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Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

May 27th 2022/ KHRG #22-104-S1

Dooplaya District Situation Update: Killing, fighting, indiscriminate shelling, air strikes and displacement, March 2022

This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik), Kruh Tuh (Kyonedoe) and Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) townships, Dooplaya District in March 2022 including killing, fighting, indiscriminate shelling, air strikes and displacement. Fighting and indiscriminate shelling has caused the displacement of villagers and property damage. In some cases, entire villages have been forced to flee. Displaced villagers have settled in different places including monasteries, the houses of relatives living in other villages, and in displacement sites along the Moei River, and are in need of food and medicine. In one incident of shelling, a 17-year-old girl was hit by a mortar that was fired by State Administration Council (SAC) troops into Htee Moo Hta village, Noh Hpoh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township and died immediately. Three other villagers were injured by the shelling. Two mortar shells that landed in Taung Kyar Inn village, Nga Pyin Ma village tract, Kruh Tuh Township after heavy shelling on March 23rd 2022 did not explode and have yet to be removed. The SAC launched an air strike twice in Bler Doh village, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township on March 27th 2022 following heavy fighting with the local Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO) combined troops.¹

Fighting, indiscriminate shelling and displacement

On the evening of March 3rd 2022, in Bu Baw and Htee K'Pler villages, Choo K'Lee village tract², Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, skirmishes occurred between State Administration Council (SAC)³ troops and the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁴. The SAC also flew helicopters over the villages and indiscriminately fired [mortar shells]. This caused villagers to be terrified and flee to K--- Place near Noh Hpa Doh village [a Thai-Karen village in Thailand].

¹ The present document is based on information received in March 2022. 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 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 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 The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

Villagers [IDPs] are in need of food. Some of them have nausea and are coughing and so are also in need of medicine. Some children have diarrhoea.



These photos were taken on March 16th 2022 in K--- Place near Noh Hpa Doh village, Thailand. These photos show displaced villagers from Htee K'Pler and Bu Baw villages, Choo K'Lee village tract, Kaw T'Ree township who fled to the nearby Thai border. They are facing food shortages and are in need of healthcare supplies at the displacement site. [Photos: KHRG]

On March 11th 2022, fighting happened between the SAC and Karen National Defence Organisation (KNDO)⁵ in Taung Kyar Inn village, Nga Pyin Ma village tract, Kruh Tuh (Kyonedoe) Township, Dooplaya District. This fighting resulted in the displacement of many

⁵ 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.

villagers. Some villagers sought refuge in the nearby monasteries and some fled to other villages to stay with their relatives. On the first day, displaced villagers returned to their homes shortly after the fighting stopped. However, as fighting happened again on the night of March 12th 2022, the villagers had to flee to other nearby villages including T--- village, Th'Meik Dut village tract, Kruh Tuh Township. The head of T--- village provided some food and shelter for the displaced villagers. He said that there was no support from organisations or monitoring of the situation. The displaced people are in urgent need of humanitarian aid. There were more than 60 people taking refuge in T--- village on March 12th 2022.



This photo was taken on March 12th 2022 in T--- village, Th'Meik Dut village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, Doooplaya District. This photo shows displaced villagers from Taung Kyar Inn village, Nga Pyin Ma village tract, Kruh Tuh Township who are currently sheltering in T--- village due to fighting [in their village]. [Photo: KHRG]

On March 14th 2022, fighting happened between the SAC and the People's Defence Force (PDF)⁶ in Seikgyi Town, Noh T'Kaw (Kyainseikgyi) Township, Doooplaya District. On that day, at 9:00 am, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁷ #432 left their camp. The PDF planted a trip-wire bomb, which allowed them to ambush the SAC troops. As a result, fighting broke out for a few minutes. From 9:00 am to 11:00 am, SAC soldiers continued firing both 79 mm guns and other small guns around Seikgyi Town. Due to the indiscriminate gunfire, a civilian named U M---, aged over 40 years old, was hit in his stomach by a bullet while sitting at a coffee shop in town. On the same day, he was taken to the Mawlamyine 300-bed hospital by an ambulance car. Some villagers who live in the area around Noh T'Kaw village, Noh T'Kaw village tract also temporarily fled to other nearby villages [due to the fighting in Seikgyi Town]. They returned to their homes [on March 16th 2022].

From March 15th 2022 at 8:30 pm to March 16th 2022 at around 3:30 am, fighting broke out for about seven hours between the combined forces of the SAC Infantry Battalion (IB)⁸ #32 and LIB #559 and the KNDO in Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Doooplaya District. During the period of fighting, more than 20 mortar shells were fired, as well as small guns. The local villagers [in the surrounding area] saw an unexploded mortar shell fall on the main road

⁶ 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.

