



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Situation Update

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Hpapun and Hpa-an Situation Update: Bu Tho and Hlaingbwe townships, April to May 2013

This Situation Update describes events occurring in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District and Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District during the period between April and May 2013, including, civilian injuries and theft.

- *BGF Sergeant Saw Day Day injured a villager and her baby by shooting a grenade launcher directly at them in their home in January 2013.*
- *After villagers evacuated from their homes due to the construction of Hatgyi Dam, BGF Battalion #1014 soldiers removed posts from the walls of villagers' homes and sold the posts for profit.*
- *Two babies suffered injuries from shrapnel during fighting between the BGF and DKBA in April 2013.*

This Situation Update was initially published in the Appendix of KHRG's in-depth report, [Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire.](#)

Situation Update | Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District and Hlaingbwe Township, Hpa-an District (April to May 2013)

The following Situation Update was received by KHRG in July 2013. It was written by a community member in Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This report was received along with other information from Hpapun District, including one short update, five incident reports, 12 interviews and 38 photographs.²

In this report I am going to write about the incidents that happened from April 27th 2013 to May 25th 2013. The places that incidents took place were A--- village, Ba Zun Myaung village tract, Bu Tho Township in Mu Traw [Hpapun] District, and the other one took

¹ KHRG trains community members in eastern Burma to document individual human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing situation updates, community members are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area.

² 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 Website.

place in B--- section, Myaing Gyi Ngu, a special area, Son Nant Tha Myaing Shwe Myo Daw, Hlaingbwe [Lu Pleh] Township, Hpa-an District in 7th brigade.

The human rights abuses happened in A--- village, Ba Zun Myaung village tract, Bu Tho Township in Mu Traw District. Ma C---, who is 23 years old, and her son, Maung D---, who is one year and six months old, were injured because of a BGF (Border Guard Force)³ grenade launcher. Also, the members of the BGF troops dislodged the posts and walls from the houses in A--- village that people did not live in and sold them. The other one is about Naw E---, who is one year old, and her little brother, Saw F---, who is 20 days old, who were injured because of the fighting between the DKBA (Democratic Karen Buddhist Army)⁴ and the BGF.

People who caused these incidents were the DKBA troops led by Bo [officer] Bee and BGF troops led by Major Saw Chit Thu⁵ and Major Saw Maung Chit⁶ and they committed the human right abuses. The reason that caused the human rights abuse is because some of the leaders of the DKBA and the BGF wanted to control the Myaing Gyi Ngu, which is a special [strategic] area, and their subordinates did not have enough salary.

The incidents happened like this. First of all I have to talk about the incident that happened in A--- village, on January 15th 2013, at noontime. Sergeant Saw Day Day, who was drunk, came into the house of Ma C--- (24 years old) when she was breast-feeding her child, and asked her if there was any gas and she answered that there was no gas. Then, Saw Day Day asked Ma C--- if he should shoot her and turned the head of a M-79 gun [grenade launcher] and its ammunition, a 40 mm grenade, went toward her

³ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry or light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District," KHRG, June 2009.

⁴ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military Government in Burma at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "Inside the DKBA," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity

⁵ Maung Chit Thu, commonly referred to as Chit Thu, was the operations commander of Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) Battalion #999 prior to the DKBA transformation into the Tatmadaw Border Guard Force, which began in September 2010. His role has grown considerably since the transformation, and he is now second in command of Tatmadaw BGF forces, overseeing BGF battalions #1017, #1018, #1019 and #1012 based in Ko Ko, Hpa-an District. Abuses committed by Maung Chit Thu have been cited in previous KHRG reports, including ordering the forcible relocation of villagers from eight villages in Lu Pleh Township in July 2011, while acting as a Border Guard commander, see, "Pa'an Situation Update: June to August 2011," KHRG, October 2011. For more information on the DKBA / Border Guard transformation, see, for example: "Border Guard Forces of South-East Command formed in Paingkyon of Kayin State," *New Light of Myanmar*, August 22nd 2010; and "Border Guard Force formed at Atwinkwinkalay region, Myawaddy Township, Kayin State," *New Light of Myanmar*, August 25th 2010.

