



## Incident Report

September 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024 / KHRG # 24-310-I1

## Mu Traw District Incident Report: One teenager was killed and another was severely injured by a UXO explosion, in Lu Thaw Township (July 2024)

*This Incident Report describes events occurring in Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, in July 2024. On the evening of July 14<sup>th</sup> 2024, two villagers named Saw R--- (17 years old) and Saw U--- (16 years old) went to fish at the Salween River. On their way, they saw an object lying next to a road, about 1.6 km distance from the deserted W--- village, Kaw Loo Der village tract, Lu Thaw Township. The boys picked it up, unaware that it was an unexploded ordnance (UXO) and hit it, causing it to explode. The 16-year-old boy was killed on the spot and the 17-year-old sustained serious injuries to his body, including the loss of one hand, and two and a half fingers from the other. Due to the incident, their families feel devastated and are facing difficulties in securing their family livelihoods.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	[UXO explosion.] A villager was killed and another injured [both children] from the UXO explosion
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	July 14 <sup>th</sup> 2024
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	[Near] the deserted W--- village [all villagers forcibly displaced due to active conflict], Kaw Loo Der village tract <sup>2</sup> , Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District

Victim(s) Information		
<b>Name</b>	Saw <sup>3</sup> R---	Saw U---
<b>Age</b>	17 years old	16 years old
<b>Gender</b>	Man	Man
<b>Ethnicity</b>	Karen	Karen
<b>Marital Status</b>	Single	Single
<b>Occupation</b>	Farming	Farming

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in July 2024. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw 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.

<sup>2</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Saw’ is a S’gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person’s name.

<b>Religion</b>	Christian	Christian
<b>Position</b>	Villager	Villager
<b>Village</b>	E--- village, Naw Yoh Hta village tract, Lu Thaw Township	A--- village, Naw Yoh Hta village tract, Lu Thaw Township

<b>Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)</b>				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

### **1. Explain in detail how this information was collected.**

A villager from H--- village, Pay Kay village tract, who went to buy food and other necessary items in P--- village, Kaw Loo Der village tract, Lu Thaw Township, witnessed the [aftermath of the] incident and informed [a KHRG researcher] about the incident. The KHRG researcher went to conduct an interview with Saw R--- [the injured villager]'s mother's aunt. On August 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, a KHRG office staff also conducted an interview with Naw<sup>4</sup> K---, Saw R---'s mother, for more information about the incident.

### **2. Explain how the source verified this information.**

Saw R---'s mother's aunt, Naw S---, who is a [chairperson of] KWO [Karen Women's Organisation] in charge of P--- village, provided the information. She helped with the funeral for the villager who was killed [Saw U---] and arranged a boat for the villager who was injured [her niece's son]. Saw R---'s mother [Naw K---] also provided information about the incident.

## **Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident**

### **Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.**

On the evening of July 14<sup>th</sup> 2024, two villagers named Saw R--- (17 years old) and Saw U--- (16 years old), from Naw Yoh Hta village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District, went fishing at Khoh Loh Kloh [Salween River]. On their way [travelling from P--- village, Kaw Loo Der village tract], they saw an unexploded mortar shell lying next to a road [1.6 km away] from the former [deserted] W--- [village], Kaw Loo Der village tract. [Unaware of what the object was,] they picked up the unexploded mortar shell and hit it. The mortar shell exploded and [the shrapnel] hit them. With the explosion, one of the villagers [16-year-old Saw U---] was killed on the spot and the other villager [17-year-old Saw R---] was seriously injured. [Naw S---, a family member of Saw R---, reported that] as they [the victims] were children and had never seen mortar shells, they were not conscious of the danger of UXOs.

The deserted W--- village is located next to a former State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>5</sup> army camp, not far from P--- village, where the two villagers had come to find a job due to their

<sup>4</sup> Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>5</sup> 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

families' livelihood struggles. As soon as the villagers from P--- village heard the explosion, they went to the incident location to see what had happened. There, Naw S--- and other villagers witnessed that Saw U--- died on the spot. As for Saw R---, his left hand was blown off and his right hand was also severely injured [he had lost his thumb, his index finger and half of his middle finger]. His forehead, cheek, nose, areas next to his mouth, chest, and legs were also hit [and injured].

Having seen the condition of the injured child, Naw S---, his mother's aunt who works as a local village KWO chairperson, in P--- village said: *"We thought that he [Saw R---] was gone [died]. We didn't know whether we would be able to send him to the hospital [on time]. His whole body was injured. His hand was blown off. The other hand was destroyed. His forehead, chest, thigh, and legs were hit [by shrapnel of the mortar explosion]."* She added: *"When we looked at his injuries, they were very severe. We do not know whether he will be able to work or not. If his other hand is not amputated, he would be able to take care of himself. He will face great difficulties if both of his hands have to be amputated. He will have to take care of himself as well as his family. That's a great difficulty."*

When the incident happened, villagers were worried and anxious because there was no one to provide immediate treatment for the injured villager. [Naw S---,] Saw R---'s mother's aunt encouraged him by saying: *"You will not die. Be courageous. You will be able to receive medical [treatment] and meet with kind healthcare workers as well as your friends. Although you go there alone [for now], your parents will go and visit you tomorrow. They will be there to encourage you."* He felt encouraged by her and asked people to hurry to send him to hospital. He encouraged himself to stay alive.

