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Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Doo Tha Htoo District Situation Update: Two villagers were killed and 17 villagers were injured by SAC's indiscriminate shelling in Kyeh Htoh Township (December 2022 to February 2023)

This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Kyeh Htoh (Kyaikto) Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District during the period between December 2022 and February 2023. During these three months, the State Administration Council (SAC) conducted indiscriminate shelling in Kyeh Htoh Township, which resulted in displacement, property damage, death and injuries. Due to the SAC's indiscriminate shelling, 17 villagers, including children, were injured and at least two more died. Local villagers' livelihood was seriously challenged, as they could not work freely because of the increase of indiscriminate shelling.¹

Introduction

This Situation Update describes human rights violations that happened in Kyeh Htoh (Kyaikto) Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District during the period between December 2022 and February 2023. In Kyeh Htoh Township, State Administration Council² (SAC) battalions under the Light Infantry Division (LID)³ #44 conducted indiscriminate shelling frequently. These SAC battalions [under LID #44] are Artillery Unit #310, Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)⁴ #207 and

¹ The present document is based on information received in March 2023. It was provided by a community member in Doo Tha 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 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).

⁴ A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. 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

Infantry Battalion (IB)⁵ #2. These battalions are based in Thein Zayet Town, Kyeh Htoh Township.

SAC indiscriminate shelling in Kyeh Htoh Township

On December 2nd 2022, [SAC's] LIB #207 and Artillery Unit #310 indiscriminately fired rounds of 120 mm, 81 mm and 60 mm mortars into Zee Pyaung village tract⁶, Kyeh Htoh Township, between 10:10 am to 10:50 am. Most of the mortar shells landed and exploded in Section 4, Section 5 and Section 6 in Zee Pyaung village, Zee Pyaung village tract. There were about 20 mortar shells that were fired in total. Due to the indiscriminate shelling, villagers were afraid and they fled from their villages.

On December 2nd 2022, at 9:18 pm, the Artillery Unit #310 fired seven rounds of howitzer [programmable artillery weapon] and 120 mm mortars in Kyout Phyar village tract and Zee Pyaung village tract. Local villagers think that the SAC fired a howitzer round in Kyout Phyar village tract that exploded in the air. However, a round of 120 mm mortar landed and exploded in the middle of Kyout Phyar village, damaging a local school and some villagers' houses. Some of the mortar shells landed and exploded in a compound of villagers' houses.

On December 3rd 2022, at 12:21 am, the Artillery Unit #310 and LIB #207 fired nine rounds of 120 mm mortars in Zee Phyaung village tract. The mortar shells landed near Section 5 of Zee Pyaung village. Seven of the mortar shells exploded and two of them did not explode. On December 6th 2022, at 7:26 pm, the Artillery Unit #310 fired four rounds of 120 mm into Kyout Phyar village tract and Zee Pyaung village tract. However, no villagers were hit by the shelling.

On December 8th 2022, at 8:56 pm, LIB #207 fired three rounds of 60 mm mortars in Thone Kwat village, Kha Ywel village tract. The mortar shells landed near the village and exploded. There were no casualties caused by the shelling. On December 11th 2022, at 7:43 pm, LIB #207 fired one round of 81 mm mortar in Section 5 of Zee Pyaung village, Zee Pyaung village tract, but it did not explode. Again, on December 11th 2022, at 7:46 pm, the LIB #207 fired one round of 81 mm mortar and it landed on Wet Won Mountain [Bear Mountain] in Zee Pyaung village tract and exploded. At 7:48 pm [on December 11th 2022], they [LIB #207] fired another round of 81 mm mortar and it landed near Alon Taw Pyit monastery, Kha Ywel village tract, and exploded.