⁷ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light 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. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

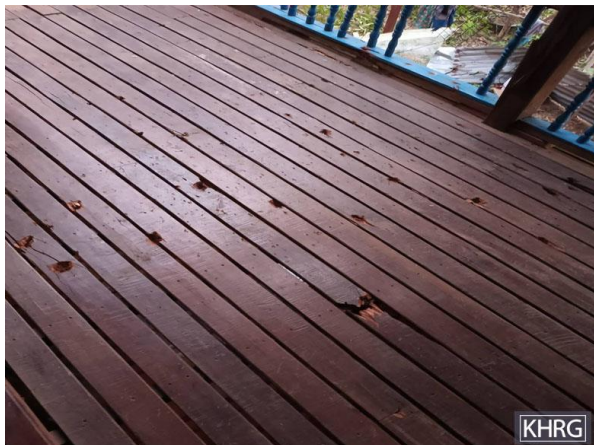
⁸ An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

between Myawaddy Town and Waw Lay village, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. Almost every villager in Thay Baw Boh village tract had already fled to hide, so no villagers were injured.



This photo was taken on March 16th 2022 on the main road between Myawaddy Town and Waw Lay village, Waw Lay village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The photo shows an unexploded mortar shell that fell during fighting in Thay Baw Boh village between SAC IB #32 and LIB #559 combined troops and the local KNDO. [Photo: KHRG]

On March 23rd 2022 at 8:00 pm, SAC LIB #231 and LIB #230, based in Tada Kyo village, Hlaing Wa village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township indiscriminately fired 120 mm mortars and bullets into Taung Kyar Inn village, Nga Pyin Ma village tract, Kruh Tuh Township. One house was destroyed by the shelling. Two of the mortar shells that fell into Taung Kyar Inn village remained there, unexploded. The two unexploded shells have not yet been removed by any organisation.

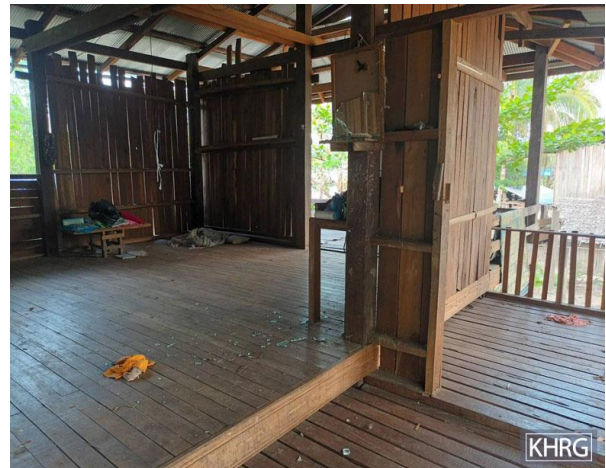




These photos were taken on March 23rd 2022 in Taung Kyar Inn village, Nga Pyin Ma village tract, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. The photos show damaged houses and shells [from bullets and mortars] that were fired during the SAC's indiscriminate shelling. One of the mortars exploded and damaged a house. Two more mortars [one is shown in the last image] landed in the village but did not explode; they have yet to be removed. *[Photos: KHRG]*

On March 23rd 2022 at 2:00 pm, fighting occurred for a few minutes between the SAC and PDF in Thanmya village, Kyaw Kay Hkoh (Da Li) village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township. SAC soldiers, who were in a truck, conducted indiscriminate shelling in the direction of the village using both artillery and guns. Over 10 houses were hit by the indiscriminate shelling. The following day, March 24th 2022, at 2:45 pm, a woman who was six months pregnant, Ma W--- aged 39 years old, was shot twice by a civilian [one bullet hit her left chest and one her right arm], while she was sitting in front of her shop. She was referred to Mawlamyine Hospital.

On March 20th 2022, fighting broke out between the SAC and the combined KNLA and KNDO in Oo Kray Hta village, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. During the fighting, SAC LIB #302 fired multiple mortars into Oo Kray Hta village, which damaged six houses and a monastery. At the time of the fighting, villagers had already fled to a different location so there were no civilian casualties.





These photos were taken on March 20th 2022 in Oo Kray Hta village, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The photos show houses that were damaged by the indiscriminate shelling. [Photos: KHRG]



These photos were taken on March 20th 2022 in Oo Kray Hta village, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The photos show displaced villagers who had to flee due to indiscriminate shelling by SAC LIB #302. [Photos: KHRG]

