee Thar Saw village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. These photos show some villagers' houses that were damaged by the SAC air strike on September 10th 2023. [Photos: KHRG]



These two photos were taken on December 12th 2023 in A--- village, Htee Thar Saw village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. The left photo shows a church damaged by the SAC air strike on September 10th 2023 in A--- village and the right photo shows a local school damaged by the SAC air strike in A--- village. [Photos: KHRG]



A KHRG researcher received this photo on December 12th 2023 from a local villager, Naw G---, who lives in A--- village, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. This photo shows the body of a 12-year-old child, Saw B---, killed by an SAC air strike in A--- village on September 12th 2023. [Photo: local villager]



A KHRG researcher received these photos on December 12th 2023 from a local Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁷ soldier, in Htee Thar Saw village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. The left photo shows a remnant of an exploded bomb dropped by the SAC when they conducted air strikes in A--- village on September 10th 2023. The right photo shows a betel nut plantation which was damaged by the air strikes. [Photos: local KNLA]

Further background reading on the situation on air strikes in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“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.
- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: SAC air strikes killed a villager and damaged civilian property in Hpa-an Township \(March 2023\)”](#), December 2023.
- [“Why would they target us?: Exploring patterns of the Burma Army's retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma”](#), June 2023.

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.

⁷ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed (KNLA) wing of the Karen National Union (KNU).

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District Map
SEVEN KNU ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT

