



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

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Dooplaya District Short Update: SAC shelling and air strikes resulted in civilian casualties, property destruction and displacement, in Kruh Tuh Township, December 2023.

This Short Update describes events that occurred in December 2023 in Kruh Tuh (Kyonedoe) Township, Dooplaya District. On December 28th 2023, combined forces from the People's Defence Force (PDF) and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) attacked State Administration Council (SAC) troops stationed at the Taung Kyain bridge area in Taung Kyain village tract, Kruh Tuh Township. After the fighting, the SAC fired mortar shells into A--- village, Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, killing an 11-year-old boy and injuring two villagers, including a 13-year-old girl. Later on the same day, the same combined forces from the PDF and KNLA attacked the SAC police station in B--- village, Taung Kyain village tract. The SAC conducted air strikes in B--- village while the fighting was ongoing, destroying 22 houses and two schools. In the evening of the same day, at about 9 pm, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #545 fired mortar shells into and around C--- village, Raw Keh village tract. Mortar shells landed on a monastery where families from B--- village were seeking shelter. The explosions injured a monk and a monastery supporter. After the incident, the displaced families fled again to other places.¹

SAC shelling into A--- village caused child casualties

On December 28th 2023, combined forces from the People's Defence Force (PDF)² and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)³ attacked State Administration Council (SAC)⁴ soldiers based at the Taung Kyain bridge [area], Taung Kyain village tract,⁵ Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. After the fighting, the SAC fired mortar shells into [nearby] A--- village, Raw

¹ The present document is based on information received in January 2024. It was provided by a community member in Dooplaya 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 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.

³ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁴ 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.

⁵ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township. At about 9 pm, a mortar shell landed in a villager's kitchen, fatally injuring an 11-year-old student (Grade 3), Saw⁶ D---, and also injuring a 13-year-old girl, Nan⁷ E---, and a 19-year-old boy, Saw F---, while they were sleeping in the house. Nan E--- was injured on her left leg and her back, and Saw F--- was injured on his arm by shrapnel from mortar shells. Saw D---'s left leg was shattered, his intestines were expelled from his abdomen, and his face was severely injured by shrapnel from the [exploded] mortar shells.

After the incident, Daw⁸ G---, a family member of the victims, asked a driver to help transport them to a clinic. They were first sent to H--- clinic, Wa Ka village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, for treatment. Saw D--- died approximately 30 minutes after he arrived at H--- clinic. His corpse was transported back to the village by the driver, who then returned to H--- clinic from the village, since Nan E--- and Saw F--- were [severely injured, thus] unable to be treated there. The driver then transported them to Hpa-An hospital. Daw G--- explained to KHRG: *“Another child [villager] called me, ‘A’Daw, A’Daw’, and said, ‘your grandchild and nephew were hit by mortar shells’. I asked a driver for help and transported them to H--- clinic, [Wa Ka village tract]. When we arrived at the clinic, a health worker told me: ‘This small boy [Saw D---] cannot be treated... He is only 11 years old [and] was injured on his left leg, stomach, and face. He is unable to talk anymore’. He just nodded his head when I asked anything to him. He died before midnight. A health worker said those patients [with grave injuries] cannot be treated here, and should be sent to [the hospital at] Three Pagodas Pass [a town bordering Thailand’s Kanchanaburi province]. Saw D--- died [at H--- clinic] while his aunty went back [to the village] to bring [clean] clothes. The driver transported his corpse back [to the village]. After that, the driver went to pick up the other two patients [Nan E--- and Saw F---, from H--- clinic] and transported them to Hpa-An hospital [as Daw G--- thought it is better equipped].”*

Nan E--- had to undergo surgery for the injuries on her leg and back [but Saw F--- did not require surgery]. They have already been discharged from the hospital, but still have to go to Hpa-An hospital for [follow-up] medical appointments [, as of the reporting date]. The victims were living with [Daw G---,] their [Nan E---'s and Saw D---'s] grandmother [Saw F---'s aunt], because their parents are working in Bangkok. Due to the rain and floods [during previous months], the victims' grandmother/[aunt] is facing livelihood challenges. [It is unknown whether their family received any support for medical costs or livelihood costs from any organisations].



