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Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

June 22nd 2022 / KHRG #22-93+94-D1

Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC airstrikes destroyed two houses and resulted in the displacement of villagers in Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, March to April 2022

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) and Hsaw Htee (Shwegyin) townships, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District in March 2022. SAC air forces conducted airstrikes in two respective areas of KNU-controlled Kler Lwee Htoo District on March 19th 2022. There were no casualties among villagers, but the bombs destroyed two houses and resulted in the displacement of villagers living in these areas.¹

On March 19th 2022 at 2:00 am, a jet from the Burma Army [State Administration Council (SAC)² military³], came and conducted an air strike in A--- place, near B--- village, in Loh Hkee village tract⁴, Hsaw Htee (Shwegyin) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District. At that same time, they [SAC military] also conducted an air strike in C--- village, Kwee Lah village tract, Ler Doh (Kyaukkyi) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. Both incidents took place in areas controlled by the Karen National Union (KNU)⁵/Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁶ Brigade #3.

¹ The present document is based on information received in March and April 2022. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee Htoo 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 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.

³ The term most commonly used in referring to Burma (Myanmar)'s armed forces is Tatmadaw. The term has been used by KHRG throughout its reporting history, and most consistently during periods of civilian government. Since the February 1st 2021 coup and the military's establishment of the State Administration Council (SAC) as the executive governing body of Burma, Burma's armed forces have also come to be referred to as the SAC military. KHRG uses the term SAC military in specific reference to the Burma military since the February 1st 2021 coup. During previous periods of military rule, KHRG also used the names adopted by the military government in referring to the Tatmadaw (i.e. SLORC [State Law and Order Restoration Council] between 1988 to 1997, and SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] from 1998 to 2011), because these were the terms commonly used by villagers in KHRG research areas.

⁴ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

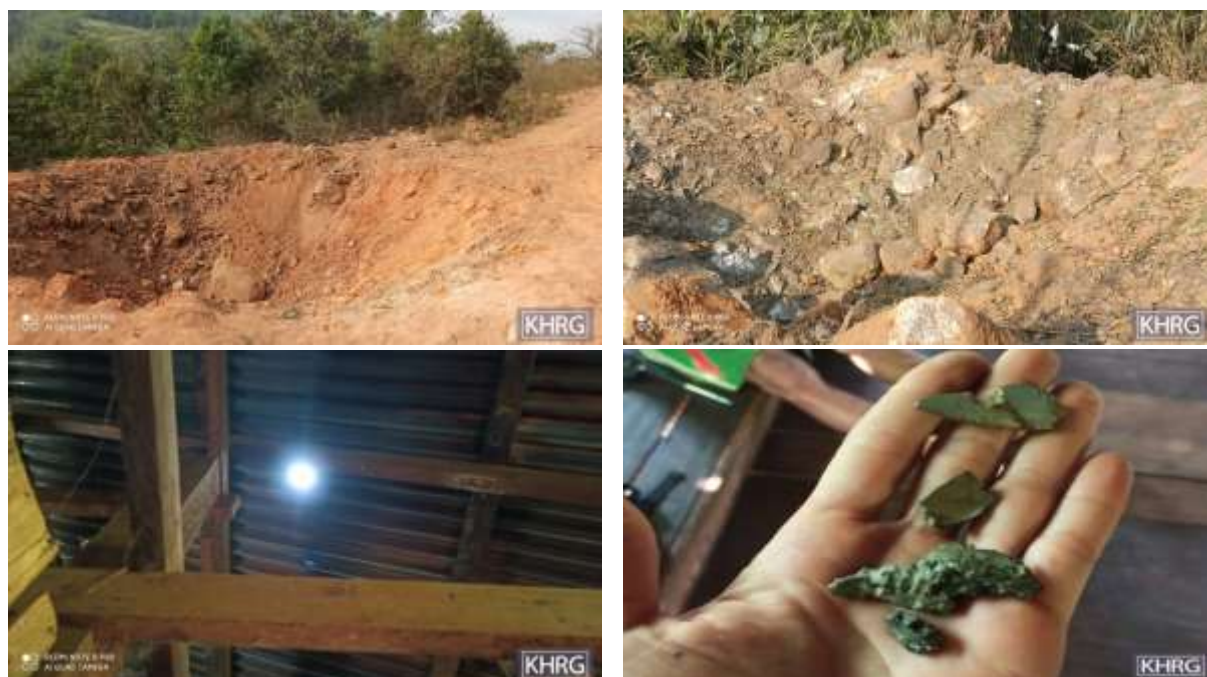
⁵ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma/Myanmar government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of

Civilians in both Hsaw Htee and Ler Doh townships fled from their villages and became displaced.

