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Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

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Taw Oo District Short Update: SAC troops conducted shelling, causing casualties, and carried out arbitrary arrests, physical violence, and explicit threats in Daw Hpah Hkoh Township (January to March 2025)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Daw Hpah Hkoh (Thandaunggyi) Township, Taw Oo (Toungoo) District, from January to March 2025. On January 15th 2025, State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers conducted indiscriminate shelling into A--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract, after troops from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the People's Defence Forces (PDF) attacked them. The shelling killed a villager, who was a father of three children, in a nearby rubber plantation. After the incident, the SAC soldiers threatened to burn down the houses of local villagers in A--- village if local armed resistance forces attacked them again. On February 14th 2025, the SAC arrested three villagers, including two 12-year-old children, after a skirmish between the SAC against the PDF-KNLA in B--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract. They physically assaulted the adult villager upon arrest. They later released the two children, but villagers believe that the SAC soldiers killed the adult. The soldiers also threatened to burn down the village if attacked again. During the period between February 1st and 19th 2025, the SAC also conducted shelling several times into C--- village, injuring two villagers inside their house, including a 5-year-old child. On February 20th 2025, SAC soldiers conducted shelling into C--- village again, injuring two women who were inside the church compound, and damaging a water tank and two villagers' houses. On March 20th 2025, the SAC conducted shelling into D--- village, injuring a villager inside her house, and damaging four villagers' houses.¹

SAC shelling, arbitrary arrests, and physical violence in P'Saw Loh village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township

- **January 15th 2025: SAC shelling killed a villager in A--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract**

On January 13th and 14th 2025, over 80 soldiers of the State Administration Council (SAC)², from an unknown battalion, temporarily stayed in a monastery in A--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District.

¹ The present document is based on information received from January to March 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. This document combines several received reports with the following KHRG internal log numbers: #25-28-D1, #25-66-D1, #25-98-D1 and #25-99-D1.

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.

On January 15th 2025, at 9:45 am, combined forces of local armed resistance groups, [Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)³ and People's Defence Forces (PDF)⁴, under the command of KNLA Battalion #5] from Taw Oo District, attacked the SAC soldiers staying at the monastery in the village using silent handmade bombs [small, handheld, homemade bombs that are fired using slingshots]. The local armed resistance groups entered the village and attacked the SAC soldiers while in the village. After this, the SAC soldiers from the monastery fired four rounds of mortars into the village and its surrounding areas. It is unknown what kind of mortars the SAC fired. Two mortar shells landed and exploded on a road in the village and damaged electricity wires beside the road.

The other two mortar shells landed and exploded in a rubber plantation outside of the village. A piece of the shrapnel from one of the mortar shells hit a villager's head when he was lying on the ground in the rubber plantation [to take cover from the shelling]. He died on the spot. The name of the deceased villager is E---. He is over 30 years old. He lives in A--- village. His ethnicity is mixed Karen and Bamar. He is a father of three children. [His three children are now staying with their mother in A--- village. Villagers said his three children and their mother are struggling to find income to support themselves as E--- was the breadwinner for the family. He used to work on a rubber plantation before he died.]

After the shelling and fighting, the SAC soldiers arrested three villagers from A--- village. Then, they questioned and interrogated the villagers. After the interrogation, they released the villagers. Before they released the three arrested villagers, they threatened them. A local villager explained [to KHRG]: *"They [SAC soldiers] told us, 'Local armed groups should not shoot us when they stay in the village. If they want to shoot us, they should go outside the village and shoot us. They shoot us when we are in the village. If we shoot them back, it will harm villagers. If they shoot us when we are in the village again, we will burn down villagers' houses."*

On January 15th 2025 after the incident, many villagers fled to nearby forests outside of the village and their plantations. On the evening of January 16th 2025, some elder villagers returned to the village [in order to see how the situation was], but villagers who have family and children remained in their displacement places.

- **February 14th 2025: SAC arbitrarily arrested and beat a villager in B--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract, after a skirmish**

On February 12th 2025, about 100 SAC soldiers from Taw Oo (Toungoo) Town, travelled through a road between Taw Oo Town and Tar Pu (Leik Tho) Town, in Daw Hpah Hkoh Township. They arrested three villagers [that were travelling in Zayet Gyi area]. The villagers are from Zayet Gyi area, Htaw Ta Htoo Township, Taw Oo District. These three villagers are men and [ethnic] Pa'O. [As reported by one of the arrested villagers to KHRG, the SAC brought the villagers with them as they travelled along a road between Taw Oo Town and Tar Pu (Leik Tho) Town.] Later that day, these three villagers escaped, along with an SAC soldier. [The SAC deserter helped the three villagers escape.] The [deserter] SAC soldier brought his gun with him when he escaped.

³ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁴ 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.

Then, the [three] escaped villagers went to 'Ken Ni's Defence Team' [People's Defence Force soldiers based in Ken Ni area, in Daw Hpah Hkoh Township], under the command of KNLA Battalion #5 in Brigade #2 [Taw Oo District], in order to seek protection. The villagers were able to contact their parents and so the 'Ken Ni's Defence Force' sent them back to their parents. It remains unknown what happened to the escaped SAC soldier [after he helped the three villagers escape]. One of the escaped villagers said [to KHRG]: *"The SAC deserter did not come and surrender to any local armed resistance group. We do not know where he [the SAC deserter] went [after they escaped]."*

On February 13th 2025, at 7:30 am, about 100 SAC soldiers arrived at a road near Lay Du Chaung River near F--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract. Then, 'Ken Ni's Defence Force' troops attacked them. Fighting happened. [According to local Karen National Union (KNU)⁵ authorities and villagers from F--- village,] three SAC soldiers died in the fighting. No soldiers from 'Ken Ni's Defence Force' died. The skirmish lasted slightly more than 10 minutes. No villager was killed or injured during the fighting [and no villager property was damaged].

On February 14th 2025, the SAC soldiers went to B--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract and attacked local PDF and KNLA soldiers under the command of KNLA Battalion #5. [Fighting occurred on the outskirts of B--- village.] [According to villagers from B--- village,] no soldiers from the PDF and KNLA died in this attack.

When the SAC soldiers attacked the PDF and KNLA, three villagers were working on a turmeric plantation near the incident place. Later that day after the clash, the SAC arrested these three villagers [and held them in B--- village]. [Local villagers reported that the SAC suspected these villagers were working with local armed resistance groups because they saw them near where the fighting took place.] These villagers are from D--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract. Two of them are 12-year-old boys, and the other one is a 30-year-old man. As two of the arrested villagers are children, a local monk from D--- village went to see the SAC soldiers to request they release the children. In response, the SAC released the children. The monk did not know the 30-year-old villager, so he only requested the SAC release the children. As a result, the 30-year-old villager was not released.

The name of the 30-year-old villager is Saw⁶ G---. He is Karen. He is single. He is just a villager who was taking care of his widowed mother. He was wearing military boots when he worked on the plantation because he needed them to do his work. [Villagers believe that SAC soldiers may have accused him of being a local armed resistance group member because he was wearing military boots.] The monk who asked the SAC soldiers to release the two children reported [to KHRG] that one of the children (who the soldiers arrested) saw SAC soldiers beat Saw G--- when they arrested him. [Local villagers reported that they believe the SAC soldiers killed Saw G--- after they moved him out of B--- village in February 2025, as Saw G--- never returned to the village and no one has heard from him ever since.]

In addition, the SAC soldiers approached villagers and threatened to burn down B--- village if fighting happened again. It is unknown which battalion these SAC soldiers are from. It is unknown what is the name of their battalion commander.

- **February 1st and 20th 2025: SAC shelling injuring four villagers in C--- 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 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.

⁶ Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

During the period between February 1st and 19th 2025, SAC troops from Kon Nit Maing army camp and Shel Tho Maing army camp fired several rounds of 60 mm mortars into P'Saw Loh village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. Kon Nit Maing ('7 miles') army camp and Shel Tho Maing ('13' miles) army camp are located next to Thandaunggyi Town, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township.

One of the mortar shells landed and exploded [unknown date, between February 1st and 19th 2025] in C--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract, and injured two villagers. [C--- village is around a 10-minute motorbike ride away from A--- village, where SAC troops clashed with PDF and KNLA troops on January 15th 2025.] The two injured villagers are father and son. The son is five years old, and his neck was injured by the mortar shrapnel. [It is unknown how serious the father's injuries were.] Their house was also damaged by the shelling. [Both of the injured villagers were in their house when the shell landed in the village.]

On February 19th 2025, the SAC closed a road between Toungoo Town and Thandaunggyi Town [for unknown reasons]. Cars and motorbikes were not allowed to travel on the road. [The SAC reopened the road on February 20th 2025.]

On February 19th 2025, KNLA and PDF soldiers from Brigade #2 attacked an unknown SAC battalion, as they [the SAC soldiers] were returning to their army camp [based in I--- village], using a tripwire landmine. The attack took place on a road between H--- village and I--- village, both located in P'Saw Loh village tract. As a result, fighting happened. The fighting lasted slightly more than 10 minutes. The SAC battalion is based in I--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract. According to a local villager, no villagers were injured during fighting and none of the houses or property of the villagers were damaged.