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

⁷ ‘Nan’ is a Pwo Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.

⁸ ‘Daw’ is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person’s name.



These photos were taken on January 11th 2024, in A--- village, Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. These photos show Daw G---’s house, which was damaged by SAC mortar shelling. The shelling killed Saw D--- (11 years old) and injured Nan E--- (13 years old) and Saw F--- (19 years old). [Photos: KHRG]

Fighting and SAC air strikes on B--- village caused destruction

On the same day, the same combined forces from the PDF and KNLA attacked the SAC police station in B--- village, Taung Kyain village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. During the fighting, the SAC conducted air strikes in B--- village, Taung Kyain village tract, Kruh Tuh Township. Consequently, 22 houses were burned [by the air strike], one school building was burned, and another nearby school building that had two floors was destroyed.

SAC shelling into C--- village caused injuries

After the police station was captured [by the KNLA], at about 9 pm, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁹ #545, under Military Operations Command (MOC)¹⁰ #12, based near Kaw T’Ree Town, fired mortars into C--- village, Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township [located approximately half an hour away by motorbike]. In total, 10 rounds of mortar landed in and around C--- village. Four mortar rounds landed in the village, one mortar round landed outside a [nearby] monastery complex, and five mortar rounds landed in the monastery complex. The shell that landed at the entrance of the monastery damaged a nun’s dormitory and monastery building. Around 60 people from B--- village were seeking shelter in this monastery due to [the earlier] fighting. Among the displaced, there were [vulnerable] villagers [including someone] who had a stroke and [someone with] diabetes. Monks and villagers [from C--- village] supported and provided food and hygiene [products] to the displaced.

A monk named U¹¹ I--- explained to KHRG: *“I heard that they [the SAC] said that they did not target us [the monastery]. However, in my perspective, they targeted us. They fired two mortar shells into the displacement site [their monastery], so I have some suspicions [about their intentions]. They fired five mortar shells in the monastery complex in total.”* The monk also added: *“During the shelling, displaced people, including persons with [physical] disabilities who sought shelter in the monastery, were hiding under a [stilt] building so they were safe. If not, at least six or seven people would have been killed, because a mortar shell landed on the place*

⁹ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. Most Light Infantry Battalions 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.

¹⁰ Military Operations Command (MOC) is comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs) made up of three battalions each.

¹¹ ‘U’ is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

[building] where they were sleeping.” The mortar shrapnel injured a 34-year-old monk named U J--- on his right arm, as well as a 53-year-old monastery supporter [villager who helps with daily tasks] named U K--- on his left buttock. A C--- villager transported the two victims on the same night to H--- clinic, Wa Ka village tract, Kruh Tuh Township. Since the shrapnel was embedded in their bodies, they were transferred to Hpa-An hospital for further treatment the next morning. The victims have been discharged from the hospital and have [fully] recovered. [It is unknown whether they received any support for medical costs from any organisations].

After the shelling on December 28th 2023, the displaced families [from B--- village] who were staying at the monastery in C--- village [felt afraid and] had to flee again to other places. Some people fled to their relatives’ villages, while others fled to other nearby areas. Moreover, some of the monks who live in C--- monastery also fled to other areas because they did not dare to stay at the monastery after the incident. The monk named U I--- added: “I would like to say it is not a good thing to shell villages and religious buildings. Targeting civilians and religious buildings was not a good thing to do, so I would like to report [inform] the international community about it.”



These photos were taken on January 10th 2024, in C--- village, Raw Keh village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. These photos show the monastery buildings damaged by SAC mortar shells on December 28th 2023. The photos on the top row show a cupboard in the monastery to store clothes (left) and the ordination hall (right). The photos on the bottom row show the pagoda area (left) and the dormitory for nuns (right). [Photos: KHRG]

Further background reading on the security and human rights situation in Doo Tha Htoo District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers were injured as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township, June 2022”](#), March 2023.
- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Villagers killed as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township, June 2022”](#), February 2023.
- [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: Rape and killing of two adolescent sisters in Waw Ray Township, April 2022”](#), January 2023.
- [“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, the 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.khrg.org.

