



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

September 30th, 2025 / KHRG # 24-334+364+441-D1

Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: SAC military activities causing casualties, including shelling, shootings, arbitrary arrests, use of porters, and burning of houses in K'Ser Doh, Ler Doh Soe, and Ler Muh Lah townships (August to September 2024)

This Short Update describes events occurring in K'Ser Doh, Ler Doh Soe, and Ler Muh Lah townships, Mergui-Tavoy District, from August to September 2024. On August 1st 2024, State Administration Council (SAC)'s Infantry Battalions (IB) #280 and IB #285, based in Palaw (P'Law) army camp, advanced to a company site in K--- village, Kleh Muh Htee area, K'Ser Doh Township, which People Defence Force (PDF) soldiers had ordered to vacate. As the SAC soldiers travelled in the area, fighting broke out between them and armed resistance forces in V--- village. During the fighting, the SAC shelled several mortar rounds, killing a 24-year-old villager from V--- village. On the following day, SAC soldiers entered the village again and shot dead a 47-year-old villager. On August 5th, the SAC soldiers reached K--- village, in Kleh Muh Htee area, where they shot at a 40-year-old villager, killing him, and injured a 13-year-old boy, who were transporting rice packs to Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers. On August 11th 2024, SAC soldiers from IB #104 and #267, based in Dawei Town, marched to Way Tah Eh Town to rotate their troops. On their way, they arrested 12 villagers. The SAC soldiers forced the villagers to carry ammunition for them and to serve as navigators for them. On August 16th 2024, the SAC soldiers arrested a 45-year-old villager in T--- village, K'Moh Thway area, and also forced him to follow and carry ammunition for them. In September 2024, SAC soldiers from IB #285 marched to G--- village, P'Law area, to conduct 'clearance operations'. While they were marching, fighting also broke out with armed resistance forces. The SAC soldiers burned down more than 113 villagers' houses in P'Law area, and a 50-year-old villager was also found burned in S--- village, killed during the SAC-provoked fire. During the operations, SAC soldiers also arrested and physically abused several villagers. Due to the SAC soldiers patrolling and conducting human rights violations in the villages, many villagers were forced to flee and feared returning home.¹

SAC military activities and shelling killed three villagers in K'Ser Doh Township

On August 1st 2024, the SAC [State Administration Council²] Infantry Battalion (IB)³ #280 and IB #285, based in Palaw (P'Law) [army camp], travelled towards the premises of the 'Pyi Pyo Htun'

¹ The present document is based on information received in August and September 2024. It was provided by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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. This document combines several received reports with the following KHRG internal log numbers: #24-441-D1; #24-334-D1 and #24-364-D1.

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

company, located in K--- village, Kleh Muh Htee area, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. [Earlier in the year,] the People Defence Force (PDF)⁴ had ordered the company to move [their business] from K--- village.

The ['Pyi Pyo Htun'] company is a business owned by [a businessman named] Maung⁵ La Than. It cultivates rubber trees and other plants and trees [for commercial purposes]. Before the ceasefire⁶, around the year 2000, the company [owners] collaborated with Burma Army⁷ soldiers. Burma Army soldiers confiscated some land from villagers and paid inadequate compensation according to the land value. Some [land] were sold by villagers themselves.

Later, on August 1st 2024, between 3 and 4 pm, the Battalion #12 [from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁸] and [other local armed resistance] combined forces ambushed the SAC soldiers as they reached V--- village, in Kleh Muh Htee area [and fighting occurred between them]. When the fighting broke out in the village, [the SAC conducted shelling and] a mortar shell landed on the village and killed a 24-year-old villager named L---. He was single and [worked as] a motorbike mechanic. [After,] the Burma Army soldiers retreated because some of them were injured. The next morning, on August 2nd 2024, between 7 am and 8 am, the Burma Army soldiers advanced to V--- village again. When they reached V--- village, they [Burma Army soldiers] shot dead a 47-year-old villager named U⁹ B---.