⁶ Commander Maung Chit, also referred to as Maw Hsee, is the commander for Tatmadaw Border Guard Force (BGF) battalion #1014 in Hpapun District. Maung Chit is not to be confused with Maung Chit Thu (typically referred to as Chit Thu), who is a senior level BGF commander overseeing battalions #1017, #1018, #1019 and #1020 in Ko Ko, Hpa-an District.

and cocked it and then it fired in a few seconds, and hit the calf of Ma C--- and her son who is one year and six months years old, who was sitting on her leg. The grenade did not explode but it injured Ma C--- along her calf and injured the waist of her son. They sought treatment in Myaing Gyi Ngu Hospital and she received six stitches for her injuries and her son received three for his. Their medical fees cost 250,000 kyat (US \$256.68)⁷ but the BGF Yae Thwe gave her only 100,000 kyat (US \$102.67).

Again [another incident], in A--- village, Sergeant Saw Day Day and his comrades from BGF dislodged the posts and walls from houses that people do not live in and sold them and then [took] the money for their own use. Sergeant Saw Day Day and his comrades who are the subordinates of Commander Yae Thwe under control of BGF Battalion Commander, Major Saw Chit, Battalion #1014, which is based in A--- village, dislodged the posts and walls from the houses that people do not live in and transported it and sold it in Ka Ma Maw. The houses that the BGF dislodged are not ownerless houses. The owners are those who cannot labour for the forced labour [demands] of the BGF anymore and have moved to Mae Lah Oo refugee camp or Myaing Gyi Ngu to evacuate from [evade] the risk, damage and flooding of the Hatgyi Dam, the dam that will destroy the whole village if it is built and also for other reasons. But these people come back to the village very often. The BGF dislodges the [the posts from] houses when there are no owners of the houses [present].

Around the same time, another incident of theft and looting happened in A--- village by the same old man, Saw Day Day, a subordinate of Commander Yae Thwe. [Saw Day Day] plucked as many dog fruit as he wanted from the trees and then sold it in Ka Ma Maw city for his own profit. Some of the owners of the dog fruit [trees] are away from their plantations and some of them have moved to other places.

I also want to report about the two children who were injured because of the fighting that happened in Lin Lon Myaing section in Myaing Gyi Ngu city. The two children, who were injured in the fighting on April 27th 2013, were the son and daughter of U G--- and Naw H---, who are living in B--- section in Myaing Gyi Ngu city. The little girl's name is Naw E--- and she is one year and six months old. The little boy is named Saw F--- and he is a newborn baby who is only 20 days old. A piece of shrapnel from a bomb [grenade] struck and injured the head of the girl and another piece of shrapnel struck through the ear of the little girl, creating a hole in one of her ears. Two pieces of shrapnel from the bomb also hit the back of the little girl. The face of Saw F--- was grazed by the shrapnel from the bomb and shrapnel hit his calf, creating a hole in his calf. This is the story of the children who were injured in the fighting in Myain Gyi Ngu.

These kinds of human rights abuses will happen in the future because the Thein Sein Government and his subordinate staff and privates on the frontline do not have good communication. The subordinates and soldiers of U Thein Sein [the president of Burma] do not follow what U Thein Sein is saying.

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

- *Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response in Southeast Myanmar since the 2012 ceasefire*, (May 2014)
- "Ongoing militarisation prevents Lu Thaw Township IDPs from returning home," (February 2014)

⁷ As of January 13th 2014, all conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate of 987 kyat to the US \$1.

- “Hpapun Interview: Saw B---, February 2013,” (February 2014)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to October 2013,” (February 2014)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, March to May 2013,” (December 2013)

