



Short Update

July 31st, 2024 / KHRG # 24-222-D1

Taw Oo District Short Update: SAC shot dead a minor and arbitrarily arrested, detained and tortured a villager in Htaw Ta Htoo Township (May 2024)

*This Short Update describes events occurring in Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, in May 2024. On May 22nd 2024, State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers from Infantry Battalion (IB) #39 shot at two villagers (including a 17-year-old) on a road in front of their army camp after curfew in A--- village, G--- village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, while they were travelling on their motorbikes. The 17-year-old villager was hit and died immediately. The SAC soldiers arbitrarily arrested, detained and tortured the other villager. During his arrest and detention in IB #39 army camp, the villager was burned, punched, and denied food, water, and medical treatment. He was released the next day. Since the incident, the villager has been afraid to leave home and has been unable to work or travel. The victim and the victims' families have felt afraid to speak about the incident due to fears of retaliation by the SAC.*¹

SAC soldiers shot at villagers

Ko² C--- is a villager who lives in B--- village, G--- village tract³, Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District. He rents a building, where he opened a motorbike repair shop to support his livelihood. This building is located in A--- village, G--- village tract. The building is owned by a villager named D---, who lives beside it. Every day, Ko C--- goes to work in his motorbike repair shop in the morning and he comes back to his house in the evening. His house is a half mile away from his shop.

On May 22nd 2024, Maung⁴ E--- went to Ko C---'s motorbike repair shop in order to fix his motorbike. Maung E--- (17 years old) is friends with Ko C---. Maung E--- lives in F--- Section, I--- village, G--- village tract. After Maung E---'s motorbike was repaired, Ko C--- asked him to wait for him to go back home together in the evening. In the evening, Ko C--- and Maung E--- went home together on their motorbikes.

¹ The present document is based on information received in 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 'Ko' is a Burmese title meaning older brother. It can be used for relatives as well as non-relatives.

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

When they were passing a place [a road] in front of the State Administration Council (SAC)⁵ Infantry Battalion (IB)⁶ #39 army camp [in A--- village] at around 7 pm, SAC soldiers from IB #39 shot at them while they [continued to] drive on their motorbikes. [The SAC soldier shot at them from behind, as they had just passed the gate next to the army camp]. One of the bullets hit Maung E--- [on his back]. As he was hit by the bullet, he fell off from his motorbike on a road which is in front of a barber shop. The name of the barbershop is 'H--- Shop', next to IB #39 army camp. Maung E--- died on the spot in the place where he fell off. [Villagers from A--- village heard the sound of multiple gunshots. The SAC took the dead body of Maung E--- away, as witnessed by local villagers close to the army camp.]

There is a signboard set up at SAC checkpoint in B--- village that states that no one is allowed to go out during the period between 6 pm and 6 am. There was also a rumour that when these two villagers arrived in front of IB #39 army camp, the SAC soldiers told them to stop but they did not stop. Then, the SAC soldiers shot at these two villagers. [As explained by Ko C---'s friend to KHRG, the villagers had previously travelled outside the curfew on a number of occasions before, so they did not believe there would be any repercussions. There is no checkpoint outside the army base.]

Torture, arrest and detention

[When Maung E--- was shot, Ko C--- stopped his motorbike.] The SAC then arrested Ko C---. Ko C--- was detained in [SAC] IB #39 army camp for one night. He was released the next day [without explanation]. Villagers [from A--- village] saw that his face was bruised and it looked a dark brown colour from being tortured.

Update received by KHRG in the last week of May 2024, a few days after the incident, regarding the arrest of Ko C---:

When the SAC soldiers arrested Ko C---, they asked him 'do you have petrol in your motorbike?'. He said, 'yes'. Then, they took out the petrol from his motorbike and poured it on Ko C---'s legs and set fire to it. His legs burned and layers of skin came off. After he was arrested, while the villager was detained, SAC soldiers humiliated and tortured him. They offered him a cigarette and when he accepted, they burned his face with lit cigarettes and punched him in the face. He also did not receive any food, water or medical care during his detention.

As of July 2024, Ko C--- has been afraid to leave his home after the incident and did not feel safe to go to work or travel. He did not receive any medical treatment or support following the incident. Ko C--- informed his close friends and family about the incident, and they are afraid to share information about it due to fears of retaliation by the SAC, who control the area. No investigation or action has been taken against the perpetrators.

⁵ 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.

⁶ An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most 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. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

Retrieval of the body of Maung E---

In the morning of May 23rd 2024, Maung E---'s parents went to IB #39 army camp in order to request the retrieval of the dead body of their son [that was being kept at Toungoo hospital] but the SAC did not allow for the return of his body to them. [The SAC did not provide any reasons for their refusal to retrieve Maung E---'s body.] On May 24th 2024, Maung E---'s parents, local monks and elder villagers from G--- village tract went to request [permission to retrieve] the dead body of Maung E--- from the SAC [again]. This time, the SAC asked all of them to sign an agreement paper [absolving the SAC of responsibility for his death] to have the body returned. The villagers only received the dead body of Maung E--- after they signed the agreement paper.

[As explained by Ko C---'s friend, the bullet holes on the victim's body showed that he was diagonally hit by a bullet in the side of his back and through the front side of his chest. Ko C---'s friend was informed by a witness that brought back the body from Toungoo hospital.]

Further background reading on the situation on torture, detention and extrajudicial killings in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [*Permanent Scars: Torture of villagers under arbitrary detention by State Administration Council in Southeast Burma \(January – December 2023\)*](#), April 2024.
- [*"Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: Arbitray arrest and killing of a villager by the SAC in K'Ser Doh Township, October 2023"*](#), March 2024.
- [*"Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: A male villager was arrested, tortured and killed by the SAC in Kyeh Htoh Township, in July 2023"*](#), January 2024.
- [*"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.
- [*"Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: SAC indiscriminate shelling, killing, arrests, torture, house burning, and villagers' displacement in K'Ser Doh Township, June 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.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District Map
SEVEN KWU 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

