



Incident Report

May 14th, 2024 / KHRG # 23-411-I1

Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: A 19-year-old villager was injured by a landmine explosion in K'Ser Doh Township, October 2023

This Incident Report describes events occurring in K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, in October 2023. On October 15th 2023, a 19-year-old villager named Saw L--- stepped on a landmine, while carrying the dead body of his friend, at Yin Kweh Taung place, Hseh Phyu Taing village tract, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. The landmine resulted in severe injury to Saw L---'s left leg. He was promptly transported to a hospital in Thailand by local Karen National Union (KNU) leaders, where he remained hospitalised for over a month. An international humanitarian organisation provided support to the victim, including the cost of medical treatment and food. A local KNU leader also provided financial assistance to him. As his left leg had to be amputated, Saw L--- faces challenges in resuming his work.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Landmine incident
Date of Incident(s)	October 15 th 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	Yin Kweh Taung place, Hseh Phyu Taing village tract, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District

Victim Information	
Name	Saw ² L---
Age	19 years old
Gender	Man
Ethnicity	Karen
Marital status	Single
Occupation	Plantation farmer
Religion	Christian

¹ The present document is based on information received in December 2023, and further follow-ups with the victim/survivor. It was provided by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

Position	Villager
Village	E--- village, Sa Tain village tract, Ler K’Hsaw Township, Mergui-Tavoy District

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander’s Name
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

[A KHRG researcher] interviewed the victim while he was hospitalised at the hospital.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The victim provided the information himself.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On October 15th 2023, the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)³ Battalion #203, based in Ler K’Hsaw Township, was ordered by commander Lin Thein to seize the territory of Lieutenant Eh Hkwee from the Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA)⁴. Saw L---, a villager who has medical knowledge, was asked by his friends [who are KNLA soldiers] to accompany them on [his duties on] that day. After they arrived at Yin Kweh Taung place, [a mountainous area] in Hseh Phyu Taing village tract, K’Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, and took a rest, the [KNLA] soldiers guarded security in the area.

After a while, Saw L--- told his friend [one of the KNLA soldiers] that he did not want to stay in the area anymore [suspecting that something bad would happen]. A moment later, soldiers under the command of KTLA Lieutenant Eh Hkwee shot a bullet at Saw L---’s friend [the KNLA soldier] with a sniper, that penetrated his head and immediately killed him on the spot. As soon as Saw L--- heard the sound, he found his friend was already on the ground. Then, he carried the dead body back [to the KNLA’s temporary base] with the help of other friends. While carrying the body on his way back, at 12:23 pm, Saw L--- stepped on a landmine [and was

³ The Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) is the armed wing of the Karen National Union (KNU).

⁴ The Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) was founded on July 17th 2022 by Brigadier-General Nerdah Bo Mya. Nerdah Bo Mya, former Commander-In-Chief of the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), was dismissed by the KNU in 2022. KTLA operates in two districts in Southeast Burma, in KNU-controlled areas, namely Mergui-Tavoy and Dooplaya districts. In Dooplaya District, they operate in alliance with resistance armed groups. KTLA battalions in Mergui-Tavoy District are in conflict with both SAC and KNLA troops.

severely injured]. His friends [the other KNLA soldiers] carried him and the dead body [of the KNLA soldier] in a car and sent them to the Karen National Union (KNU)⁵ district office, four hours away, located in Mergui-Tavoy District. When he arrived [at the district office], Saw L--- was given an injection and became unconscious.

As the injury was serious, the local KNU leaders then sent him to a hospital in Thailand, for further treatment. On October 15th 2023, at about 4 pm, Saw L--- was hospitalised. When he woke up at the hospital, he found out that his left leg had already been amputated. He also noticed that Pu⁶ A---, a staff from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), was there to take care of him [as a patient attendant]. At first, they were strangers, but later they became familiar. Pu A--- took care of him well at the hospital [helping him move and bringing food]. After a week, Pu A--- returned to his house and a pregnant woman went to take care of Saw L--- at the hospital. Saw L--- felt uncomfortable having her take care of him [as she was pregnant]. The woman left after three days. Since then, Saw L--- had no patient attendant taking care of him at the hospital.

Saw L--- had difficulty expressing his pain at night to the [Thai] healthcare workers due to the language barrier. It was difficult for him, and he even cried silently in pain as there were no patient attendants with him at the hospital.

