



Situation Update

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Dooplaya District Situation Update: SAC shelling, militarisation and air strikes causing casualties, displacement, and education, healthcare and livelihood challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township (January to August 2024)

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District, from January to August 2024. During this period, State Administration Council (SAC) shelling and other military operations caused casualties, displacement of villagers, education and healthcare challenges, travel restrictions, livelihood challenges, and an increase in commodity prices. Villagers living near Kaw T'Ree Town displaced themselves in January 2024 due to SAC activities, including shelling and air strikes. Schools in Kaw Nweh, Maw Ma, and Meh Taw village tracts closed due to fear of air strikes, forcing children to attend classes in a monastery or to be taught at home. On three separate occasions from May to August, the SAC conducted shelling and drone strikes in Maw Ma village tract and Kaw Nweh village tract, killing one villager and injuring four. Villagers from Maw Ma, Kaw Nweh, Meh Taw, and Aaw Hpa Hpa Doh village tracts also faced difficulties accessing healthcare due to travel restrictions and the closure of the hospital in Kaw T'Ree Town. SAC activities in the area, along with heavy rains and flooding, impacted villagers' ability to secure their livelihoods and to travel. As a result, the price of commodities increased in Kaw T'Ree Town, while local fruits and livestock sold by villagers became worthless, causing concern about their food security.¹

January 2024: Displacement due to SAC shelling

On January 26th 2024, fighting broke out between Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)² and State Administration Council (SAC)³ soldiers in Kyeh Done Town [located in Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District]. During the fighting, the SAC, based in Kyeh Done Town, shelled rounds of mortar and two mortar shells landed into A--- village, Meh Naw Aa village tract⁴, Kaw T'Ree Township. The shelling did not cause any injuries, but it damaged villagers' betel nut⁵

¹ The present document is based on information received in January and August 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 Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

³ 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.

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 In Burmese, 'betel nut' and 'betel leaf' are referred to as *konywet* and *konthih*, respectively, as if they are from the same plant. The Burmese names are also commonly used by Karen language speakers. Betel nut is the seed

plantations. Due to the fighting and shelling, villagers from B--- village and A--- village, in Meh Taw village tract, and C--- village, in Meh Naw Aa village tract, had to flee. Some villagers fled to D--- village [in Thailand], and some villagers fled to E--- village, in Kyaw Hta village tract, while other villagers fled to their relatives' villages. Some villagers were unable to carry enough food or belongings, so they faced many problems during displacement. Due to security concerns [regarding shelling], villagers were not allowed to return to their village [as warned by Karen National Union (KNU)⁶ local authorities since January 2024].



These photos were taken in January 2024, in F--- village, Kyaw Hta village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. These photos show villagers from C--- village, Meh Naw Aa village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, who sought shelter in F--- village, due to fighting that occurred in Kyeh Done Town between SAC and KNLA soldiers on January 26th 2024, and the SAC shelling mortar rounds in the vicinity. [Photos: KHRG]

January to August: Education challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township

Fighting [between the SAC and armed resistance groups] and shelling [from the SAC] has occurred frequently in the vicinity of Kaw T'Ree Town and [in the vicinity of] the Asian Highway⁷,

from an areca palm tree, *Areca catechu*; "betel leaf" is the leaf of the piper betel vine, belonging to the *Piperaceae* family.

⁶ 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.

⁷ The Asian Highway Network is a United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific-supported project that aims to link 32 countries in Asia across 141,000 kilometres of roadway. In Burma/Myanmar the project has involved land confiscation and forced labour. For more information about the Asian Highway Network, see "[Beautiful Words, Ugly Actions: The Asian Highway in Karen State, Burma](#)", KHRG, August 2016;

so villages near the town and the Asian Highway, particularly G--- village (Kaw Nweh village tract) and B--- village (Meh Taw village tract) have been unable to open schools [because] villagers have fled their villages due to fighting, shelling, and SAC troop reinforcement [in the area]. Only a few schools [run by the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD)⁸] were open in villages far from Kaw T'Ree Town and the Asian Highway.

Children in Maw Ma village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, had to study in a monastery [with lessons taught by both formally and informally trained teachers] because schools were closed. [From January to March 2024, SAC Infantry Battalion (IB)⁹ #97 fired shells into Maw Ma village tract almost every day.¹⁰] Some children who were unable to study in school had their relatives teach them at home when their relatives had free time.

Even though some schools were open [in Kaw T'Ree Township], the students, teachers, and parents were still concerned about air strikes and shelling. Moreover, there were not enough teachers or textbooks in some schools. Some children were Pwo Karen, so they faced language barriers while studying in S'gaw Karen language [in the KECD schools in Kaw T'Ree Township].

