



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

July 31st 2024 / KHRG # 23-75+80+85-D1

Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC indiscriminate shelling caused death, destruction and injuries in Hsaw Htee Township (February and March 2023)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Hsaw Htee (Shweryi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District during the period between February and March 2023. In February 2023, State Administration Council (SAC) military from Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #20 indiscriminately shelled more than 31 mortars into five villages in Pyay Yay (Pyaeyin) village tract. One villager from Q--- village was killed by mortar shrapnel, and three were injured, including one elderly woman and a 17-year-old. Three female villagers from L--- village were also injured. Villagers' properties were also damaged and destroyed by the shelling. SAC shelling continued in March 2023, including 24 mortar shells fired into the eastern part of the P'Reh Loh (Sittaung) River, including Z--- village and G--- village. Three villagers were injured by mortar shrapnel and five cows were killed. The shelling over this period caused mass displacement from Hsaw Htee Township.¹

Starting on February 9th 2023, the State Administration Council (SAC)²'s Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)³ #20, based in Nyaunglebin Township [under Burma government-controlled area. Which is in Bago Region] and stationed [temporarily] at Th'Daw Kloh (Pa Zun Myaung) village, started shelling mortars into L--- village, Pyay Yay (Pyaeyin) village tract⁴, Hsaw Htee Township. On the 9th [February 2023], the SAC military shelled eight mortar rounds, which landed on the river bank close to O--- village, Pyay Yay village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. On the 10th [February 2023] SAC soldiers shelled around four mortar shells. Three mortar rounds landed in the western part of Khoh Loh Kloh (Chindwin) River, in the farm outside of the E--- village and one [mortar] landed in O--- village.

On February 11th 2023, [the same] SAC soldiers shelled nine mortar rounds [around O--- village]. Eight mortar shells exploded and one [remained] unexploded. Three mortars landed in L--- village and the remaining six [mortars] landed beside the village. Those three mortars that landed in the

¹ The present document is based on information received in February and 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 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 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.

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

[L---] village, injured [three people]: a 40-year-old villager named Naw⁵ T--- on her neck; her daughter, 20-year-old Naw K---, on her rib; and 36-year-old Naw M--- on her knee [and thigh as per the photograph below]. They are all Karen [ethnic]. They were taken to a hospital in Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) Town [under Burma government-controlled area, in Bago Region] immediately after being injured. Naw T---'s injuries were life threatening so she was taken to a [more equipped] hospital in Bago Region. After recovering [as of February 2023], Naw T--- and her daughter relocated to U--- village, Kyu Chaung village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, as they were afraid to return to their own village. [Naw M---'s recovery took longer, about two months].

As a result of the shelling, a rice barn and a pond were also damaged. A house pillar and trees [essential to villagers' livelihoods] were also damaged from the shelling as well.



⁵ 'Naw' is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.



KHRG received these photos, taken on February 2023, from local villagers. On February 11th 2023, SAC LIB #20 fired nine mortars around O--- village, Pyay Yay (Pyaeyin) village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Eight mortars landed into L--- village, Pyay Yay village tract, and exploded. One mortar shell [from those nine] remained unexploded. The two photos above show injured villagers from L--- village. The top photo on the left shows Naw M---, injured by the mortar shrapnel on her thigh and knee, and the top photo on the right shows Naw K---, injured by mortar shrapnel on her chest. The photos in the middle row show damage to buildings and trees from the shelling. The last two photos show evidence of 81 mm mortars used by the SAC LIB #20; one of them unexploded (right photo). *[Photos: Local villager]*

Due to the increase of indiscriminate shelling [on February 11th] by SAC soldiers, 115 households, comprising more than 515 villagers, from Q--- village and 69 households, comprising of 358 villagers, from L--- village were displaced. Some villagers were displaced to Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) [Town], some to Hsaw Htee Town and some to the villages where their relatives live.

On February 12th 2023, [SAC soldiers] again fired [a number of] mortar shells resulting in 85 households, comprising of 370 villagers, from G--- village being displaced. Due to the SAC shelling on the 12th [February 2023], five cows [at a farm] were also killed.

