



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

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Taw Oo District Short Update: A landmine explosion severely injured two villagers, including a 13-year-old, in Daw Hpah Hkoh Township (May 2025)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Daw Hpah Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, in May 2025. On May 29th 2025, a 13-year-old child from Aa--- village, K'lay Loh Mu Htaw village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, stepped on a landmine in Bb--- village, K'lay Loh Mu Nu Lar village tract, while he was travelling to Shel Tho Maing Town with his two friends to visit their family members. Due to the landmine explosion, the child's right foot was severed and he was also injured on his chest. Another villager (24 years old) who was travelling with him was also injured on his eye and chest. The 13-year-old was sent by local villagers to a clinic in Day Loh Mu Htaw village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, run by the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). As of now, he is still not fully recovered. The 13-year-old child said he needs a prosthetic leg. Local villagers believe that State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers planted this landmine since there is an SAC army camp in the village.¹

Landmine incident in Bb--- village, K'lay Loh Mu Nu Lar village tract

- **Road closure related to military activity**

Since May 1st 2025, the Karen National Union [KNU]² began to close a vehicle road between Leik Tho Town and Toungoo Town, a vehicle road between Thandaunggyi Town and Toungoo Town, a vehicle road between Baw G'Lee Town and Toungoo Town and a vehicle road between Zayet Gyi Town and Toungoo Town. [The towns are located in Daw Hpah Hkoh and Htaw Ta Htoo townships, in Taw Oo District.]

The KNU closed the roads in order to stop State Administration Council [SAC]³ troops from travelling to KNU-controlled areas and conducting military activities. No car was allowed to pass

¹ The present document is based on information received in June 2025. 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 The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma/Myanmar 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 in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

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 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.

through these roads. Therefore, Karen National Liberation Army [KNLA]⁴ security guards blocked the roads by putting wood logs on the roads. However, some villagers still used these roads to travel by motorbike. The SAC tried to remove the wood logs on the roads.

The KNU reopened the roads in June 2025, but the SAC closed the road between Thandaunggyi Town and Toungoo Town. As of July 2025, the road between Thandaunggyi Town and Toungoo Town is still closed by the SAC. On May 26th 2025, a cantonment area commander from [the SAC's] Ba Yin Naung army camp in Thandaunggyi Town ordered passenger cars to travel to Toungoo Town [promptly]. He said that car drivers would not be allowed to travel to Toungoo Town anymore in the future if they did not travel to the town at that time. Therefore, on May 27th 2025, a [SAC's] cantonment area commander from Ba Yin Naung army camp released an order that no car or motorbike was allowed to travel to Toungoo Town. Then, the SAC blocked the road by putting wood logs over the road.

- **Landmine explosion in Bb--- village causing serious injuries**

After the SAC blocked the road, a villager named Saw⁵ A--- [13 years old] and his two friends travelled from Cc--- village [in Day Loh Mu Nu Lar village tract⁶, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township] to Shel Tho Maing ('13 Miles') Town by motorbike. [They were travelling there to visit the friends' town.] Shel Tho Maing Town is a town between Thandaunggyi Town and Toungoo Town. His friends' names are B--- [20 years old] and C--- [24 years old]. B--- was driving the motorbike. They used a road between Cc--- village and Bb--- village [K'Lay Loh Mu Nu Lar village tract] in order to travel to Shel Tho Maing Town. This road is being blocked by the SAC.

According to local villagers, SAC soldiers asked villagers to go back to their villages whenever they saw villagers travelling on that road. A local villager from Cc--- village warned Saw A--- and his two friends that nobody was using the road anymore [since the SAC blocked it] before they travelled. However, they did not listen to the villager [thinking it was safe].

On the morning of May 29th 2025, they [the three villagers] started to travel [to Shel Tho Maing Town]. When they arrived in Ee--- Section of Bb--- village, they saw a wood log blocking the road. Then, they tried to remove the log. Saw A--- stepped on a landmine. His right leg was blown off [severed] due to the landmine explosion. C--- was also injured by the explosion and his eye and chest were injured. His eye was blinded. B--- was not injured. Local villagers believe that the SAC planted the landmine. There is the SAC's LIB [Light Infantry Battalion]⁷ #604 army camp in Bb--- village.

B--- explained what happened [to KHRG]: *"When we arrived there [Ee--- Section in Bb--- village], we saw a tree blocking the road. [...] As we brought a [long] knife, we planned to cut the tree [log] [into pieces] to remove it. He [Saw A---] took the knife and he was going to the tree [log]. When he arrived near the tree, he stepped on a landmine. It exploded. Then, he screamed, 'My leg is blown off'. It was bleeding constantly as his leg was severed. He was crying loud. [...] His leg [foot] was blown off from the ankle. His right hand was also injured. The skin on his hand separated. The right part of his chest here was also injured. It caused small holes on his chest. [...] When he stepped on the landmine, the other one [C---] was behind him. He was also injured. [...] His eye was injured. It became blind. His chest was also injured as it was hit by small stones due to the explosion. His face became dark as it was hit by gunpower*

⁴ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁵ 'Saw' is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

⁶ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

⁷ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. Most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw (Burma Army) are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers, yet up-to-date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

[as a result of the landmine explosion]. [...] I was not injured. I was standing up beside the motorbike when they both went to remove the tree. So I was not hit by the explosion. [...] The tree was put over the road to block the road. The road is made of cement. The landmine was planted three or four inches away from the cement road. It was near the tree. After the incident, I went to check the place and I saw there was a big hole there [from the explosion].”