On August 3rd 2024, the Burma Army soldiers advanced to the place [in K--- village area] where the ['Pyi Pyo Htun'] company's premises were located. When the SAC arrived at K--- village, fighting broke out again [with KNLA combined forces with other local armed groups]. The Burma Army soldiers were stationed at the ['Pyi Pyo Htun'] company premises until August 5th 2024.

On that day [August 5th 2024, in the morning], two villagers encountered the Burma Army soldiers at K--- village, on a road at the company's rubber fields, as they were bringing rice packs to the [KNLA] Battalion #12.¹⁰ They were shot by the Burma Army soldiers. One of them,

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. The military junta changed its name in July 31st 2025 to State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC).

³ 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.

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

⁶ On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups, a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between the Burma/Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the Karen National Union. It was followed by the adoption of a Code of Conduct by the signatories in November 2015. In February 2018, two additional armed ethnic groups signed the NCA under pressure from the Burma/Myanmar government.

⁷ The terms Burma military, Burma Army, SAC, and junta are used interchangeably throughout this report to describe Burma's armed forces. Villagers themselves commonly use Burma Army, Burmese soldiers, or alternatively the name adopted by the Burma military regime at the time -since the 2021 coup, the State Administration Council (SAC).

⁸ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁹ 'U' is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

¹⁰ In this incident, KHRG could not clarify if these villagers were forced or voluntarily sending food for the local KNLA forces.

a 40-year-old named Saw¹¹ A--- (from N--- village, Kleh Muh Htee area) was killed. He had six family members. The other villager, a 13-year-old named Saw C---, was injured on his left leg, but was able to escape. He is from K--- village. They are six siblings [in the family] and he is the fourth one.



These two photos were received from a local villager on August 6th 2024. On August 5th 2024 two villagers travelled to transport rice packs to local armed resistance forces at the frontline near K--- village, Kleh Muh Htee area, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, and encountered Burma Army soldiers on the way, between 11 am and 12 pm, who shot at them. The 40-year-old villager named Saw A--- died on the spot and the 13-year-old villager named Saw C--- was injured on his left leg but able to escape. The photo at the top shows Saw A---, who was shot and killed by the Burma Army soldiers. The photo on the left shows Saw C---, who was injured on his left leg, receiving treatment by a healthcare worker of the KDHW [Karen Department of Health and Welfare¹²] at Ab--- village, Kleh Muh Htee area, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. [Photos: Local villager]

On August 6th 2024, the Burma Army soldiers headed back to V--- village, and, at 12 pm, villagers gathered with [KNLA] Battalion #12 and PDF soldiers to retrieve the dead body [of the villager who was shot by Burma Army soldiers] and buried him. On the same day, at 1 pm, the [PDF/KNLA] combined forces burned down the company's buildings.

¹¹ 'Saw' is male honorific title in S'gaw Karen language.

¹² The Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW) is the health department of the Karen National Union. It was established in 1956 to address the lack of public healthcare resources in rural Southeast Myanmar. It currently operates a network of community-based clinics in the region, but its capabilities remain limited due to funding constraints.

Due to the fighting, villagers' houses [from K--- and V--- villages] and plantations were damaged. The villagers who had to flee at the time [from August 1st to 6th] were from Z---, V---, K---, Y---, H---, N---, and J--- villages, [all located nearby in] Kleh Muh Htee area. Some villagers could not carry anything with them because the fighting happened unexpectedly. Some villagers fled to villages far from their village and the incident place[s], while others fled to their plantations at the source of a river [close to the villages]. To this day [August 12th 2024], villagers have not dared to return to their houses [villages] yet, because they worry that incidents might occur again. [In addition, villagers felt] there is the danger of landmines and unexploded ammunition [in the village, that might have been planted by both SAC and KNLA while stationed there].

SAC forced villagers to serve as porters and navigators in Ler Doh Soe and K'Ser Doh townships

On August 8th 2024, SAC soldiers from IB #104 and #267, based in Dawei Town, consisting of 100 soldiers, marched to Way Tah Eh (Myitta) Town [located in Way Tah Eh area, between K'Ser Doh and Ler Doh Soe townships] to rotate their troops. On August 10th 2024, the Burma Army soldiers arrived at Aa--- village, Paw Hkloh area, K'Ser Doh Township. They slept over there one night, and they [Burma Army soldiers] caught and killed villagers' livestock, destroyed villagers' plants, and scattered the house supplies everywhere.

