



Incident Report

February 15th, 2021 / KHRG # 20-167-I1

Taw Oo District Incident Report: *Rape case in Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, August 2020*

This Incident Report describes an incident that occurred in T--- village, K--- village tract,¹ Daw Hpa Hkoh [Thandaunggyi] Township, Taw Oo [Toungoo] District. On August 12th 2020, a 75-year-old woman was raped by a fellow villager who snuck into her house during the night. The case was investigated by the village authorities and eventually referred to the Karen National Union (KNU).² The local authorities arrested the perpetrator on November 10th 2020, but he was released in December due to lack of evidence. The release of the perpetrator has left the survivor particularly vulnerable to retaliation and/or further abuse since he previously threatened to return to her house. The survivor has not benefitted from counselling services to overcome her trauma.³

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Rape
Date of Incident(s)	August 12 th 2020
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	T--- village, K--- village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

Victim Information	
Name	Naw ⁴ L---
Age	75
Sex	Female
Nationality	Karen
Family status	Widow
Religion	Christian
Village	T--- village

¹ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

² 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 in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.

³ The present document is based on information received in December 2020. 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.

⁴ Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

Perpetrator Information (Civilians)		
Name(s)	Occupation	Village
Unknown	Unknown	T--- village, K--- village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township, Taw Oo District

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

A KHRG researcher interviewed the survivor on September 5th 2020.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The source experienced this incident first hand.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.

On August 12th 2020, Naw L---, a 75-year old widow from T--- village, K--- village tract, Daw Hpa Hkoh Township was raped by a fellow villager who snuck into her house between 12 am and 1 am.

The survivor recounted the incident to KHRG: *“He climbed from the ground up through a hole in the floor. [...] I was trying to look at his face, but he did not show his face [it was dark and she could not find her torch (flashlight)]. I could hear his voice. [...] He grabbed my hands and shut my mouth with his hand. I almost died. [...] I was shouting [for help], but he was shutting my mouth [with his hand]. It was about midnight, and everyone was fast asleep. So, even if I could have shouted out loud, the villagers might not have heard me.”*

The next morning, Naw L--- came to suspect a young man who used to come to her house to drink tea and chew betel nut. As she explained: *“After the incident, he stopped coming [to my house]. I knew it right away [that he was the perpetrator]. [...] He would always call me ‘Hpee Hpee’ [grandma]. Since the incident, he does not dare to call me [grandma] anymore. I think it was that man because many people talked about the unlawful acts he committed, such as stealing.”*

She first reported the case to a local church leader, and eventually took the matter to the village head, who promised to investigate the case [KHRG was not able to establish the exact dates]. He interrogated both the survivor and perpetrator during separate meetings and recorded their statements. Although the perpetrator denied raping Naw L---, she later recognised his voice after listening to the audio statement he gave to the village head. Local leaders then asked the village tract administrator whether they could report the case further [to higher authorities], to which he replied: *“If you do report the case further, tell me [keep me informed].”*

After hearing that the case was referred to the village tract leader, the perpetrator showed up in front the village head’s house armed with a machete [KHRG was not able to establish the exact date]. Neither the village head nor his family were home at the time. Local villagers then gathered around the perpetrator, until his father eventually arrived at the scene and brought him back to their house. After this incident, the village head took his wife and children to another village out of concern for their safety.

In his [the village head's] absence, the deputy village head held a meeting with local leaders to decide whether this case should be reported to the Myanmar Police Force or to P'Doh⁵ Jackson Htun [a KNU official]. They decided to report it to the KNU authorities. P'Doh Jackson Htun arrived at the village on September 4th 2020 to investigate the case. The local authorities eventually arrested the perpetrator on November 10th 2020.

The survivor now hopes that justice will be served, and [even though the perpetrator was arrested, she] lives in constant fear of retaliation from the perpetrator: "*During the incident, he told me he would come again. After the incident, I do not feel safe enough to sleep in my house alone anymore.*" She did not benefit from counselling services to overcome her trauma.

Before this incident, Naw L--- had already experienced sexual violence in the past. She was once raped by an escaped Tatmadaw⁶ deserter while she was living in her late husband's village [she does not remember the exact date, but she told KHRG that she lived there from 1986 to 1997]. This deserter was arrested by the head of the local militia and taken to the village, where he was violently slapped in the face until he bled. However, it is likely that justice has not been served regarding this case, as the survivor does not seem to know whether further action was taken against him.

Update from a KHRG researcher, February 12th 2020: The local authorities released the perpetrator in December [KHRG was not able to establish the exact date] due to lack of evidence and witnesses. He is now back in the village, which leaves the survivor particularly vulnerable to retaliation and further abuses.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.

The victim allowed KHRG to use this information.

⁵ P'doh is a title meaning 'governor' or 'minister' within the government or military.

⁶ Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

Further background reading on sexual violence in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: Child rape in Noh T’Kaw Township, November 2020”](#), January 2021.
- [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: Sexual violence \(rape\) in Noh T’Kaw Township, September 2020”](#), November 2020.
- [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: Child rape case in Noh T’Kaw Township, July 2020”](#), November 2020.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Myanmar. 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.

Taw Oo (Toungoo) District