On February 23rd 2023, at 3:30 pm, SAC soldiers from LIB #20, based in Th'Dawh Kloh (Pa Zun Myaung) [village], shelled two mortar rounds into Q--- village, injuring three villagers and killing one. A mortar shell landed on the house of a villager called Naw N---, and she died immediately as she was hit and burned on her legs by the mortar shrapnel. She was 35 years old, had two children, and her husband was working in Malaysia [when she died]. A 22-year-old villager named Naw R--- was also injured [by the same mortar shell] and taken to Way Htoo (Shwe Kyin) hospital [in Way Htoo (Shwegyi Town)].

The [second] mortar shell landed on U⁶ V--- and Daw⁷ D---'s house, causing it to burn down and destroying a rice husker machine. Due to the shelling, their son, Saw J--- (17 years old), was injured on his head, chin, and leg by mortar shrapnel. He was in a life-threatening situation and was taken to a hospital run by Karen National Union (KNU)⁸. A woman named Naw H--- (66 years old) was also injured and burned by the mortar explosion as she was in the house when the mortar shell landed and exploded.

⁶ 'U' is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

⁷ 'Daw' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

⁸ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the 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.



These photos were taken on February 2023 in Q--- village, Pyay Yay (Pyayeyin) village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The photo on the left shows a 17-year-old boy, Saw J---, who was injured by mortar shrapnel before he was taken to hospital. the photo above shows 35-year-old Naw N--- who was burned on the legs and killed by a mortar round explosion. Both shelled by SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #20, on February 23rd 2023 at 3:30 pm. *[Photos: Local villager]*



This photo was taken on February 2023, in Q--- village, Pyay Yay (Pyayeyin) village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. This photo shows the burning of the house owned by U V--- and Daw D---, that was set on fire by a mortar explosion that SAC LIB #20 shelled on February 23rd 2023, at 3:30 pm. *[Photos: Local villager]*

[On February 23rd,] SAC soldiers set up six 120 mm mortars [artillery weapons] in S--- village [controlled by the SAC]. That afternoon, they [also] set up mortars [artillery weapons] in several villages such as in Y---, P--- and W---, in Ain Waing village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. The [SAC] [also] sent military troops to F--- village. The SAC sent approximately 150 soldiers from Light Infantry Divisions (LIDs)⁹ #44, #77, and #66. At around 4 pm, they [the SAC] shelled two mortar shells again [direction unspecified].

On March 8th 2023, [starting] at 5:50 am, SAC soldiers from LIDs #77 and #88 [temporarily assigned troops, not based locally] combined with local troops [LIB #20] located in Kwindalagyi

⁹ 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).

village, Ain Waing village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, shelled 24 mortar shells [on the same morning] into the eastern side of P'Reh Loh (Sittaung) river, in a farmland.

[In total,] three villagers were injured by the mortar shells explosions. There was also damage to the farmland. One [of three] villagers named U I--- (53 years old) was injured on his head, left arm, and right thigh by the shrapnel, when mortar shells landed inside Z--- village, Pyaeyin village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. His injuries were life-threatening, so KNU authorities sent him to the hospital (run by Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU]).

At 10:30 am, a mortar shell landed inside G--- village, Pyay Yay village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, injuring two villagers named Maung¹⁰ C--- (19 years old), on his side and arms, and Maung B---, on his back and side. These two victims were sent to the hospital (on Kaw Thoo Lei [KNU] administered territory) by local [KNU] authorities.



KHRG received these photos from local villagers in March 2023. These two photos show U I--- injured and receiving treatment in Z--- village, Pyay Yay (Pyaeyin) village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, before he was transferred to a KNU hospital for further treatment. He was injured on his head, left arm and right thigh by a mortar shell explosion fired by SAC troops on March 8th 2023. *[Photos: Local villager]*



This photo shows G--- villagers, named Maung C--- and Maung B---, who were injured by mortar shrapnel that was shelled by SAC LID #77 and #88 and other combined forces on March 8th 2023. The photo was taken when they were being transferred to a hospital for treatment by the local KNU authorities. Maung C--- was injured on his arms and Maung B--- was injured on his back and side. *[Photo: Local villager]*

¹⁰ 'Maung' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

Further background reading on the situation on indiscriminate shelling in Doo Tha Htoo District, Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