According to the villagers, on March 19th at 2:00 am, SAC air forces dropped two bombs in Loh Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The bombs landed on a road between D--- village and B--- village. Two civilians' houses were damaged from the air strike [while the families were sleeping in the houses], but there were no civilian casualties. The two houses that were damaged from the bomb explosion belong to B---villagers', Naw⁷ E--- and Saw⁸ G---. The bomb explosion caused a hole in the roof of Naw E---'s house and two holes in the roof of Saw G---'s house.

At the same time, another SAC fighter jet dropped two bombs beside C--- village, Kwee Lah village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. There were no casualties during this incident, as the bombs fell and exploded beside the village. However, the roof of a villager's house that was close to the explosion was damaged [from a piece of shrapnel that came into the village].

According to the villagers, the SAC used two fighter jets for the air strikes [on this day]; one fighter jet dropped two bombs beside B--- village in Hsaw Htee Township, and another fighter jet also dropped two bombs beside C--- village in Ler Doh Township.



These photos were taken on March 20th 2022, in B--- village, Loh Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The photos show the damage at the site of the bomb explosion, a hole in the roof of a villager's house and the pieces of shrapnel from the bomb explosion that resulted from the SAC air strikes conducted on March 19th 2022. [Photos: KHRG]

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.

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

⁷ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

⁸ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.



These photos were taken on March 20th 2022, in C--- village, Kwee Lah village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The photos show the damage at the site of the bomb explosion, a hole in the roof of a villager's house and pieces of shrapnel from the bomb explosion that resulted from the SAC air strikes conducted on March 19th 2022. *[Photos: Local villager]*

Displacement during the air strikes

[Due to the air strikes on March 19th,] villagers from C---, D---, H---, J--- and other nearby villages in Hsaw Htee Township had to flee from their villages and displace to safer places in the forest nearby. They no longer dared to sleep in their village and slept in the forest instead. In particular, children and mothers with new-born babies had to confront various challenges, as there was no proper shelter for them to take refuge in the forest. The villagers, who became displaced due to the SAC air strike, were not aware of or informed about the air strike prior to the incident. They were all asleep in their houses in the villages at the time of the incident, and immediately fled from their villages to escape, [following] the air strike.

Since then, from the beginning of April to April 30th, villagers in over half of the villages from Hsaw Htee Township have had to displace to forests to save their lives [due to ongoing military activity]. They still do not dare to return to their villages to sleep over night, as they worry that the SAC might conduct air strikes again and enter KNU-controlled areas to attack the KNLA.

The air strikes that were conducted by the SAC have led to villagers becoming fearful. The villagers are afraid to engage in their livelihoods, travel and carry out other [day to day activities].



These photos were taken on March 20th 2022, while villagers were fleeing and at a temporary displacement site outside of B--- village, Loh Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The photos show the villagers from B--- village fleeing from their village when the SAC air forces conducted air strikes on March 19th 2022. The villagers took refuge in a safer place in the forest. [Photos: KHRG]

[KHRG has also documented and published an incident where the SAC conducted an air strike on March 30th 2021 at Moe Aung gold mining site, located in Meh Theh Hkee place near Htee Hpa Doh village, Meh Yeh Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. It killed eight mine workers and a KNLA radio operator; two others were injured (one mine worker and a member of the KNU Forestry Department).⁹]

As well as conducting air strikes in Kler Lwee Htoo District, the SAC air forces conducted several air strikes into civilian places in KNU-controlled areas in Doo Tha Htoo, Mu Traw and Dooplaya districts in 2021 and these types of incidents continue at the time of reporting in April 2022.

Further background reading on the situation on human rights violations in Kler Lwee Htoo District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Violation of the right to information, travel restrictions, torture, increased SAC activities and displacement in Ler Doh and Moo Townships, August 2021 to February 2022"](#), April 2022.

⁹ KHRG, ["A Worrying Escalation: Tatmadaw airstrikes kill at least 16 villagers, displace thousands in Mu Traw and Kler Lwee Htoo districts, March 2021"](#), May 2021.

- [*"Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC troops fired mortars into a village, injuring three villagers, December 2021"*](#), January 2022.
- [*"Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: Arbitrary arrest of civilians by SAC military in Moo Township, August 2021"*](#), January 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.khrg.org.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