On February 19th 2025, at night, SAC soldiers from Ba Yin Naung army camp in Thandaunggyi Town fired one round of 120 mm mortar. On the morning of February 20th 2025, they fired another round of 120 mm mortar. From 9:13 pm to 9:16 pm, on February 20th 2025, they fired six more rounds of 120 mm mortars. According to a local villager: *"SAC soldiers from Ba Yin Naung army camp fired mortar rounds. I heard the sound when they fired the mortars, but I did not hear the sound when the mortar shells landed and exploded. Then, I called a villager from P'Saw Loh village tract over the phone. He told me that the mortar shells had landed and exploded in P'Saw Loh village tract."* All seven mortar shells landed and exploded in P'Saw Loh village tract. [It is unknown if these shells caused any damage to civilian property.]

On February 20th 2025, at night, SAC soldiers from Kon Nit Maing army camp fired several rounds of 60 mm mortars. One of the mortar shells landed by a water tank near a church in C--- village, injured two women, and damaged the water tank and two villagers' houses. [The injured women were near the water tank in the church compound when the shell exploded.] According to a local villager: *"SAC soldiers from Kon Nit Maing army camp fired mortar rounds. A villager who lives near the army camp [Kon Nit Maing army camp] told me that he heard the sound when the SAC fired the mortars and when the mortars shells exploded."*

The two injured women are Naw⁷ J--- (aged 52) and Naw K--- (aged 39). Naw K--- was injured on her thigh and head and Naw J--- was injured on her back by the mortar shrapnel. [Both injured women received treatment in the village from other local villagers who have some knowledge of how to treat injuries. It is unknown if they had to pay for their treatment. As of June 19th 2025, it is also unknown if they have recovered from their injuries yet or not.]

The SAC shelling caused fear among local communities and some villagers fled to their plantations.

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



KHRG received these photos from a local villager on February 22nd 2025. On February 20th 2025, SAC soldiers from Kon Nit Maing army camp fired rounds of 60 mm mortars into P'Saw Loh village tract. One of the mortar shells landed on a water tank near a church in C--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract, injuring two women and damaging the water tank and the houses of two villagers. The two photos on the top row show the thigh and head injuries of Naw K---. The photo on the left of the middle row shows the wound on the back of Naw J---. The photo on the right of the middle row shows the water tank, damaged by the mortar explosion. The photo on the left, bottom row, shows a villager's house, also damaged by the SAC shelling.

[Photos: Local villager]

- **March 20th 2025: SAC shelling injured a villager and damaged four villagers' houses in D--- village**

On March 20th 2025, at 11:40 am, SAC soldiers from Than Moe Taung army camp fired one round of 60 mm mortar into D--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract. The mortar shell landed in the foliage of a mango tree near the house of a villager named Ma⁸ L---, in the village, and exploded. The explosion damaged four villagers' houses, including the house of Ma L---. The mortar shrapnel also lightly injured the left hand of Ma L---. Than Moe Taung army camp is located in P'Saw Loh village tract.

⁸ 'Ma' is a Burmese female honorific title used before a person's name.

Ma L--- was in her house when the mortar shell landed and exploded. The roof, kitchen and solar panel of her house were damaged by the explosion of the mortar shell. The other three houses that were hit were only lightly damaged. The shelling did not kill any villagers. However, local villagers were worried that the SAC might conduct shelling again.



KHRG received these photos on March 20th 2025, from a local villager who lives in D--- village, P'Saw Loh village tract, Daw Hpah Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District. On March 20th 2025, at 11:40 am, SAC soldiers from Than Moe Taung army camp fired one round of 60 mm mortar into D-- village. The mortar shell landed in the foliage of a mango tree and exploded. The explosion damaged four villagers' houses, including the house of Ma L---, who was also injured by the mortar shrapnel. The photo on the left of the top row shows the SAC mortar shell on the ground near Ma L---'s house. The photo on the right of the top row shows the roof of Ma L---'s house, damaged by the shelling. The photo on the left of the bottom row shows a solar panel, owned by Ma L---, which was damaged by the mortar shrapnel. [Photos: Local villager]

Further background reading on the situation on physical abuse and arbitrary detention in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [*In the Dark - The crime of enforced disappearance and its impacts on the rural communities of Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup*](#), November 2023.
- [*"Mu Traw District Incident Report: SAC arbitrary arrest, use of villagers as forced navigators and human shields, mistreatment, and looting in Bu Tho Township \(April 2024\)"*](#), January 2025.
- [*"Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: SAC soldiers arbitrarily detained and tortured a villager at a checkpoint in Ler K'Saw Township \(November 2023\)"*](#), January 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.

