



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

15 July 2026 / KHRG # 26-116-S1

Taw Oo District Situation Update: Burma Army activities caused livelihood, fuel, education, and healthcare challenges in Htaw Ta Htoo Township (January to March 2026)

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, during the period between January to March 2026. During a Burma Army rotation in Kaw Thay Der village tract, Burma Army soldiers trespassed through villagers' plantations and forced villagers to walk with them. Additionally, they ate and destroyed villagers' crops. In March 2026, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers attacked Burma Army soldiers at a garbage dumping site in Kaw Thay Der village tract, injuring five Burma Army soldiers and damaging two lamp posts. Additionally, the presence of Burma Army soldiers at checkpoints between Toungoo Town and Kaw Thay Der village tract caused difficulties for villagers. Burma Army soldiers extorted villagers; looted food and medicines; seized motorbikes and cars; put restrictions on the carrying of foods, oil, petrol, and medicines; and charged merchants high prices to pass through with their goods. Due to the high price of petrol, some hill farmers and motorbike taxi drivers gave up their jobs because they were not making profit from their work. Moreover, flooding and landslides in October 2025 restricted travel to Toungoo Town, leaving villagers unable to sell their harvested crops, causing financial harm. In early 2026, a middle school in Ag--- village faced challenges as teachers submitted resignation letters after hearing derogatory comments from parents and school commission members, leading students to change to a school in town, which caused financial challenges for their parents. The shortage of teachers and inadequate supply of textbooks in Kaw Thay Der village tract undermined the stability of the education system, leaving students with limited education. Finally, Kaw Thay Der village tract is located far away from clinics and hospitals. There were no doctors, and medicines were not easily accessible, causing unnecessary deaths within the village tract.¹

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kaw Thay Der village tract,² Htaw Ta Htoo (Htantabin) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, from January to March 2026. Kaw Thay Der village tract has fewer cases of human rights violations [compared to other village tracts] because it is located far away from the SSPC [State Security and Peace Commission³ also known as Burma Army]⁴-controlled area.

¹ The present document is based on information received in April 2026. It was provided by a community member in Taw Oo District who has been trained by KHRG as a researcher 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 uses the received report(s) with the following KHRG internal log number(s): #26-116-S1.

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

³ The State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) is the new name of the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the 1 February 2021 military coup. Formerly called the State Administration Council (SAC), it was renamed by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 31 July 2025. 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

Human rights violations occurred when Burma Army soldiers rotated

There are five SAC [State Administration Council]⁵ camps in Kaw Thay Der village tract: Bu Ser Hkee army camp, Kaw Thay Der army camp, Koe Day army camp, Baw G'Lee army camp, and Tit Say Taung army camp. In Kaw Thay Der village tract, not much fighting has taken place, so SAC soldiers come into the village [tract] to purchase food, and they usually walk around in the village tract. Once a month, the SAC rotates soldiers from one camp to another camp and sends rations to their army camps. When the soldiers were doing their rotation, they trespassed through villagers' plantations instead of using the village road, and the soldiers plucked and pulled out cardamom trees and ate and destroyed durians and betelnuts from the villagers' plantation fields. In addition, when the soldiers found villagers in the plantation fields, they forced villagers to walk with them [as human shields] and they also threatened them. Thus, the soldiers' rotations have become a challenge for the villagers.

In Kaw Thay Der village tract, there are Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁶ soldiers administered by the KNU [Karen National Union].⁷ Once a month, when the SAC soldiers transport rations into their army camps, the KNLA attacks the SAC soldiers with tripwire mines. [For instance,] on 20 March 2026, the KNLA attacked the SAC soldiers with tripwires [that the KNLA could trigger to detonate] at a garbage dumping site, which is located between Aa--- village and Ab--- village, Kaw Thay Der village tract. A villager reported that, due to the attack, five SAC soldiers sustained injuries, and two lamp posts were damaged. However, there was no intense fighting in Kaw Thay Der village tract.

Economic challenges in Kaw Thay Der village tract

Villagers from Kaw Thay Der village tract regularly purchase their food and goods from Toungoo Town. There are five SAC checkpoints between Toungoo Town and Kaw Thay Der village tract. Villagers from Kaw Thay Der village tract, especially Ac---, Ad---, Ae---, and Af--- villages, are located very far away from towns. [The further the distance, the more tollgates there are that villagers have to cross.] The SAC soldiers at the checkpoints charged more money than they

government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup and remains the head of the SSPC. The name State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC) is used interchangeably with military junta and Burma military regime.

