



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

October 18, 2013 / KHRG #13-14-NB1

Villagers in Hpapun District relate thoughts on January 2012 ceasefire

This news bulletin describes Bu Tho Township villagers' opinions on the ceasefire's effects in Hpapun District in early 2012. Villagers noted positive changes, such as the cessation of forced labour, but also observed that some concerns remain unresolved. Villagers also reported relying on information disseminated by the Karen National Union to stay abreast of the security situation.¹

In early 2012, after the KNU and Burma government signed a ceasefire agreement,² villagers from seven villages in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District reported to a KHRG community member that they were able to pursue their livelihoods more safely. Villagers expressed support for the ceasefire and peace talks.

According to the villagers, since the ceasefire, human rights violations such as forced labour and arbitrary demands and taxation carried out by Tatmadaw and Border Guard Force (BGF) soldiers³ have stopped or decreased. As one villager said, *"In the beginning of 2012, the movements of the Tatmadaw and BGF have reduced for a little bit because the KNU and KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] operate from Nyah Day Lo to La Htee Th'daw Hta. So, there is no more taxation and forced labour orders by the BGF. We suffered these kinds of abuse in the past a lot. We hope that the KNU and KNLA improve their plans [by continuing in peace talks and participating in the ceasefire]."* Villagers also mentioned that since the ceasefire went into effect, Tatmadaw and BGF soldiers have ceased operations in and around their villages. However, villagers noted that about 100 acres of land confiscated

¹ This News Bulletin was written by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It summarizes information from 10 incident reports received by KHRG in July 2013. In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in eastern Burma, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorized by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's redesigned Website.

² On January 12th 2012 a ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma government officials in Hpa-an Town. The preliminary agreement was based on '11 key points' and was due to be followed by more in-depth talks after 45 days. Negotiators from the two parties met for a 2nd round of talks beginning on 4th April, see "KNU and the Burmese Government Continued State-level Ceasefire Talks," Karen National Union, 4th April 2012 and held a 3rd round of negotiations from 3rd-4th September 2012, see "KNU Delegations Departs for the Third Round Negotiation of Ceasefire with the Burmese Government," Karen National Union, 1st September 2012. For more information on the ceasefire and how it has affected local villagers, see "Safeguarding human rights in a post-ceasefire eastern Burma," KHRG, January 2012 and "Steps towards peace: Local participation in the Karen ceasefire process," KHRG, November 2012.

³ Border Guard Force units reported active in Bu Tho Township by the community member are Battalions #1012, #1013 and #1014.

from different villages by Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalions (LIBs) #434 and #340 in previous years has not yet been returned.

Villagers in Bu Tho Township also said they rely on KNU members and KNLA soldiers for support, including information about security developments. Villagers feel that they can travel and work freely because the territory is under KNU control. As such, they feel notably safer. However, by relying on the KNU for information, some villagers were accused of affiliation with the KNU by the BGF, resulting in fines to some.

Villagers are also worried about the situation's stability because of the area BGF's close cooperation with the Burma government, and they are afraid that the BGF and Tatmadaw will resume operations in their village again one day. Villagers expressed that if the ceasefire fails, their lives will be more difficult because they live among these armed groups.

Further background reading on the situation in Hpapun District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Forced labour and indiscriminate firing in Hpapun District, June and July 2012," (October 2013)
- "Mining development damages farms and irrigation infrastructure in Hpapun District," (August 2013)
- "Incident Report: BGF #1014 Corporal Maw Nay Say violent abuse and extortion of villager in Hpapun District, November 2012," (August 2013)
- "Violent abuse and forced labour in Bu Tho Township, November and December," (July 2013)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Dwe Lo Township, March 2012 to March 2013," (July 2013)

