



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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Over a hundred villagers cross into Thailand following joint SPDC and DKBA attacks in Dooplaya District

On March 8th 2007 State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Light Infantry Division (LID) #22 arriving from their base at Ghaw Lay in joint operation with Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) Battalions #907 and #906 attacked Kler Law Kyeh village along with the neighbouring Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) Company #3 base, which both lie in eastern Kawkaeik township, Dooplaya District. On approach to the KNLA base, SPDC and DKBA soldiers launched mortars and fired their guns into Kler Law Kyeh village. In response, local villagers have fled the area and approximately 140 of them have crossed into Thailand north of the town of Umphang with more expected to continue arriving.

In late February 2007, KNLA Company #3 soldiers attacked DKBA forces, killing one DKBA commander in the Kler Law Kyeh area of Kawkaeik township, Dooplaya District. The March 8th attack on the KNLA camp and nearby village of Kler Law Kyeh reportedly comes as a reprisal measure taken in response to the earlier KNLA attack. In this incident, SPDC forces from LID #22 operating out of Ghaw Lay camp combined with DKBA Battalions #907 and 906 to conduct joint operations.

Kler Law Kyeh village lies along the eastern edge of Dooplaya District near the Thai-Burma border about 36 kilometres south from the Burmese town of Myawaddi. The Kler Law Kyeh camp houses KNLA Company #3 operating under the command of Battalion #201, which provides protection to the local Kler Law Kyeh community. The Kler Law Kyeh area covers a larger region containing an additional eight villages. These are Kler Law Kyeh village, Maw Kee/Maw Poh Gkloh, Gkaw Hser, Gk'Law Ghaw, Gk'Neh Lay, Htee Ther Leh, Khaw Poh Kee and Paw Bu Lah Htah. Unlike Kler Law Kyeh, these other villages are under partial control of SPDC and DKBA forces which regularly make demands on the inhabitants. This area has also been the site of previous SPDC attacks against civilian communities. In January 2005, for instance, SPDC forces attacked civilians at Gk'Law Ghaw (sometimes spelled Kah Law Ghaw) village with mortar fire and rocket-propelled grenades while they were celebrating the Karen New Year festival. In this attack hundreds of villagers fled to the Thai-Burma border but were initially blocked from taking refuge on the Thai side by local Thai soldiers.¹

The most recent attack began at around 5:00 in the morning of Thursday, March 8th when the SPDC and DKBA forces arrived at Kler Law Kyeh, launching mortars and firing their

¹ SPDC Violates the Ceasefire During Karen New Year Celebrations; the Attack on Kah Law Ghaw Village, Dooplaya District, Karen Human Rights Group, January 2005 (KHRG #2005-B1).

guns into both the KNLA base and the village. The KNLA soldiers returned fire and moved to block SPDC and DKBA advances into the village proper. Although neither side took any casualties during the fighting, the joint SPDC and DKBA forces subsequently pulled back from engagement with the KNLA at Kler Law Kyeh. Local villagers, however, have said that they suspect the SPDC has plans to attack Kler Law Kyeh again.

As a consequence of this attack, villagers from Kler Law Kyeh fled the area and 141 of them made the one-hour walk east to the Thai-Burma border where they crossed over to the Thai side. These villagers are now taking refuge in a monastery at the Thai Karen village of Meh Klaw Kee near the town of Umphang while they follow developments at Kler Law Kyeh. Speaking on the subject of the new arrivals, KNLA Company #3 Commander Saw Bu Paw said, "*It would be a good idea if organisations or individuals could give relief support to the displaced villagers.*" Although the new arrival population at Meh Klaw Kee was initially 141, this number will likely increase should the SPDC and DKBA renew attacks against Kler Law Kyeh, particularly if people from the nearby villages begin to leave as well.

Additional background information regarding the human rights situation in the Kler Law Kyeh area and in Dooplaya District can be found in the following previously published KHRG reports:

- *SPDC Violates the Ceasefire During Karen New Year Celebrations; the Attack on Kah Law Ghaw Village, Dooplaya District*, Karen Human Rights Group, January 2005 (KHRG #2005-B1)
- *State repression and the creation of poverty in southern Karen State*, Karen Human Rights Group, February 2007 (KHRG #2007-F2)
- *Setting Up the Systems of Repression: The progressive regimentation of civilian life in Dooplaya District*, September 2006 (KHRG #2006-04)

Recent photos from the area are presented in *KHRG Photo Gallery 2006* (KHRG #2006-P1, November 2006). These and other KHRG reports and maps of the region can be found on the KHRG web site at <http://www.khrg.org>.