⁴ The terms Burma military, Burma Army, SAC, Tatmadaw, and junta are used interchangeably throughout this report to describe the Burma military regime's armed forces. Villagers themselves commonly use Burma Army, Burmese soldiers, or alternatively the name adopted by the Burma military regime at the time—from the 2021 coup to July 2025, the State Administration Council (SAC). On 31 July 2025, the military junta changed its name to the State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC).

⁵ The State Administration Council (SAC) was the name of the executive governing body of the Burma military regime created in the aftermath of the 1 February 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on 2 February 2021 and was 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 on 31 July 2025 from SAC to State Security and Peace Commission (SSPC), with Min Aung Hlaing retaining his position as chairperson.

⁶ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁷ 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.

should have from passing merchants. So, the merchants increased the price of their goods [when they arrived at the village] to make a profit. Consequently, it has become more difficult for the villagers who already faced extreme financial issues. Additionally, the SAC soldiers [at the checkpoint] also looted food from the merchants and seized cars and motorbikes. All these factors have resulted in significant difficulties for the villagers. In addition, villagers have to pay tollgate fees to the KNU as well. Thus, the villagers faced livelihood and transportation challenges.

[The issue of tollgates and checkpoints demanding high fees from drivers happened not only in January to March 2026 but also in July 2025.] In July 2025, [on an unknown date,] having bought medicines, a villager from Ag--- village, Kaw Thay Der village tract, was returning from Toungoo Town to Ag--- village. When the villager arrived at the Baya Chay Yin tollgate, which is located on the Thandaunggyi road, [Burma Army soldiers from the gate] looted medicines which were bought by the villager and also threatened him by saying they would put him in jail. Then, they told him that he could pay money if he did not want to go to jail. So, the villager paid 30,000,000 kyats (14,285.71 USD⁸). Following the mid-year of 2025, villagers who travelled within Kaw Thay Der village tract encountered extreme difficulties while traveling. Medicines, oil, petrol, and rice were restricted from being transported [through the gate]. [However,] some drivers [secretly] carried some oil and rice [while driving through the gate]. When the soldiers from the gate found rice and oil in the car, they kept it for themselves. The soldiers also took fish and meats from the drivers without paying the drivers any compensation fee. [This tollgate continued to operate during the reporting period, and villagers remained concerned about crossing it.]

In October 2025, flooding and landslides happened in Toungoo Town and roads to towns were restricted. Most villagers from Kaw Thay Der village tract have durian and mangosteen plantations. These types of fruits have a short shelf life. [When these seasonal] fruits were ready to harvest, villagers did not get the chance to sell them as roads were still restricted for travel [during the reporting period] due to the landslide [and have many checkpoints]. This [transportation challenge] caused shortages of basic food such as rice, oil, and salt. As a result, stealing occurred more frequently within the village tract. It therefore became a challenge for the villagers to support their livelihoods.

Impact of the fuel crisis in Kaw Thay Der village tract

On 3 March 2026, the SAC released an announcement letter ordering a reduction in fuel consumption. The next morning numerous petrol stations shut down completely. However, a few petrol stations remained open and sold limited amounts of fuel. Before the announcement, a litre of fuel cost 3,000 kyats (1.43 USD); however, after the announcement, within a week, the price of a litre of fuel increased from 3,000 kyats to 6,000 kyats (1.43 USD to 2.86 USD), and after, 10,000 kyats (4.76 USD). At the moment [as of March 2026], in mountain areas, a litre of fuel cost 15,000 kyats (7.14 USD). In Toungoo Town, fuel stations sold limited fuel on particular dates, only to licensed motorbikes. The high price of fuel negatively impacted villagers' livelihoods in Kaw Thay Der village tract. For instance, villagers used machines that required fuel to cut down trees and bushes on their hill farms before they did plantation work. Now [as of March] a litre of fuel cost 15,000 kyats (7.14 USD), and the daily labour fee also cost 15,000 kyats (7.14 USD) per person, excluding three meals a day. Thus, it was not worth it to hire a daily labourer, which caused extreme difficulties for villagers. Moreover, some villagers used to work as motorbike taxis, driving to far places, but after the fuel price changed, they stopped working.

⁸ All conversion estimates for the Kyat are based on the official market rate as of 3 June 2026 at 1 USD = 2,100 MMK; conversion rate available at <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/usd-to-mmk-rate>

Education challenges in Kaw Thay Der village tract

Before the dictatorship came to power [in the 2021 coup], there were only SAC government schools in Kaw Thay Der village tract. However, after the 2021 coup, KECD [Karen Education and Culture Department]⁹ schools were established in the village tract. Before, students did not know how to read or write in the Karen language. But now [after the 2021 coup], under the KECD curriculum, the students are able to read and write Karen very well, even though KECD schools have Karen subject classes only up to Grade 5.

