



## Incident Report

November 28<sup>th</sup>2024 / KHRG #24-62-11

## Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) soldiers arrested and killed a villager in Ler K'Saw Township, January 2024

*This Incident Report describes an event occurring in Ler K'Saw Township, Mergui-Tavoy District, in January 2024. On January 16<sup>th</sup> 2024, a villager named Ko T--- was arrested by soldiers from the Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) Company #3, Hsa K'Saw Division, based in H--- village, Sa Tein village tract, Ler K'Saw Township. Ko T--- had been accused by one of his brothers-in-law of being a drug dealer and was reported to the KTLA, who then arrested him with a villager collaborator. He was killed in the same evening of his arrest by the KTLA soldiers and the villager collaborator, and his body was disposed of in a nearby river. His wife learned of his death from another villager on or around January 31<sup>st</sup>. Ko T---'s body has not yet been found. Due to this incident, Ko T---'s family is also facing livelihood challenges, since Ko T--- was the breadwinner.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Type of Incident                                   | Killing   |
| Date of Incident(s)                                | January 16 <sup>th</sup> 2024   |
| Incident Location (Village, Township and District) | L--- place, H--- village, Sa Tein village tract, <sup>2</sup> Ler K'Saw Township, Mergui-Tavoy District |

| Victim Information |                      |
|--------------------|----------------------|
| Name               | Ko <sup>3</sup> T--- |
| Age                | 42 years old         |
| Gender             | Man                  |
| Ethnicity          | Bamar <sup>4</sup>   |
| Marital Status     | Married              |
| Occupation         | Plantation worker    |

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in February 2024. It was provided by a community member in Mergui-Tavoy 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> 'Ko' is a Burmese title meaning older brother. It can be used for relatives as well as non-relatives.

<sup>4</sup> The majority ethnic group in Burma (Myanmar), also known as ethnic Burmese or Burman.

|                 |  |
|-----------------|--|
| <b>Religion</b> | Buddhist   |
| <b>Position</b> | - [villager]   |
| <b>Village</b>  | H--- village, Sa Tein village tract, Ler K'Saw Township, Mergui-Tavoy District |

| <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]                         | Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) <sup>5</sup> soldiers from Company #3, Hsa K'Saw Division | Htein Man place, H--- village, Sa Tein village tract [Karen National Union (KNU) <sup>6</sup> controlled area] | Captain Sa Pih [of Company #3] |
| Saw <sup>7</sup> San Myit Aung                | [a villager affiliated with KTLA] | -  | -  | -                              |

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

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

The KHRG field researcher interviewed Ko Z---, the victim's brother-in-law, and documented the information in detail.

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

The victim's brother-in-law, Ko Z---, provided the researcher [with this information]. The KHRG researcher corroborated the authenticity of the information provided by the interviewee by talking with Ko Z---'s wife, Daw<sup>8</sup> P---, and the victim's wife, Daw U---.

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

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

On January 16<sup>th</sup> 2024, at 6 pm, seven soldiers from KTLA Company #3, Hsa K'Saw Division, based in Htein Man place, nearby H--- village, Sa Tein village tract, Ler K'Saw Township, [and one villager collaborator named San Myit Aung] arrested an H--- villager named Ko T---. Ko T--

<sup>5</sup> The Kaw Thoo Lei Army (KTLA) was founded on July 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

<sup>6</sup> 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.

<sup>7</sup> 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>8</sup> 'Daw' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

-’s wife, Daw U---, recounted [the arrest]: “A villager named San Myit Aung, [in collaboration with] seven KTLA soldiers, came and took [arrested] my husband [and took him] with them [to their base] to question him. He was accused of being a drug dealer and was reported to the KTLA, then the KTLA came to arrest him. They told me: ‘We will not do anything to your husband, we will just ask him a few questions then we will release him’”. [Saw San Myit Aung is a villager who frequently engaged in military activities with KTLA soldiers.]

Ko T--- was a daily wage worker who was a breadwinner for his family. He struggled a lot with [securing] his family’s livelihood due to [the economic instability caused by the] political situation [since the 2021 coup]. As such, he had to labor for someone [be hired for daily work] to get money for his family’s daily needs. He was accused of selling methamphetamines by Saw Y---, his brother-in-law [a different brother-in-law from Ko Z---, who was interviewed by KHRG], and reported by him to KTLA [Company #3]. San Myit Aung [, a villager collaborator, and seven KTLA] soldiers then arrested Ko T--- on the evening of January 16<sup>th</sup> [2024].

Ko T--- had not been released as of January 31<sup>st</sup>. Daw U--- was waiting for the day her husband would return home, because on the day that he was arrested, she was told [by San Myit Aung] that he would just be asked a few questions, and he would not be killed. His wife relayed this information to her younger brother [Ko Z---]. [On or around January 31<sup>st</sup>, still without any news of Ko T---,] his wife was enquiring about her husband [in the area around H--- village]. When she reached L--- place, where villagers have plantations near H--- village, she met a plantation worker and asked about her husband. The plantation worker informed her: “Your husband already died. They [KTLA soldiers] killed him on the first day they arrested him. They shot him dead and threw him in the canal [near the KTLA base in Htein Man place]. I have seen it [his body being dumped] with my own eyes”. The plantation worker also clarified: “The time he was killed was around 7 pm”.

[As of September 2024,] Ko T---’s body has not yet been found and retrieved. [After the enforced disappearance of Ko T---, the family is facing livelihood challenges.]

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

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

Ko Z--- [the brother-in-law of the victim] and Daw U--- [the victim’s wife] allowed this information to be used and published.

Further background reading on the situation of killings in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Taw Oo District Short Update: SAC shot dead a minor and arbitrarily arrested, detained and tortured a villager in Htaw Ta Htoo Township \(May 2024\)”](#), July 2024;
- [“Mergui-Tavoy District Incident Report: Arbitrary 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.

### 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](http://www.khrq.org).