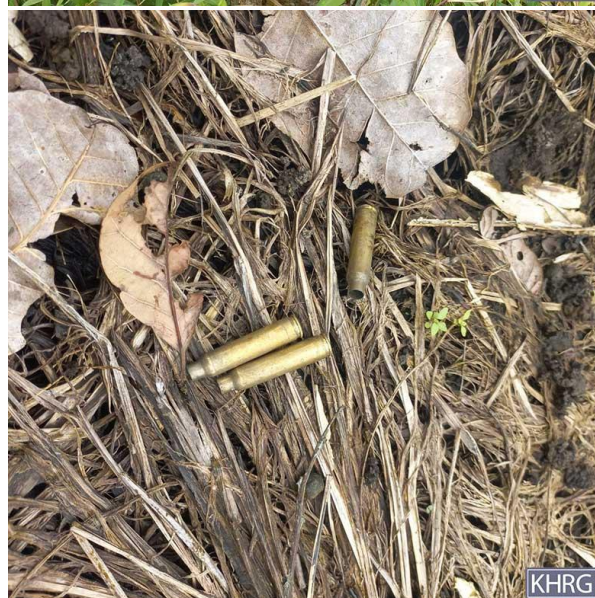
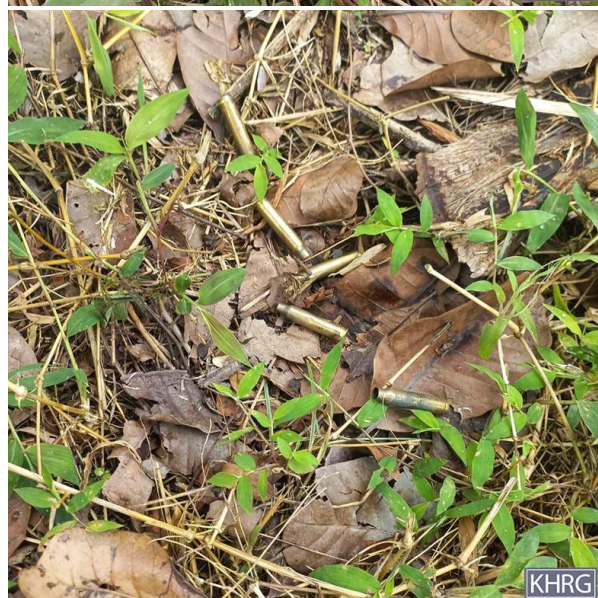
On August 11th 2024, they [Burma Army soldiers] advanced to Way Tah Eh Town. On the way, they [Burma Army soldiers] saw some villagers, arrested them, and forced them to carry ammunition. A total of 12 villagers were arrested, including seven villagers from M--- village, Paw Hkloh area, K'Ser Doh Township; three villagers from O--- village, K'Moh Thway area, Ler Doh Soe Township; and two villagers from Q--- village, K'Moh Thway area. The villagers from M--- village and O--- village were released after they reached P--- police station, in P--- village, K'Moh Thway area. However, it remains unclear whether the two villagers from Q--- village were released or not [as the KHRG researcher could not travel to Q--- village and collect such information].

On August 12th 2024, Burma Army soldiers continued advancing to Way Tah Eh Town. [On August 12th 2024] at 7 am, before they had reached R--- village, in K'Moh Thway area, they encountered KNLA combined forces [with other local armed resistance forces] and fighting broke out [between them]. Again [on August 12th], at 9 am, a skirmish occurred between the KNLA combined forces and the Burma Army soldiers at R--- village. Between 2 pm and 3 pm, another skirmish occurred between the KNLA combined forces and the Burma Army soldiers at W--- monastery, in W--- village, K'Moh Thway area. [Burma Army soldiers were staying in the monastery, and all villagers and monks had previously fled.] Finally, when Burma Army soldiers were advancing to Way Tah Eh Town, between 4 pm and 5 pm, fighting broke out again between the KNLA combined forces and the Burma Army soldiers.