For high school students [from Kaw Nweh village tract, Meh Taw village tract, and Maw Ma village tract], they have to go to H---'s high school, in A'Kyoo village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. Some [high school] students stopped their education and went to Thailand [to work]. Some students were unable to study because they had fled from the village to their huts [away from the village] and the river sources [term used to refer to upstream, usually towards the jungle].

In the villages close to Kaw T'Ree Town, the children's education has been impacted for three years due to the armed conflict.



These photos were taken in August 2024, in I--- village, Maw Ma village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. These two photos show an uncle teaching his nephews and nieces at home because the children cannot go to school after the schools were closed due to fighting, shelling, and SAC air strikes. [Photo: KHRG]

[“The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkareik Town road construction threatens villagers’ livelihoods,”](#) KHRG, March 2015.

⁸ The Karen Education and Culture Department is the education department of the Karen National Union. Its main goals are to provide mother tongue education services to rural Karen populations in Southeast Myanmar, as well as to preserve the Karen language, culture and history. Despite being an important education provider in the region, it is not officially recognised by the Myanmar government.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ Unpublished data collected from Dooplaya District (24-205-S1).

May to August: SAC drone strikes and shelling in Maw Ma village tract and Kaw Nweh village tract

On May 31st 2024, an SAC drone dropped four bombs into I--- village, Maw Ma village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, and killed one villager and injured another. Saw¹¹ U--- (19 years old) was killed immediately by the SAC drone strikes, and V--- (14 years old) was injured on his right arm. V--- was hospitalised at Z--- clinic in Hkoh Ther Si village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township.

On July 8th 2024, the SAC conducted shelling into I--- village, Maw Ma village tract. Due to the shelling, a villager named Saw W--- (41 years old) was injured by the shrapnel from a mortar shell. He was injured on his back and hospitalised at Z--- clinic in Hkoh Ther Si village tract.

On August 2nd 2024, at 2:40 pm, the SAC conducted shelling into Q--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, and injured two villagers. U¹² X--- (58 years old) was injured on his neck and ear and U Y--- [unknown age] was injured on his calf and minorly on his head and ear. [Their treatment location is unknown.]

[From January to August 2024, the SAC conducted multiple shelling and air attacks in Kaw T'Ree Township, not all included in this Situation Update.]

January to August: Healthcare challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township

In Kaw T'Ree Township, villagers faced difficulties with health care issues. There are no clinics in Aaw Hpa Hpa Doh village tract, Maw Ma village tract, and Kaw Nweh village tract, so villagers from all three village tracts have to travel very far to access a clinic when they are ill. If villagers were not seriously ill, they bought medicine from the shop in the village. Patients [from these village tracts who require medical care] such as those injured by shrapnel from mortar shells or pregnant women who have to deliver babies had to go to clinics in J--- village, in A'Kyoo village tract, and Z--- village, in Hkoh Ther Si village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, or K--- village, T'Ree T'Kaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township. It is very far for villagers who live in Aaw Hpa Hpa Doh village tract, Maw Ma village tract, and Kaw Nweh village tract to access these clinics. A mother who had just given birth [unidentified name and village] explained to [the KHRG researcher] that she faced problems when she went to the clinic to deliver her baby because of flooding, poor roads, and mud [that she encountered on the way]. Villagers were afraid to go to the town for treatment [due to the presence of SAC soldiers and fighting], and the hospital [in Kaw T'Ree Town] was also closed [because of fighting].

The villagers in L--- village, and M--- village in Meh Taw village tract, who were located near Kaw T'Ree Town, had to flee from their villages [due to fighting and other SAC military activities]. The villagers did not receive proper [medical] treatment [for injuries or diseases] because the available [Burma] government hospital is located far from them. Due to flooding and poor road conditions, villagers who are in emergency [medical] situations and critical conditions faced serious challenges to access the hospital. Due to the poor [state of the] road and flooding, a one-hour journey became a three- or four-hour journey to travel.

There are KNU-run clinics located in J--- village, A'Kyoo village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, and in K--- village, T'Ree T'Kaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township [which are far from L--- village and M--- village]. The long distance delayed the patients from receiving quick treatment [meaning that] some villagers lost their lives since they could not receive treatment on time.

Villagers who had been displaced in the jungle were facing serious problems with finding or buying medicine.