As there was no hospital nor healthcare workers close by, villagers sent him in a hurry to O--- Hospital [located on the Salween riverbank in Mu Traw District, northern Karen State] as quickly as they could. His aunt and other villagers arranged a boat to send the child to the hospital for treatment at around 5 pm. A villager called Saw J--- and a boat driver took the child by boat to get him to O--- Hospital, which took over three hours. Saw R--- was hospitalised in O--- Hospital for one night. For the travel cost, the boat driver asked for the price of three petrol bottles [around 270 baht (8.39 USD)] and 3,500 baht [108.77 USD]<sup>6</sup>

Due to inadequate medical supplies for the child's treatment, on July 15<sup>th</sup> 2024, healthcare workers from O--- Hospital transferred Saw R--- to L--- Hospital in Thailand [Mae Hong Son province]. From there, he was sent directly to N--- Hospital, also in Thailand [Mae Hong Son province]. At the beginning of his hospitalisation [in Thailand], there was no one available to care for him, so healthcare workers from L--- Hospital hired a caregiver [patient attendant] for 200 baht [6.20 USD] per day. It took two days for Saw R---'s mother to travel to O--- hospital, but by this point his son had already been transferred to N--- Hospital. She finally reached N--- Hospital on July 17<sup>th</sup> 2024, when she took over the care of her son and paid the caregiver 3,000 baht [93.23 USD].

According to Naw K--- [the mother of Saw R---], her son was hospitalized in N--- Hospital for nine days. The healthcare workers treated his wounds and noticed he had bloodshot eyes, which are now improving [as of August 9<sup>th</sup> 2024]. His hand injuries were also healing. However, he needed to return to N--- Hospital for a medical checkup in two weeks. Seeing her son's condition improve, Naw K--- said: *"I am happy to see that my son's situation is getting better now."*

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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.

<sup>6</sup> All conversion estimates for Thai Bhat are based on the September 30<sup>th</sup> 2024 mid-market exchange rate of 1 baht to USD 0.03 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/thb-to-usd-rate>).

There are four people in Saw R---'s family, including him. He has a brother [14 years old] who attends Grade-6 [lower secondary education], his father has fatigue and is unable to work full-time, and his mother works as a missionary in A--- village, Naw Yoh Hta village tract, Lu Thaw Township. Due to the incident, it is extremely difficult for the family to secure their livelihood because Saw R--- was the only person who was able to work on their farmland. When Saw R--- was in the hospital, his 14-year-old brother worked on the farmland for two weeks to support the family.

As for Saw U---'s body, villagers from P--- village collaborated to bury him on the same day when the incident happened. [His mother was informed and attended the funeral]. After his death, his mother was left [alone] with her six daughters and two sons and faces great difficulties [to secure their livelihood]. Saw U---'s father had passed away last year [in 2023] from an illness so Saw U--- had shared the responsibility of securing the family's livelihood. With the death of her son, she [Saw U---'s mother] is facing great difficulties in taking care of the rest of her children.

The place where these two villagers found the unexploded mortar had been an area of active conflict. It is not clear which armed group shelled this mortar because a lot of armed groups had been operating in that place during fighting. There have also been frequent landmine explosions in the area where the UXO explosion took place. Most landmine explosions happen due to trees falling and occasionally when livestock step on them. UXO contamination causes difficulties for villagers as they remain afraid to leave their villages and travel to work on their farmlands. There are no [humanitarian] groups or organisations clearing UXOs in the areas surrounding P--- village nor have villagers received [UXO] awareness [training] in P--- village.

Regarding UXO contamination, Saw R---'s mother's aunt, Naw S---, added: *"As villagers, we cannot cope with the situation of UXO contamination. We cannot do it. The only thing that we [can] do is be vigilant. We all try to avoid dangerous places. We do not go [there]. That's how we do [cope]. We cannot do not have any other coping strategies."*

On August 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, [KHRG] received information that both victims' families have received support from an international humanitarian non-governmental organisation in Thailand which covers expenses for medical treatment [and support for victim's families].



These photos were received from a P--- villager, Kaw Loo Der village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Mu Traw District, on July 19<sup>th</sup> 2024. These photos show the two villagers who were hit by an UXO explosion, as they saw it on the road on their way fishing, and picked it up, unaware. The first photo shows 17-year-old Saw R--- who was severely injured and the second photo show 16-year-old Saw U--- who was killed by the UXO explosion. [Photos: Local villager]

## **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

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

The victim's relatives provided their consent to use this information. To reduce the risk of UXOs in the future, they allowed KHRG to use the information.

Further background reading on the situation on unexploded ordnances [UXOs] in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Why would they target us?": Exploring patterns of the Burma Army's retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma](#), June 2023.
- ["Taw Oo District Short Update: fighting, SAC looting and burning of villagers' houses, and two children killed by an UXO explosion, in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township \(February and March 2024\)"](#), July 2024.
- ["Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: A 19-year-old villager was injured by a landmine explosion in K'Ser Doh Township, October 2023"](#), May 2024.
- ["Dooplaya District Incident Report: A 21-year-old villager stepped on a landmine in Kaw T'Ree Township, December 2023"](#), April 2024.
- ["Photo Set: Landmine incidents in Southeast Burma, March 2021 to January 2024"](#), April 2024.

### **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.khrg.org](http://www.khrg.org).