On August 16th 2024, the Burma Army soldiers who had reached Way Tah Eh Town Operations Command [army camp] were going back to [Dawei] Town, when the KNLA [soldiers and other combined forces] ambushed them at E--- village [Paw Hkloh area, K'Ser Doh Township] again. On August 18th 2024, after the Burma Army soldiers reached P--- police station, they continued to go back [to their operation area at Dawei Town]. After they reached T--- village, K'Moh Thway area, fighting broke out twice after the KNLA ambushed them. After the fighting, Burma Army soldiers arrested a 45-year-old villager from T--- village, named Saw D---. He was forced to follow the Burma Army soldiers and carry ammunition. The Burma Army soldiers continued their journey, when fighting broke out again [against KNLA Battalions #12 and #27, Kawthoolei Army

(KTLA)¹³, and other local armed resistance forces] as they reached M--- village [Paw Hkloh area, K'Ser Doh Township]. Due to the fighting that occurred beside the village, some of the villagers' farmlands were destroyed.

Saw D--- explained: *"I was arrested by Bamar [Burma Army] soldiers when I reached the forest, and the Bamar [Burma Army] soldiers questioned me to see whether I was a member of the PDF. According to the Bamar [Burma Army] soldiers, if I lied to them, they would break my head. I explained to them that I was not a PDF member. The Bamar [Burma Army] soldiers also threatened me by pointing a gun at my head. During the night, one of Bamar [Burma Army] soldiers, who is Karen, came to me and brought me five packs of 'MaMa' [brand of instant noodles] and one lighter. Then he gave it [the packs and the lighter] to me and told me, 'Run! If you don't get away, the consequences will not be easy for you.' Then, I ran and tried to escape from there."* Saw D--- ran and [was able to] escape from the Burma Army soldiers.



¹³ The Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) was founded on July 17th 2022 by Brigadier-General Nerdah Bo Mya. Nerdah Bo Mya, former Commander-In-Chief of the Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO), was dismissed by the KNU in 2022. KTLA operates in two districts in Southeast Burma, in KNU-controlled areas, namely Mergui-Tavoy and Dooplaya districts. In Dooplaya District, they operate in alliance with resistance armed groups. KTLA battalions in Mergui-Tavoy District are in conflict with both SAC and KNLA troops.

These photos were taken by a KHRG researcher in August 2024, while he travelled to M--- village, Paw Hkloh area, K'Ser Doh Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, for documentation. The photos on the top row show villagers' plantations that were damaged while fighting broke out between SAC against KNLA Battalions #12 and #27, KTLA, PDF, and others local armed resistance forces. The combined forces ambushed the SAC soldiers when the latter were going back to Dawei Town, from Way Tah Eh Town. The photos on the bottom row show bullet shell casings in the plantations. [Photos: KHRG]

On August 20th 2024, Burma Army soldiers arrived at Ab--- police station [located in Ab--- village, Pa Ka Yi area, Dawei Township (under SAC control)].

The villagers [from M---, E--- villages, Paw Hkloh area, K'Ser Doh Township, and R---, W---, T--- villages, K'Moh Thway area] had to flee from their villages to other villages since August 9th 2024, the day [after] Burma Army soldiers started patrolling, until August 20th 2024. Some villagers returned to their homes when the Burma Army soldiers left the villages [in the incident area].

SAC soldiers burned houses and killed one villager in Ler Muh Lah Township

On September 14th 2024, SAC soldiers from IB #285, consisting of around 100 troops, marched to G--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, to conduct 'clearance operations' [to remove armed resistance groups' activities and control] in the village. When the SAC reached Kh--- village, P'Law area, a skirmish occurred with KNDO [Karen National Defense Organisation¹⁴] Battalion #7 combined forces [with the KNLA and PDF]. Then, the SAC soldiers burned down nine [villagers'] houses. The SAC soldiers remained in Kh--- village and, on September 16th 2024, began 'clearance operations' in Ki--- village, in P'Law area, where fighting broke out again with the armed resistance combined forces [KNDO, KNLA and PDF]. The SAC soldiers burned down a villager's house.