After the incident, B--- helped his two injured friends, and they travelled back to Cc--- village by motorbike. When they reached a bridge near Bb--- village, C--- decided not to travel anymore with them [as riding on the motorbike while injured was too painful]. He left on the bridge. Then, B--- and Saw A--- continued their journey. When they arrived near a pineapple plantation, owned by a local villager, they stopped there because Saw A--- could not travel with the motorbike anymore, as he could not endure the pain from his injuries. Then, B--- tried to communicate with other villagers from Cc--- village for help. After a while, some villagers who attended a healthcare training came and provided first aid to Saw A--- to stop the bleeding.

Then, B--- went back to the bridge to see his friend, C---, but he did not see him anymore. He later found that C--- walked back from the bridge to Shel Tho Maing Town. He arrived in Shel Tho Maing Town on May 30th 2025. [KHRG was not able to get further information on what happened to C--- after, or whether he received medical treatment when he arrived in Shel Tho Maing Town.]

After Saw A--- received the first aid, local villagers sent him to Cc--- village. Then, the villagers carried him in a hammock from Cc--- village to the clinic managed by KNLA Battalion #5 in Ler Kho Doe Kar area, Day Loh Mu Htaw village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, in order to receive medical treatment. He received medical treatment there [free of charge]. It takes around seven or eight hours on foot from Cc--- village to the clinic in Ler Kho Doe Kar area. This clinic was built and established by the KNLA. BPHWT [Back Pack Health Worker Team]⁸ staff and KNLA medics are working together in the clinic to provide medical treatment to KNLA soldiers [and any other injured soldiers] and local villagers.

- **Impacts of the landmine incident**

When the incident happened, Saw A---’s parents were staying in Aa--- village, K’lay Loh Mu Htaw village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township. During the incident date, B--- informed his [Saw A---’s] parents about what happened to his son over the phone. Then, the parents went to see him in the clinic.

There are six people in Saw A---’s family: his father, mother, one elder sister and two elder brothers [, and him]. Saw A--- is a 13-year-old student in Grade-7 at Ff--- school, near Aa--- village. The school is run by the KECD [Karen Education and Culture Department]⁹. His mother’s name is Naw¹⁰ D--- (aged 50). His parents work on plantations to support the family’s livelihood. His elder sister’s name is Naw E---. His two elder brothers’ names are Saw F--- and Saw G---. Saw A--- and his family members lives in Aa--- village.

⁸ Backpack Health Worker Team (BPHWT) is an organisation that provides health care and medical assistance to displaced civilians inside Burma. KHRG reports that cite BPHWT include [ကဘီယုဟဲလ် Aircraft coming! : Impacts of air strikes on local communities and villagers’ protection strategies in Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup.](#) (Nov 2024), and “[Hpa-an Situation Update: Hlaingbwe Township \(February to April 2016\)](#)”.

⁹ The Karen National Union’s 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.

¹⁰ ‘Naw’ is a S’gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.

Naw D---, the mother [of Saw A---], told KHRG about her concerns about her son's education: *"My son is really sad about what happened to him. I encouraged him to be strong. [...] I want him to continue going to school. However, he will not be able to do things much [easily] as he lost his leg. This year, I want him to stop going to the school because he needs to rest [to recover]. I will send him to the school next year. I still want him to go and study in school because I worry that he will lose interest in learning in the school. I told him, 'It is good to go to the school this year if you can go', but I also told him it is okay not to go to the school this year if he cannot go. As parents, we have to prepare the best thing for him. [...] It [education] is important. If you don't have education, you will become nothing."* Saw A--- told the KHRG researcher about his needs: *"I want to get a prosthetic leg"*.

[As of July 2025, the villager is in the process of receiving financial support from a local Karen community-based organisation that focuses on providing humanitarian aid.]

B--- is 20 years old and he lives in Gg--- Section of Shel Tho Maing Town. He came to work on plantations in Aa--- village before the incident. [The other injured villager,] C--- is 24 years old and he lives in Gg--- Section, Shel Tho Maing Town. He also came to work on plantations in Aa--- village before the incident.



The left photo was taken on June 6th 2025, in a clinic in Ler Kho Doe Kar area, Day Loh Mu Htaw village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. It shows a 13-year-old villager, named Saw A---, receiving medical treatment in the clinic after he was injured by a landmine explosion in Bb--- village, K'Lay Loh Mu Nu Lar village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, on May 29th 2025. He was injured on his right foot, right arm and chest. The right photo was taken on May 29th 2025 on a road near Cc--- village, Day Loh Mu Nu Lar village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township. It shows local villagers carrying Saw A--- in a hammock, as they were transporting him from Cc--- village to the clinic in Ler Kho Doe Kar area, on May 29th 2025. [Photos: KHRG]

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

- [“Mu Traw District Short Update: A landmine explosion killed one monk and left another injured in Bu Tho Township \(January 2025\)”](#), April 2025.
- [“Doooplaya District Situation Update: SAC shelling and air strikes causing 24 civilian casualties and damaging civilian property; extensive house burning and use of human shields; and a landmine explosion, in Doooplaya District \(October to December 2023\)”](#), February 2025.
- [*Defying Hunger : State Administration Council \(SAC\)’s systematic destruction of civilian livelihoods and food systems in Southeast Burma \(January - December 2024\)*](#), May 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.