On December 13th 2022, at 7:37 pm, LIB #207 indiscriminately fired two rounds of 81 mm mortars. They landed in K'nyi Ai village, Zee Pyaung village tract and exploded but there were no casualties caused by the shelling. On December 17th 2022, at 7:13 pm, LIB #207 fired mortar shells from the Hein Myanmar Company mine. The mortars landed in Section 5 of Zee Pyaung village, Zee Pyaung village tract, and exploded. Again, at 7:27 pm, they [LIB #207] fired two rounds of mortars in K'nyi Ai village, Zee Pyaung village tract. Despite the shelling, there were no casualties, but local villagers had to flee from their village.

On December 21st 2022, at 7:12 pm, the Artillery Unit #310 under [the commandment] of LID #44 fired four rounds of mortars. Again at 8:12 pm, they fired one round of mortar. They used 60 mm and 81 mm mortars. The mortars landed near Thone Kwat village, Kha Ywel village tract.

by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

⁵ 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 NCA. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

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

On January 5th 2023, at around 8:00 pm, LIB #207 indiscriminately fired rounds of 60 mm mortars in Thone Kwat village. The number of mortar rounds fired is unknown. One of the mortar shells landed near U⁷ A---'s house and exploded. As a result, U A--- and his wife Daw⁸ B--- were injured. U A---'s legs and back were injured. Daw B--- sustained injuries all over her body as she was hit by the shrapnel.

On January 6th 2023, at around 7:30 pm, IB #2 indiscriminately fired two rounds of 60 mm mortars in Lel Ler Ku village, Win K'law village tract, and two civilians were injured by the shelling. The mortar shells landed near U C---'s house and Ma⁹ D---'s house and exploded. U C--- was injured on his armpit. Ma E---, daughter of Ma D---, was injured on her left thigh.

On January 7th 2023, at 7:35 pm, LIB #207 and Artillery Unit #310 indiscriminately fired eight rounds of 120 mm and 60 mm mortars. The mortar shells landed in a rubber plantation near Thone Kwat village, Kha Ywel village tract. As a result, one villager died and six villagers were injured. The villager who died is named Ko¹⁰ Zaw Moe. He died while he was lying on his bed as he was hit by the shrapnel. The injured villagers are Ma F---, G---, Ma H--- (11 years), I--- (7 years), J--- (13 years) and Ma K---. Ma F--- was injured on her bottom, G--- was injured on his abdomen, Ma H--- was injured on her thigh, I--- was injured on his bottom, J--- was injured on his back, and Ma K--- was injured on her eyebrow. On January 8th 2023, LIB #207 indiscriminately fired three rounds of mortars in Thone Kwat village, Kha Ywel village tract. On January 8th 2023, at around 9:00 pm, the Artillery Unit #310 indiscriminately fired two rounds of mortars in Akhine village, Kha Ywel village tract. Despite the shelling, there were no casualties.

On January 9th 2023, at 7:10 pm, Artillery Unit #310 indiscriminately fired three rounds of 120 mm mortars. The mortar shells landed near Thone Kwat village and Yay Kyaw village, Kha Ywel village tract. On the same day, at around 11:00 pm, IB #2 indiscriminately fired four rounds of 120 mm mortars. Two mortar shells landed in Kyout Phyar village and exploded, and another two shells landed in Pyin Ka Tone Kone village and exploded. Despite the shelling, there were no casualties. On January 13th 2023, at around 11:15 pm, Artillery Unit #310 indiscriminately fired two rounds of 120 mm mortars into Kyout Phyar village. There were no casualties.

On January 19th 2023, at 1:44 pm, an SAC reconnaissance aircraft, an ATR 42MP, conducted aerial reconnaissance over several villages in Kyeh Htoh Township for a long period of time. Due to the long aerial reconnaissance, local villagers fled from their villages [as they were afraid of air strikes].

