



Short Update

October 23rd, 2024 / KHRG # 24-123-D1

Taw Oo District Short Update: SAC arbitrary arrest, torture, conflict-related sexual violence, house burning and forced labour of villagers in Daw Hpah Hkoh Township (November 2023)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Daw Hpah Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, in November 2023. On the early morning of November 12th 2023, State Administration Council (SAC) troops opened gunfire in the air while entering A--- village, Htee Day village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township. The SAC soldiers arrested more than 20 villagers who had not fled, three of whom were subsequently tortured. At around 9 am, a skirmish occurred between the SAC troops and local resistance armed groups near A--- village. During the skirmish, SAC troops burned down 15 civilian houses and looted property. One SAC soldier committed sexual violence against a 90-year-old villager. As the SAC troops were withdrawing from the village, they held two villagers and used them as human shields and porters.¹

Arbitrary deprivation of liberty and torture

On November 12th 2023, in the early morning, State Administration Council (SAC)² troops [unknown battalions] entered A--- village, Htee Day [Pa Tauk Kone] village tract³, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. They opened gunfire in the air as they were entering. Local villagers believe the SAC troops were from Naypyidaw Council Territory [central Burma], ordered to conduct a clearance operation in the area.

Many villagers, particularly men, fled from the village when they knew SAC troops were coming [fearing violence and arrest]. The SAC troops saw those who had not fled and arrested more than 20 villagers in their homes, most of them being women. The SAC soldiers gathered them somewhere beside a road located in the village. Then, the SAC asked them to lie face-down with their hands behind their heads. When [three] villagers raised their heads and looked at the

¹ The present document is based on information received in March and May 2024. 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 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.

SAC soldiers, one SAC soldier said, ‘why do you look at us? What do you want?’. Then, the SAC soldiers kicked them in the head and stamped on their necks with their military boots. [One of the villagers who was kicked in the head was still suffering pain from his injuries according to information provided to KHRG in March 2024]. According to a villager, the SAC soldiers [entered the village and] treated the villagers in this way because they claimed that People Defence Force (PDF)⁴ members stayed in the village.

Looting and destruction of property

Following this incident, at around 9 am [on November 12th 2023], a skirmish happened between [the same] SAC troops and local armed resistance groups [combined forces of Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁵ and PDF] near A--- village [on a road near villagers’ farms]. The skirmish lasted 15 minutes.

At the same time [during the skirmish], SAC soldiers burned down 15 houses [in A--- village] and a cowshed, owned by the villagers. They also looted everything [valuable items from the villagers’ houses], as well as food and snacks from a villager’s shop. They also shot and injured a villager’s cow in the village. The villagers lost their houses and property [including wood, money, clothes and cooking materials] that they had worked hard to obtain for their livelihoods and the future of their children.



KHRG received these photos from a local villager in March 2024. The photos show some villagers’ houses that SAC troops burned down in A--- village, Htee Day village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District, on November 12th 2023. [Photos: Local villager]

⁴ 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.

⁵ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

Conflict-related sexual and gender-based violence

During the incident [skirmish and burning of houses], one of the SAC soldiers tortured, [sexually assaulted,] and raped a 90-year-old woman in her house in A--- village. [Read more in the published incident report].⁶ The survivor's name is Daw⁷ B---. During the incident, her daughter [who is over 50 years old], two grandchildren [over 40 years old] and another female villager [age unknown] were hiding under her house.

This incident happened when other SAC soldiers were burning villagers' houses. Daw B--- was unable to flee the village due to her old age during the skirmish.

Forced labour and use of human shields

After the SAC soldiers had burned the houses in the village, they [the SAC soldiers who were detaining villagers] released most of the villagers who were being detained but they took two young men with them when they left. They used these two villagers [allegedly] as human shields and porters: they asked the villagers to carry the things that the SAC had looted from the shop [and houses] and they also asked the villagers to walk in front of them. During the way, the SAC soldiers physically abused, tortured and humiliated these two villagers. They kicked the villagers on their bodies with their boots and they also punched them in their faces. When they reached a place far from the village, they released the two villagers. [According to information explained to KHRG third-hand by local villagers,] one of the villagers who was tortured had bruising on his face and he was in serious pain in his waist. The villagers did not receive any medical treatment or support.

Further background reading on the situation of torture, sexual violence and destruction of property in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [Permanent Scars: Torture of villagers under arbitrary detention by the State Administration Council \(SAC\) in Southeast Burma, January to December 2023](#), April 2024.
- ["Taw Oo District Short Update: Shelling, air strikes and house burning by SAC troops, and use of forced navigators by PDF soldiers in Htaw Ta Htoo Township \(November to December 2023\)"](#), April 2024.
- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC air strikes and indiscriminate shelling caused casualties, destruction and displacement, in Hsaw Htee Township \(November to December 2023\)"](#), June 2024
- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: An SAC sergeant sexually abused a 7-year-old child in an army camp, March 2023"](#), November 2023.