¹¹ 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

¹² 'U' is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

Travelling restrictions in Kaw T'Ree Township

Since the military coup [in February 2021], it has been difficult for villagers to travel. Villagers are afraid to go to the town due to the Burma Army's checking [questioning at checkpoints and during random patrols] on the way. The route that villagers use to go to [Kaw T'Ree] Town was dug up by Burma Army soldiers with backhoes so villagers could not travel on it anymore. As a result, villagers had to use other routes, which were poor routes [unpaved roads], muddy, and flooded. Particularly in July 2024, there was heavy raining and flooding, so it was difficult to travel. Some villagers even had to travel by boat.

When villagers go to Kruh Tuh Town to buy things [whenever they cannot go to Kaw T'Ree Town], they had to use the routes that did not have a Burma [Army] military camp. Villagers who live near Kaw T'Ree Town were afraid to travel on the main road [Asian Highway, due to fighting], so they had to travel on another road, which is a poor [unpaved] road. Similarly, if villagers from Aaw Hpa Hpa Doh village tract, Kya Ka Wa village tract, and Kaw Nweh village tract want to go to Kruh Tuh Town to buy things, they have to travel through the mountain route and cross the Kyar Ywa river to K--- village, T'Ree T'Kaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township. As June to August was the rainy season, with unusual [heavy] flooding this year [2024], it was difficult for villagers to travel.

January to August: Livelihood challenges

Villagers who live near Kaw T'Ree Town, in Maw Ma village tract, Kaw Nweh village tract, Aaw Hpa Hpa Doh village tract, and in N--- village, Ywa Tan Shin village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, were living in fear of air strikes, shelling, and the Burma military entering into the village. Villagers from G--- village, O--- village, and P--- village, Kaw Nweh village tract, were afraid to return to their villages because Burma [Army] soldiers were staying in the villages [it is unknown whether the soldiers occupied the villagers' houses since villagers did not return to check].

The fighting [between the SAC and armed resistance groups] often occurred along the Asian Highway, so the villagers whose farms are located near the Asian Highway dared not continue doing their farming. Burma [Army] soldiers conducted shelling and drone strikes [often, from January to August 2024], so villagers were afraid of farming and herding their cows. Villagers from G--- village and Q--- village, in Kaw Nweh village tract, have been unable to do farming for two years. In R--- village and S--- village, Maw Ma village tract, some villagers dared to do farming, while some did not, especially those who have farms that are located near the Asian Highway.

As villagers were displaced, they could not take care of their cattle, so the cattle damaged some paddy plants. Flooding also caused damage to the villagers' paddy plants, especially in S--- village, Maw Ma village tract, T--- village, Aaw Hpa Hpa Doh village tract, [and N--- village, Ywa Tan Shin village tract] in Kaw T'Ree Township; and K--- village, T'Ree T'Kaw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, because those villages were located near big rivers. As a result, villagers were worried for their food [supply] in the coming year.

While villagers were displaced, their belongings that were kept in their houses were stolen by thieves.



These photos were taken in August 2024, at N--- village, Ywa Tan Shin village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. These photos show villagers' paddy plants damaged by flooding during the rainy season. [Photos: KHRG]

Commodity prices increased in Kaw T'Ree Town

Since villagers [from Kaw T'Ree Town] had difficulty traveling [to Myawaddy to purchase goods to sell in town], commodity prices have increased dramatically in Kaw T'Ree Town, especially oil, onions, and foods that were being sold in town. Some villagers [in Kaw T'Ree Town and the surrounding village tracts] cannot afford to buy things in town [because they do not have enough money]. For instance, the petrol price has increased from 20,000 to 30,000 kyat [9.52 to 14.29 USD]¹³ for one litre. One litre of oil is 8,000 kyat [3.81 USD]. In contrast, the local fruits and livestock became worthless. Therefore, villages were facing serious problems [with the price of foods].

¹³ All conversion estimates for Kyat are based on the official market rate as of December 3rd 2024 at 1 USD = 2,098.93 MMK, conversion rate available at <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter/>

Further background reading on the human rights situation in Dooplaya District in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [ကဘီယုဟဲလံ Aircraft coming! : Impacts of air strikes on local communities and villagers' protection strategies in Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup](#). November 2024.
- ["Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC soldiers killed five villagers, torturing two and raping a pregnant woman, in Kaw T'Ree Township, in May 2024"](#), November 2024.
- ["Dooplaya District Short Update: SAC shelling killed a villager and damaged houses in Kruh Tuh Township \(May and September 2023\)"](#), September 2024.
- ["Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC air strike killed a villager, injured three, and destroyed houses and two schools, in Kaw T'Ree Township, March 2024"](#), August 2024.

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.khr.org.