While Saw L--- was hospitalised, he wished and hoped that local KNU leaders would visit and encourage him. He explained: *“The people I wished to come did not visit me, and only unexpected visitors came to encourage me.”* A pastor came and prayed for him. He also added: *“I am not discouraged, even though I had my left leg amputated. Many people have faced worse situations than me and have stood up and not given up on life. I believe that I can do anything if I try. When I recover from my leg injury, I will help wherever necessary with the medical knowledge that I have. Although I cannot help my mother with plantation work [anymore], I would like to help her with her healthcare condition. Even though I have lost one of my legs, I will not give up easily. I would like to encourage everyone to never give up.”*

Saw L--- did not have enough food provided in the hospital nor any money with him to buy [more] food. He had to endure this situation from November 15th 2023 until December 18th 2023 [when he was discharged]. His family did not [immediately] know what had happened to him because he had no phone to contact and inform [them] about the landmine incident. Fortunately, his brother travelled to H--- place, in Thailand. At first, his brother did not know [much] about the incident until he asked about his brother to a KNU local leader secretary at the [Mergui-Tavoy] district office. She [the KNU local leader] then informed him about the landmine incident. The brother of Saw L--- also asked the KNU military intelligence [officer], G---, who sent his brother to the hospital, in order to get more information about his condition and where he was sent. On October 16th 2023, Saw L---’s brother went to meet with him [at the hospital] for a short period of time.

The ICRC provided expenses for the treatment and medication as well as some food to Saw L--- while he was being hospitalised. A local human rights organisation also helped make it possible for the two brothers to meet at the hospital. Saw L--- expressed: *“I would like to thank those working at the organisation after hearing encouragement and receiving support from my brother. If not, I would not have been able to meet with my brother and talk to my parents. Now, I can communicate with the phone my brother has given to me. If not, I would have stayed alone in the hospital.”*

⁵ 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.

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

Although the victim had attended a Mine Risk Education (MRE) training [provided by the KNLA], he was not able to avoid the landmine-contaminated area. Now, he is staying at a safe house prepared for injured people located in Thailand with good living conditions [as of December 2023]. Regarding the contamination of landmines during times of conflict, Saw L--- expressed: *“I believe it would be beneficial if marks were placed after the landmines are planted. Having visible indications would help villagers stay informed and cautious while walking in the area, ensuring their safety by signalling whether there are mines present or not. I sincerely hope that such tragic incidents do not occur in the future. My wish is that future generations, including children and youth, will not have to endure the pain and suffering caused by landmines.”*

Saw L--- has to do a medical follow-up to check his wound which costs 30 baht every day. To cover up the cost, a local KNU leader, Saw N---, provided 900 baht [25.04 USD]⁷ to him. [This local KNU leader provided him 2,900 baht [80.68 USD] in total since his admission at the hospital]. These follow-ups have become a great challenge for Saw L--- as he has no money. Due to the unstable political situation, his parents cannot work on their plantation and have no income, so they could not send money to him. He is facing a hard time. Recently, Saw L--- applied for a job peeling ripe tamarind shells. However, the local KNU leader advised him to not work as he has not fully recovered.

[As of April 2024, he is recovering from his injuries and waiting to receive an artificial leg provided by an international non-governmental organisation working in Thailand.]



This photo was taken on October 16th 2023 while the victim was hospitalised in Thailand. It shows Saw L---, a villager who was injured by a landmine explosion in Yin Kweh Tuang place, Hseh Phyu Taing village tract, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. His left leg had to be amputated due to the injuries sustained. [Photo: KHRG]

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The victim himself allowed KHRG to use the provided information.

⁷ All conversion estimates for the Thai bath are based on the March 21st 2023 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 THB to USD 0.027 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/thb-to-usd-rate?amount=1000>)

Further background reading on the situation of landmines in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“DooPlaya District Incident Report: A 21-year-old villager stepped on a landmine in Kaw T’Ree Township, December 2023.”](#), April 2023.
- [Photo Set: Landmine incidents in Southeast Burma, March 2021 to January 2024](#), April 2024.
- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: A 13-year-old boy was killed by a landmine explosion in Kyeh Htoh Township, July 2023”](#), April 2023
- [Danger Beneath Our Feet: Landmine contamination in Southeast Burma and its impacts on villagers since the 2021 coup](#), December 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.khr.org.