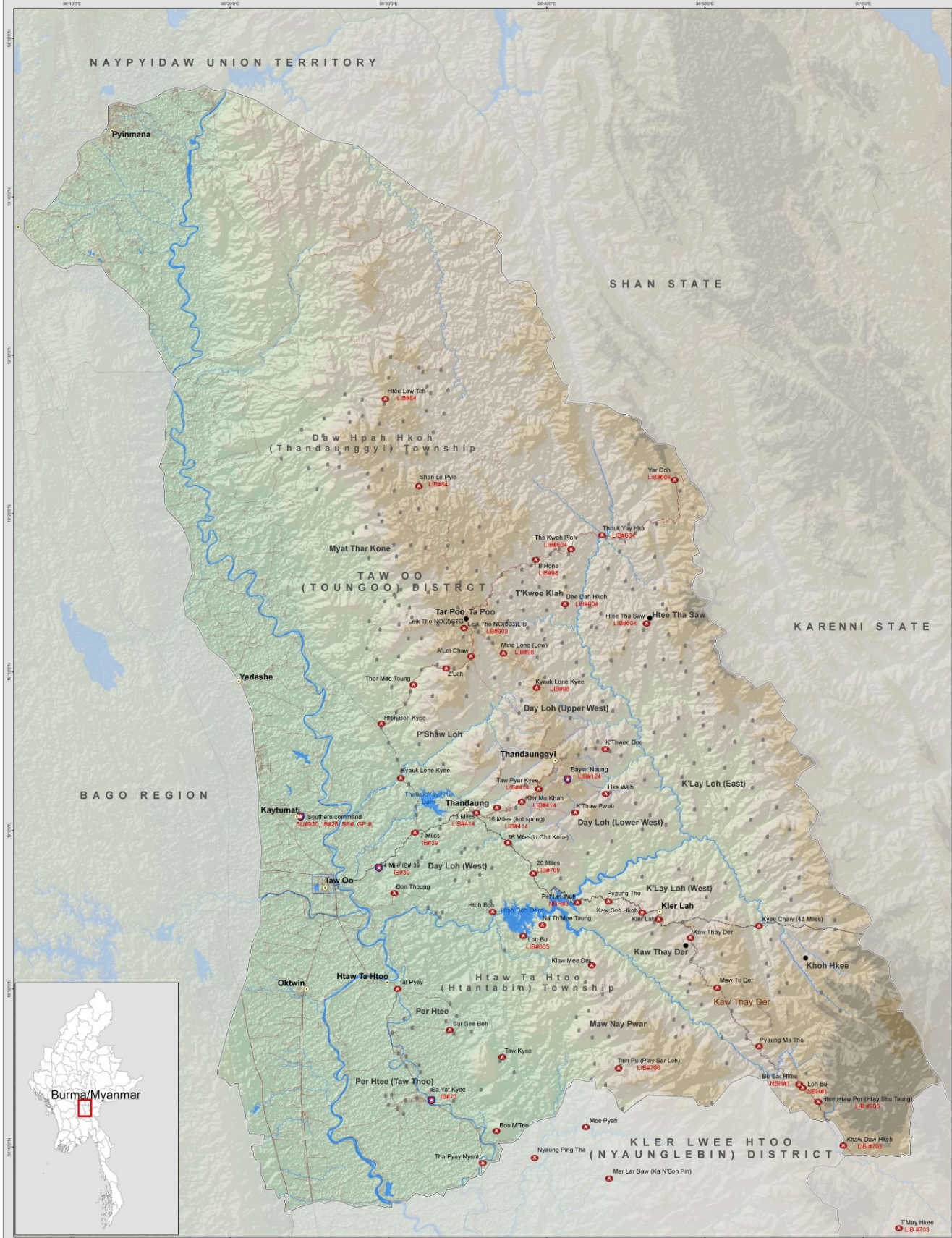
About KHRG

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

⁶ KHRG, "[Taw Oo District Incident Report: An SAC soldier committed conflict-related sexual violence against a 90-year-old villager in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township \(November 2023\)](#)", September 2024.

⁷ 'Daw' is Burmese honorific title for female adults, a married woman or a woman of a higher social position.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District Map
SEVEN KNU ADMINISTRATIVE DISTRICT



Legend

- Town
- Village
- Village tract point
- Army Base
- Army Camp
- Major Road
- - - Sub-Road
- Water
- Kawthoolei Township boundary
- Kawthoolei District boundary

Elevation (meter)

-35 - 15	493 - 841
15 - 96	841 - 1,337
96 - 261	1,337 - 2,016
261 - 493	2,016 - 5,711

Map ID: KHRG_District_Map_Taw Oo
Date: 19-Jul-2022
Size: 33.11 X 46.8 inches