On September 18th 2024, the SAC soldiers reached G--- village, when fighting broke out with armed resistance combined forces [KNDO, KNLA, and PDF], and the SAC soldiers burned down three civilians' houses. On September 19th, the SAC soldiers advanced to S--- village, P'Law area, and they burned down more than 40 houses belonging to S--- villagers, because of the ambush [that happened the previous day]. When SAC soldiers burned down S--- village, one villager was burned to death, according to P'Doh¹⁵ Naw¹⁶ Dc---, a person who looks after IDPs [a local Karen National Union (KNU)¹⁷ authority that supports displaced villagers in that area voluntarily].

On September 20th 2024, the SAC soldiers returned to the IB #285 camp. Then, villagers from S--- village, along with the armed groups [KNDO combined forces], discovered the body of the villager who had died in the burned area. The SAC soldiers burned S--- village at midnight while the villagers were sleeping. The villager who died was reportedly around 50 years old and was sick. It remains unclear [to villagers] whether this villager was arrested by SAC soldiers before

¹⁴ The Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) was formed in 1947 by the Karen National Union and is the precursor to the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Today the KNDO refers to a militia force of local volunteers trained and equipped by the KNLA and incorporated into its battalion and command structure; its members wear uniforms and typically commit to two-year terms of service.

¹⁵ 'P'doh' is a title meaning 'governor' or 'minister,' within the government in S'gaw Karen.

¹⁶ 'Naw' is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

¹⁷ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Myanmar and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015, following the 2021 coup staged by Burma Army leaders, the KNU officially stated that the NCA has become void.

the burning [and whether he was purposely burned] or if he was unable to escape due to his condition.



These four photos were received on September 4th 2024, from a local KNU authority who supports displaced villagers voluntarily, from Ip--- village, P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township, Mergui-Tavoy District. The photos show villagers' houses in S--- village, P'Law area, burned down by the SAC on September 19th 2024, after skirmishes occurred in the area with armed resistance groups. Reportedly, one villager also died, burned in the attack. *[Photos: Local villager]*

In September [unknown date] 2024, SAC soldiers patrolled around P'Law area and burned down more than 60 villagers' houses. Due to the area 'clearance operations', they [SAC] encountered attacks by armed resistance forces [KNDO, KNLA, PDF], which led to fighting, so they [SAC soldiers] burned down the houses, and interrogated, arrested, and pounded villagers. In the current situation, some of the villagers have not been allowed [by KNU authorities] to return [to their villages yet due to safety concerns].

The villagers who were arrested [during such SAC operations] remain unaccounted for, as P'Doh Naw Dc---, the local authority [who supports villagers in the area, and provided this information to KHRG] does not know where they came from [in P'Law area], or how many were arrested. This is because villagers were fearful, with some fleeing into the forest, others moving to nearby villages, some relocating to other townships, and some moving to Dawei Town. As a result, the KHRG researcher could not document the number of people arrested by the SAC soldiers.

Due to the SAC soldiers patrolling and conducting human rights violations, some villagers went back to check their village [and homes], but some still do not dare to return to their village [homes]. While fleeing, villagers faced numerous challenges, such as a lack of food, clothing, and access to healthcare. According to P'Doh Naw Dc---, the person [local authority] who looks after IDPs [from P'Law area, Ler Muh Lah Township], villagers have not received any additional support except from CIDKP [the Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People], which remains insufficient to meet their needs. She also reported that many villagers fear returning to their villages due to concerns over renewed fighting, planted landmines, and lack of security, while some have lost their houses.

Further background reading on the situation of shelling and military operations in Mergui-Tavoy District, Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Mergui-Tavoy District Situation Update: SAC air strikes caused death, injuries, displacement, and destruction \(February to September 2024\)"](#), June 2025.
- [*Community spaces under fire : Attacks and destruction of community buildings and cultural events in Southeast Burma by the State Administration Council \(SAC\) \(January - June 2025\)*](#), August 2025.
- [*Photo Set: Destruction of civilian livelihoods in Southeast Burma due to military attacks, December 2023 to December 2024*](#), August 2025.

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.khrq.org.