On January 21st 2023, at around 4:00 pm, LIB #207 fired six rounds of 81 mm mortars into K'nyi Ai village, Zee Phyoung village tract. After the shelling, the SAC LIB #207 went to K'nyi Ai village and then they burned down U L---'s house at around 5:00 pm. On January 23rd 2023, at around 12:00 pm, LIB #207 fired two rounds of 81 mm mortars. The shells landed near Thone Kwat village, Kha Ywel village tract, and exploded. Despite the shelling, there were no casualties. On the same day at 7:15 pm, they [LIB #207] fired ten rounds of mortars. Four mortar shells landed near Thone Kwat village and exploded. One mortar shell landed and exploded near a phone tower [cellular radio tower], close to Wah Ghout Kwin [sports field], Kha Ywel village tract. The rest of the mortar shells did not explode. Villagers did not know where they landed.

On January 25th 2023, at 12:10 pm, SAC soldiers stationed at Motpalin (Ma Yan Chaung) checkpoint indiscriminately fired rounds of 40 mm mortars when a civilian [passenger] truck was

⁷ Male honorific title in Burmese language.

⁸ Female honorific title for a married woman or a woman of a higher social position.

⁹ Female honorific title in Burmese language.

¹⁰ Male honorific title in Burmese language.

driving from New Sittaung Bridge to Kyeh Htoh Town. [Some] SAC soldiers from Ma Yan Chaung checkpoint let cars without license plates pass their checkpoint every day [which angered some other soldiers]. Therefore, soldiers started to argue with each other. Then, a SAC soldier shouted and swore and fired a round of 40 mm mortar. The mortar landed over the civilian truck and exploded. There were many villagers from Pwint Phy Township, Magway Division, inside the truck who planned to go and pay their respects to a pagoda. Because of the explosion, one villager died and seven villagers were injured.

On February 3rd 2023, at around 1:00 am, the SAC soldiers stationed at Pouk Tan village, in the eastern area of Waw Township, Bago Division, indiscriminately fired seven rounds of 120 mm mortars. Three mortar shells landed and exploded in Htin Tal section, Kha Ywel village, Kha Ywel village tract, Kyeh Htoh Township. Due to the shelling, some villagers' houses were damaged and one toilet was damaged. However, no villagers were injured.

On February 11th 2023, at 8:55 am, LIB #207 and IB #2 from Let Pan Pin village, Inn Ga Bo village tract, which is near a highway between Motpalin Town and Kyeh Htoh Town fired three rounds of mortars. They landed in Pyin Ka Toe Kone village and exploded.

On February 12th 2023, at 10:45 pm, SAC soldiers stationed in Aout Poe village tract, in the eastern area of Waw Township, Bago Division, fired three rounds of 120 mm mortars. The mortar shells landed and exploded near Kha Ywel village, Kha Ywel village tract, Kyeh Htoh Township. Despite the shelling, there were no casualties.

On February 18th 2023, at 9:30 pm, Artillery Unit #310 fired 81 mm mortars in Pyin Ka Toe Kone village. There were no casualties.

On February 25th 2023, the SAC fired two rounds of 60 mm mortars in Poe Wah Thein village, A'Lu Gyi village tract. There were no casualties due to the shelling.

On February 27th 2023, at around 9:00 am, Artillery Unit fired one round of 120 mm mortar that landed in Kyout Phyar village and exploded. There were no casualties caused by the shelling.

Conclusion [Researcher's perspective]

As mentioned above, the SAC deliberately conducted shelling in civilian areas. They fired mortar shells because they wanted to harm villagers' livelihood, as villagers cannot work well due to the shelling. Due to the SAC's shelling, thousands of local villagers in Kyeh Htoh Township have fled from their homes and they have faced difficulty in accessing food and shelter. Apart from limited job opportunities and an increase in commodity prices, [another aspect impacting villagers is how] the SAC has limited the transportation of food in the area. Due to this situation, local villagers have faced many challenges in their daily lives.

Further background reading on the situation of shelling in Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Short Update: House burning and indiscriminate shelling in Kyeh Htoh Township"](#), January 2023
- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers were injured as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township"](#), June 2022
- ["Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Villagers killed as a result of SAC mortar shelling in Bilin Township"](#), June 2022
- ["Why would they target us?": Exploring patterns of the Burma Army's retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma](#), June 2023

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.khrg.org.

Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton)District