On March 26th 2022, SAC LIB #559, LIB #560, Light Infantry Division (LID)⁹ #44 and LID #11 sent troop reinforcements to retake Maw Hkee army camp in Maw Hkee village, Maw Hkee village tract [after it had been seized by the KNLA and KNDO combined troops on March 21st 2022]. First, they marched from Kawkareik Town to Myawaddy Town, then to P'Loo village, P'Loo village tract and then to Thay Baw Boh village, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. When they arrived at Hkler Kloh Place on March 27th at 11:00 am, heavy fighting started between the marching SAC troops and KNDO and KLNA combined troops. There were a high number of deaths and injuries on the SAC side. Local villagers believe this is why two SAC helicopters flew over the area and conducted air strikes in Bler Doh area on March 27th at 2:00 pm. Villagers in Bler Doh, Thay Baw Boh and Lay Gaw villages, Thay Baw Boh village tract no longer felt safe to stay in their village and so they fled. Bler Doh villagers fled to Thailand but the Thai soldiers did not allow them to stay and they had to return to Burma. On March 27th, SAC helicopters flew around the area of Bler Doh village [and conducted air strikes] twice. They also came again on March 28th at 5:20 am. [As of March 28th 2022] the fighting is still ongoing

⁹ A Light Infantry Division (LID) of the Tatmadaw is commanded by a brigadier general, and consists of ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, search and destroy operations against ethnic insurgents. They were first incorporated into the Tatmadaw in 1966. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, three battalions each and one reserve, one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units. Each division is directly under the command of the Chief of Staff (Army).

and the sound of mortars and guns are still there now. There are 54 households consisting of 195 people who were displaced from Bler Doh village. They are currently settling along the banks of the Moei River.

On March 26th 2022, fighting occurred between SAC and Border Guard Force (BGF) combined troops and Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) splinter group¹⁰ and KNLA combined troops in Kwee Ler Ter Th'Waw Thaw village, Maw village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, Doooplaya District. Due to the fighting, villagers in the area displaced to different places along the border in Thailand. Some of them settled in Lay Taw Hkoh village [a Thai-Karen village] in Thailand, whereas some settled in plantations and the forest along the border [in Thailand].



¹⁰ On January 16th 2016, this splinter faction of the DKBA established itself as the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army led by chief of staff General Saw Kyaw Thet, vice chief of staff General Saw Taing Shwe (aka Bo Bi) and commander Bo San Aung. Therefore, confusingly, there are now two groups using the acronym DKBA: the main 'Benevolent' DKBA (Democratic Karen Benevolent Army) and the splinter faction 'Buddhist' DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army). The new splinter 'Buddhist' DKBA should not be confused with the original Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, which existed from 1994-2010. The 'Benevolent' DKBA has signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement but the new 'Buddhist' DKBA splinter faction has not. The latter are still actively engaged in armed clashes with the Tatmadaw in multiple areas in Karen State.



These photos were taken on March 28th 2022 in a betel nut plantation near Lay Taw Hkoh Hospital, Lay Taw Hkoh village, Thailand. The photos show displaced villagers from Htee Th'Blu Hkee and Kwee Ler Ter villages, Kwee Ler Ter village tract, Noh T'Kaw Township, Dooplaya District. 223 villagers were displaced on March 28th 2022 due to fighting that happened between the SAC - BGF combined forces and DKBA Splinter - KNLA combined forces on March 26th 2022. *[Photos: Local villagers]*

Killing

On March 24th 2022, fighting broke out between the SAC and KNLA on the Asia Highway between Myawaddy and Kawkareik towns, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District, when the SAC sent out troop reinforcements to the area around Myawaddy Town. At 5:40 am, during the fighting, SAC LIB #355 indiscriminately fired mortars near Htee Moo Hta village, Noh Hpoh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. Six mortar shells were fired, and one landed in the village. The explosion killed a 17-year-old girl, and injured one male and two female villagers. The 17-year-old girl was hit on her head [by a fragment of the mortar shell], breaking her skull. She died immediately. Among the three injured villagers, one (female) villager was seriously injured and was hospitalised in Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town.



These photos were taken on March 24th 2022 in Htee Moo Hta village, Noh Hpoh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The photos show the corpse of a 17-year-old girl who was killed by indiscriminate shelling fired by SAC LIB #355. [Photos: KHRG]

The shelling also destroyed a house, a barn and a car. A community member reported that SAC LIB #355, which is based at the entrance of Htee Moo Hta village between Thin Gan Nyi Naung and Kawkareik towns, was responsible for firing the mortar into Htee Moo Hta village.



These photos were taken on March 24th 2022 in Htee Moo Hta village, Noh Hpoh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The photos show a house and car that were damaged by the indiscriminate shelling undertaken by SAC LIB #355. [Photos: KHRG]

Further background reading on the situation of fighting and indiscriminate shelling in Dooplaya District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: SAC and BGF tortured and killed a female villager in Bilin Township, December 21st 2021”](#), January 2022.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC troops fired mortars into a village, injuring three villagers, December 2021”](#), January 2022.
- [“Dooplaya District Situation Update: Indiscriminate shelling, fighting, forced labour, peace talks, and the COVID-19 pandemic, August to September 2021”](#), February 2022.

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.khrq.org.

Dooطلا (Southeastern Karen State) District