Kaw Thay Der village tract has 16 villages, but it only has 11 schools: one high school, three middle schools, and seven primary schools. Those 11 schools' curriculums were administered by the KECD. The schools received support from the KECD, students' parents, and village heads. The schools are self-funded schools. When students finish high school in Kaw Thay Der village tract, they continue their education by going to Ah--- Junior College [administered by the KECD] in Ai--- village, Peh Htee village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, and Aj--- school in Maw Nay Pwa village tract, Htaw Ta Htoo Township.

Teachers who work in the [KECD] schools are villagers who finished high school within the village or villagers who attended college. The teachers are volunteer teachers. However, the parents were not pleased with the volunteer teachers. They believed that the teachers who did not finish school would not be able to teach children properly. To illustrate, during the 2025-2026 school year there were 16 teachers at a middle school in Ag--- village. Teachers received 45,000 kyats (21.43 USD) per month from students' parents; yet the teachers disregarded monetary concerns and continued teaching in schools voluntarily. However, teachers were discouraged to teach when they heard derogatory comments from some school commission members and some students' parents. One of the school commissioners said that 13 out of 16 teachers submitted resignation letters. This environment had a negative impact on the students' education. Teachers changed frequently, and it caused difficulties for students to study properly. Furthermore, it was hard for the school to employ 13 [replacement] teachers during the three months of summertime [March to May 2026]. Thus, some parents wanted to send their children to SAC schools, religious schools, and NUG [National Unity Government]¹⁰ schools in Toungoo Town. Parents who did not have money or did not have relatives in towns struggled financially to send their children to towns to study.

[Another issue occurred in] Ab--- school located in Ab--- village, Kaw Thay Der village tract, which has classes from Grade 1 to Grade 6, but there were only two teachers, so students did not get to study effectively. Additionally, inadequate books for students have become an obstacle to access education. Villagers could print books in towns; however, villagers were afraid to travel to towns because there are [Burma Army] checkpoints on the way.

⁹ 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.

¹⁰ The National Unity Government (NUG) was formed by the acting cabinet of the Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw (CRPH) on 16 April 2021, following the 1 February 2021 military coup. U Win Myint was retained as President, and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi as State Counsellor, both still under detention by the State Administration Council (SAC) military. The NUG claims to be the legitimate government of Myanmar and has sought international recognition as such. The NUG cabinet is composed primarily of lawmakers elected in the 2020 election, along with other key ethnic figures. As the military junta has declared the NUG illegal, it is operating as a government-in-exile. On 5 May 2021, the NUG announced the formation of a "People's Defence Force" to serve as its armed wing. Further information can be found at the NUG website: <https://www.nugmyanmar.org/en/>

Healthcare challenges in Kaw Thay Der village tract

Although there are 16 villages in Kaw Thay Der village tract, there are only two clinics: Ak--- clinic and Al--- clinic. Before the rise of the dictatorship, there was a hospital in Baw G'Lee Town. After the 2021 coup, many healthcare workers from Am--- hospital joined the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)¹¹ causing a staff shortage. Thus, at the moment [as of March 2026], the hospital was closed. There were no doctors in the villages and medicines were not easily available for sale or purchase. Generally, villagers approached other villagers to receive treatment. Villagers who had advanced diseases approached the nearest hospitals in Toungoo Town to receive treatment. Some villagers who should have lived ended up dying because the distance between the villages and the hospitals was too far. In addition, villagers faced financial struggles to receive treatment. It was very challenging to access healthcare.

Further background reading on the situation in Taw Oo District in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- *Stolen Childhoods: Violations of children's rights, urgent needs, and local agency in rural Southeast Burma during the conflict, October 2025.*
- "Taw Oo District Short Update: Burma Army shelling and air strike injured two children, damaged villagers' houses, and caused displacement in Htaw Ta Htoo Township (July 2025)", June 2026.
- "Taw Oo District Short Update: Burma Army air strikes injured a 16-year-old girl and damaged six houses in Daw Hpah Hkoh Township (February to March 2026)", May 2026.

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.

¹¹ On 2 February 2021, healthcare workers at state-run hospitals and medical facilities across Myanmar spearheaded what is being referred to as a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) consisting of labour strikes in protest against the 1 February 2021 military coup. The movement quickly spread to include civil servants from all sectors of the government who are walking off their jobs as a way of non-recognition and non-participation in the military regime. Because of the popularity of the movement, and its seminal role in wider protests across the country, some people have begun using it as a catch-all phrase to include other protest forms like boycotts and pot-banging.

