



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident Report

September 30th 2024 / KHRG #24-291-11

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)

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Daw Hpa Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District in November 2023. On November 12th 2023, a skirmish occurred between SAC troops and local resistance armed groups near A--- village, Htee Day village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township. During the skirmish, an SAC soldier tortured and perpetrated sexual violence against a 90-year-old villager, resulting in enduring physical and psychological impacts. The survivor did not receive medical treatment and is unable to formally report the incident.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	[Conflict-related] sexual violence
Date of Incident(s)	November 12 th 2023
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- village, Htee Day village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

Victim Information	
Name	Daw ² B---
Age	90 years old
Gender	Woman
Ethnicity	Bamar ³
Marital Status	Widow
Occupation	Dependent
Religion	Buddhist

¹ The present document is based on information received from February to June 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 ‘Daw’ is Burmese honorific title for female adults, a married woman or a woman of a higher social position.

³ The majority ethnic group in Myanmar, also known as ethnic Burmese or Burman.

Position	Villager
Village	A--- village, Htee Day village tract ⁴ , Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)				
Name(s)	Rank	Unit	Base	Commander's Name
Unknown	Soldier	State Administration Council (SAC) ⁵ , unknown Battalion	Naypyidaw Council Territory	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how this information was collected.

After receiving information about an incident in A--- village, in February 2024, a KHRG researcher went to document the incident and talked to A--- villagers. In May 2024, due to active conflict in the area, the KHRG researcher interviewed a friend of the daughter of the survivor in a displacement site. In June 2024, the KHRG researcher was able to visit A--- village to meet and interview the survivor, Daw B---.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

This information was obtained by conducting [two] interviews: with Daw B---, the survivor; and a friend of the survivor's daughter [the survivor's daughter had witnessed the incident].

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On November 12th 2023, a skirmish happened between SAC troops [unknown battalion] and local armed resistance groups [combined forces of Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁶ and People's Defence Force (PDF)⁷ near A--- village.] During the skirmish, the SAC troops burned down villagers' houses. [They also looted valuable items from the villagers' houses, as well as food from a villager's shop. They also shot a villager's cow. The villagers reported that the SAC burned down the houses because the SAC thought that the villagers had a connection with the PDF.]

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

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

⁷ 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.

While villagers' houses were being burned, one of the SAC soldiers tortured and raped⁸ a 90-year-old villager, who had not fled due to her old age. The SAC soldier [identified by the survivor as a man with a beard and dark skin] saw Daw B--- sitting [on a ladder on her porch]. He [asked her if she was alone, and when she confirmed that she was, he] took her by the arm into her house. He tried to take off her shirt and sarong [skirt]. Daw B--- told him, 'I am your mother's age. You can't do this to me'. Then, he aimed at his [own] knife to her [neck] [and strangled her]. After [threatening her], he took off her shirt and sarong and said, 'You are very skinny'. He had some [unknown] ointment, which he put on her vagina [and his penis]. He forced her to hold his penis for about half an hour and groped her breast. He was unable to become erect, so he stopped and put her underwear, shirt and sarong back on her. After that, he left from her house.

Daw B--- explained to KHRG: *"I am very afraid whenever I think about this incident. Whenever I think about it, his [the perpetrator's] face always comes to my mind. [...] He is Ka La⁹. He has very dark skin. [...] When I shouted out [with fear], he held my throat tightly like this. My throat is still painful. [...] I am not shy to talk about this [the attack]. [...] If I tell you openly, his thing [penis] did not even get up so he did not rape [penetrate] me. If he had raped me, I could have died"*.

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. A friend of the survivor's daughter told KHRG: *"Her [Daw B---'s] daughter told me that a [SAC] soldier came to her house. Then, he went inside the house. He did not take off his shoes [when he went inside the house]. And then, he took her mother to a [another] room. He put his gun away and then he took off her shirt. Her daughter saw what happened to her mother because she was hiding in a bunker under the [stilt] house. [...] She [her daughter] could see what happened inside the room through [cracks in the floor] because the house floor is made of wood. [...] There were four people hiding under the house, including her daughter. All of them could see what happened inside the room. They [the witnesses] told me what they saw. They cried loudly when they explained this to me. This incident happened while other [SAC] soldiers were burning villagers' houses. After the soldier was gone, they [people who were hiding] went up to the house. They saw that she had been tortured [by her injuries]. Her calf was bruised as [it looked like] she had been seriously beaten with an iron stick. Her daughter said she was tortured. She recalled what the soldier said: 'This grandmother is very skinny', and then he hit her calf."*

[As of May 2024,] Daw B---'s throat is still painful as a result of the attack she had faced. Also, she is still in fear whenever she recalls her memories of this incident. Her village is situated in a mixed-control area where there is active armed conflict, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes. This makes it difficult for villagers to report human rights violations including incidents of sexual violence, as well as facing other access to justice issues in such cases.

Daw B--- is 90 years old, ethnic Bamar and Buddhist. She used to work as a farmer. She has seven family members. Daw B--- currently lives together with her youngest daughter, the husband, and her grandchild in her house [in A--- village]. Her youngest daughter's husband usually goes out for work. She [Daw B---] depends on her youngest daughter's family for her livelihood. Her health situation is not good: her voice is shaky and her vision is not good.

⁸ According to the International Criminal Court, Elements of Crimes, Article 8 (2)(b)(xxii)-1, the definition of rape requires the perpetrator to have 'invaded the body of a person by conduct resulting in penetration, however slight, of any part of the body of the victim or of the perpetrator with a sexual organ, or the anal or genital opening of the victim with any object or any other part of the body'. From the information available, the incident likely constitutes rape, however it is noted that the survivor reported this incident as 'attempted rape'.

⁹ Ka la, is a Burmese/Myanmar term which is sometimes used to refer to individuals in Burma who are perceived to have a darker skin colour. In Karen State, it is often associated specifically with followers of Islam (Muslims), although this association is sometimes erroneous, and Muslim individuals do not typically self-identify with this term.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

The survivor gave KHRG permission to publish this information.

Further background reading on the situation of torture and sexual violence 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.
- [*“Dooplaya District Incident Report: Man attempts to rape a 19-year-old villager in her home, Kaw T’Ree Township, April 2023”*](#), December 2023.
- [*“Dooplaya District Incident Report: A 60-year-old male villager raped two children in Kruh Tuh Township, April 2023”*](#), November 2023.
- [*“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.