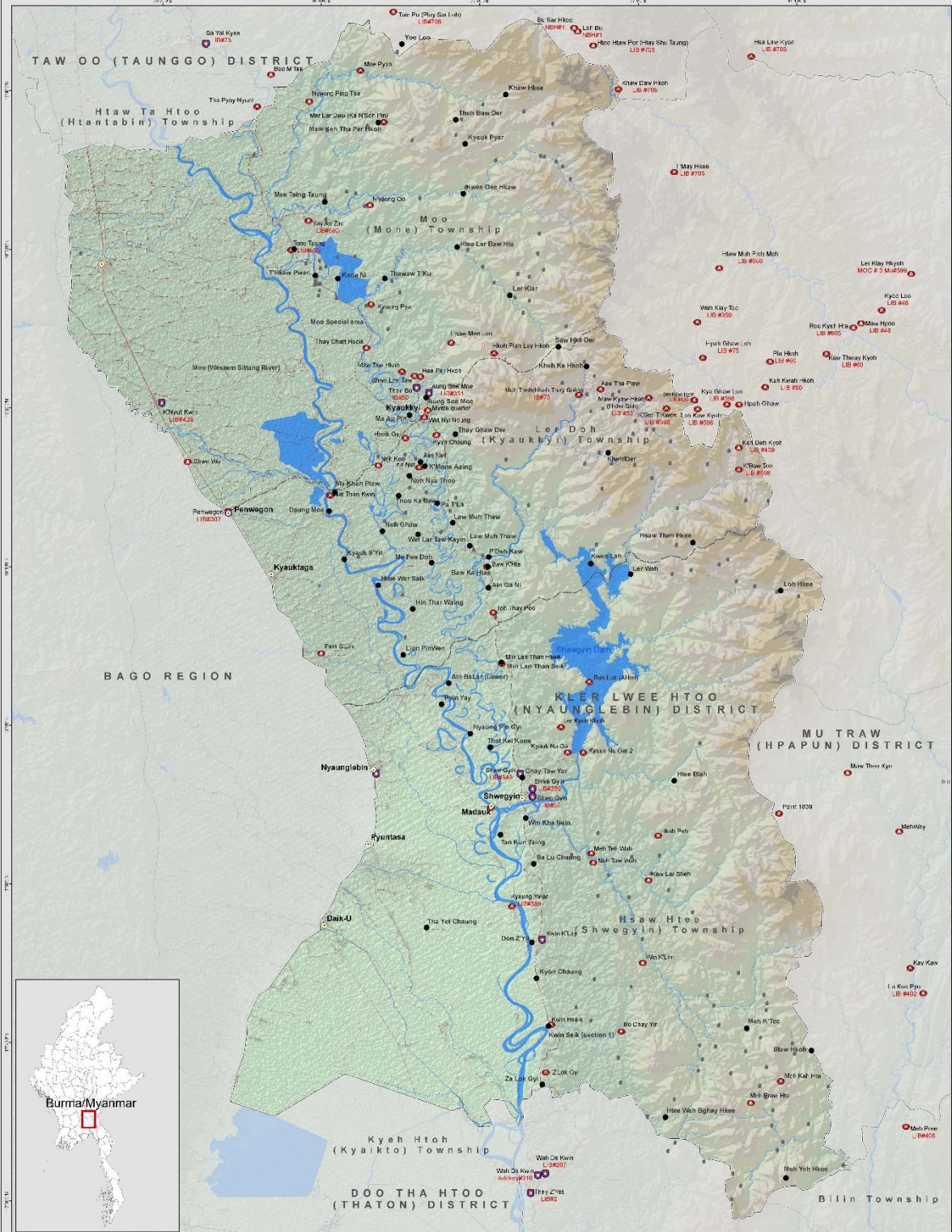
- [*Deadly Encounters: Killings of civilians by armed actors in Southeast Burma \(October 2022 – April 2023\)*](#), June 2023
- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Short Update: House burning and indiscriminate shelling in Kyah Htoh Township \(January 2023\)"](#), June 2023
- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers were injured as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township"](#), June 2022
- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Villagers killed as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township"](#), June 2022
- ["Human, Not for Shield: Attack on civilians in Bilin Township, Doo Tha Htoo District, April 22nd to May 22nd 2022"](#), December 2022

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.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District Map

SEVEN KNU ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT



Legend

- Town
- Village
- Village tract point
- Army Base
- Army Camp
- Major Road
- Sub-Road
- Tethadaw Road
- Water

Elevation (meter)

- 35 - 15
- 15 - 96
- 96 - 261
- 261 - 499
- 499 - 641
- 641 - 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

