



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Tatmadaw artillery fire directed at villagers working on hill field farms in Hpapun District, February 2015

This News Bulletin describes event occurring in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District in February 2015. On February 17th 2015, Burma/Myanmar Tatmadaw troops indiscriminately fired artillery shells towards a location where villagers were clearing vegetation for hill field farming in Saw Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township. Again, on February 22nd 2015, villagers reported that Tatmadaw troops fired shells toward villagers preparing hill fields for farming in Hkay Hpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township. Both Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalions (LIB) #543 and #410 are based nearby, however villagers are uncertain which battalion fired the shells. Although no villagers were injured, they report being afraid to continue clearing hill fields for planting season.

Hill field farming is one of the key livelihood activities for villagers in Lu Thaw Township, Hpapun District. Every year, villagers clear vegetation, such as trees and bamboo, in forest areas in order to create space for their hill field farms.

On February 17th 2015, at 1:00 pm, Burma/Myanmar Tatmadaw troops indiscriminately fired artillery shells from Maw Law Koh hill top in the direction of villagers cutting down trees to clear their hill field farms in Saw Muh Plaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township.

Again, on February 22nd 2015, at 2:00 pm, Burma/Myanmar Tatmadaw troops twice shelled heavy weapons in the direction of villagers cutting down trees for hill field farms in Hkay Hpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township.

Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)¹ #543, under the control of Military Operations Command (MOC)² #5, is based at Khaw Thaw Hkoh military camp. Tatmadaw LIB #410, led by Battalion Commander Win Min Oo, is under the control of MOC #8 and is based at Wah Klay Lu camp. Both Tatmadaw camps are located near Saw Muh Plaw and Hkay Hpoo village tracts. Villagers reported that it was one of the Tatmadaw battalions above which fired heavy weapons towards the location where villagers were clearing hill field farms.

Villagers fled from the area where shelling occurred and no villagers were injured. However, Tatmadaw shelling near areas where villagers earn their livelihoods has

¹ Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprised of 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

² Military Operations Command. Comprised of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each.

created insecurity among villagers. Currently, the villagers do not dare to cut down trees near their villages for hill field farming.

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

- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2013,” (February 2015)
- “Ongoing militarisation of southeastern Burma/Myanmar, since the January 2012 ceasefire agreement between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar government,” (February 2015)
- “Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, October 2014,” (February 2015)
- “Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1013 Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw steals villagers’ livestock,” (January 2015)
- “Hpapun Incident Report: Landmine incident in Lu Thaw Township, May 2013,” (December 2014)

Tatmadaw artillery fire locations

