



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

## Incident Report

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2025 / KHRG # 25-26-I1

## Mu Traw District Incident Report: A landmine explosion killed a villager in Dwe Lo Township (December 2024)

*This Incident Report describes events occurring in Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, in December 2024. On December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024, a villager named Saw R---, who was over 40 years old and living in O--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, was killed by a landmine explosion near H-- bridge, in Thwah Hkoh Loh area, while he was foraging for fruits to earn an income. He was accompanied by his two sons, who waited on the road while he went to harvest. The landmine explosion caused severe injuries to his face and chest, resulting in his immediate death. It is unclear which armed group planted the landmine. Despite local Karen National Union (KNU) authorities warning villagers about landmine contamination in the area, he felt compelled to go harvest fruits due to severe food shortages. As O--- village is located near an SAC army camp, many farmers are afraid of working on the farms near the road, creating an increasing difficulty to secure their livelihood.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Landmine incident [causing death]
Date of Incident(s)	December 23 <sup>rd</sup> 2024
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	A--- place, near H--- bridge, situated in Thwah Hkoh Loh area, Ma Htaw village tract <sup>2</sup> , Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District

Victim Information	
Name	Saw <sup>3</sup> R---
Age	over 40 years old
Gender	Man
Ethnicity	Karen
Marital Status	Married

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in January 2025. It was provided by a community member in Mu Traw 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.

<sup>2</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

<sup>3</sup> ‘Saw’ is a S’gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Religion</b>	Buddhist
<b>Position</b>	Villager
<b>Village</b>	O--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District

<b>Perpetrator Information (Armed Actors)</b>				
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Rank</b>	<b>Unit</b>	<b>Base</b>	<b>Commander's Name</b>
Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown	Unknown

## **Part 2 - Information Quality**

### **1. Explain in detail how this information was collected.**

On January 3<sup>rd</sup> 2025, a field researcher from the Karen Human Rights Group [KHRG] conducted an interview with Naw<sup>4</sup> K--- [the wife of the victim] who knows about the landmine incident that happened to her husband. On the same day, the KHRG field researcher conducted an interview with Saw M---, who is the village head of O--- village.

### **2. Explain how the source verified this information.**

The KHRG field researcher verified this information by asking Saw R---'s wife, Naw K---, and Saw M---, the village head from O--- village.

## **Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident**

### **Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.**

On December 23<sup>rd</sup> 2024, at 10 am, Saw R--- (over 40 years old), from O--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, was injured and killed by a landmine at A--- place, near H--- bridge, situated in Thwah Hkoh Loh area, Ma Htaw village tract, while he was foraging for 'Daw Ka Tha' [the fruit of *Oroxylum indicum* or Indian trumpet tree] to be able to sell it for money to buy rice.

On the day of the landmine incident, Saw R--- went together with his two sons [names and exact ages unknown; between 6 and 11 years old] and asked them to wait for him on the road while he was going to harvest 'Daw Ka Tha' next to a hut where the State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>5</sup> soldiers used to be based. [The SAC soldiers left in November 2024, after Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>6</sup> soldiers seized the camp.]

Saw R--- went under the [stilted] hut as there was a box under it, and when he opened the box, the landmine exploded and hit him [the type of landmine is unknown]. With the explosion of the landmine, the gunpowder covered and burned his face, which turned completely black from the

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

<sup>5</sup> The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Burma/Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup.

<sup>6</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

explosion, and [the blast] hit his chest, killing him on the spot. People do not know whether this landmine was planted by the KNLA or the SAC.

His two children realised that their father was struck by a landmine because [they heard and saw the explosion and] he did not respond when they called out his name. They then returned home, filled with fear and sadness. They reached their hut [at the displacement site situated in U--- village, Ma Htaw village tract], but they did not tell their mother what had happened to their father [likely as they were traumatised]. As the evening approached, their mother asked them why their father had not returned. They then told her what had happened to him.

As it was getting dark, villagers did not dare to look for Saw R--- because they were concerned about the risk of landmines [in the area]. On December 24<sup>th</sup> 2024, villagers [from O--- village] asked the [Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>7</sup>] local leaders to go with them [to retrieve Saw R---] and they buried the body of [Saw R---] in a pit which had been dug by the SAC soldiers previously based there.

Saw R--- had eight children in total: four sons and four daughters. His children are young, and he had struggled to obtain enough produce from hill farming, resulting in financial difficulties. Because of it, he was harvesting 'Daw Ka Tha' in fear, in landmine contaminated areas: Despite local KNU authorities had given [verbal] warnings [to villagers about the landmine contamination in these areas], he felt compelled to search for 'Daw Ka Tha' due to severe food shortages, regardless of the risks. The family had secured their livelihood by working on a hill farm, but the farm did not produce enough rice. As a result, they had faced difficulties each year in obtaining rice. With no regular income, they had struggled to purchase basic foodstuffs such as rice, salt, and sweet powder.

The family [of Saw R---] had only a box of rice left when he died. If that box were empty, it would become a big problem for his family. Naw K--- explained: *"We do not have things [foodstuff] to buy for the house. We run out of money. We will not get to eat with the death of my husband. [...] With the death of my husband, I will have to work for my children. My children are young. I cannot work [easily] and I don't know how to work, as my children are young, and it's not easy for me to go [somewhere else and work]."*

After Saw R--- passed away, his family has returned to live with Naw K---'s elderly mother in U--- village area, in the forest, in Ma Htaw village tract. Now, there are no adult men in the family to secure their livelihood, so it has become a concern and a big problem for Naw K---. With the death of her husband, she desperately needs help, but her siblings are also poor and unable to assist her. Naw K--- explained: *"We do not dare to work on our farmland because it is close to the Burma Army camp. [...] No one has enough to eat. They [villagers] are struggling. Now, the price for a bag of rice is 180,000 kyats [85.74 USD]<sup>8</sup>. If they [villages] cannot afford the rice, they borrow it. We are also afraid to borrow it [rice] from other people because no one has it [rice]. Now, villages are displacing, and they do not have it [rice]."* The children of Naw K--- are still too young to work.

After the death of Saw R---, the family has not received support from local leaders and organisations [as of January 2025]. Regarding this, Naw K--- explained: *"We face difficulties, and we cannot work or do anything. We will be happy if people come and help us. We live*

<sup>7</sup> 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 (NCA) in 2015, following the 2021 coup staged by Burma Army leaders, the KNU officially stated that the NCA has become void.

<sup>8</sup> All conversion estimates for Kyat in this report are based on the official market rate as of February 26<sup>th</sup> 2025 at 1 USD = 2,099.22 MMK, conversion rate available at <https://www.xe.com/currencyconverter>

*[here] and we cannot work on anything.”*

The villagers in O--- village primarily raise cows, buffaloes, pigs, and chickens, and also engage in hill farming as their main sources of livelihood. Before the SAC seized power [military coup in February 2021], most villagers lived as loggers and bamboo harvesters, selling them for income. However, after the [2021] coup, they could no longer continue these activities and had to make a living as farmers. O--- village is located near an SAC soldiers’ [army] camp in Ma Htaw village tract. Because of this proximity, farmers are afraid to work on farms that are close to the road.



This photo was sent on January 4<sup>th</sup> 2025 by a family member of the victim from U--- village, Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, Mu Traw District. This photo shows Saw R---, a villager who was killed on the spot by a landmine explosion while he was harvesting fruits at A--- place, near H--- bridge, situated in Thwah Hkoh Loh area, Ma Htaw village, Dwe Lo Township. *[Photo: Local villager]*

## **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’s wife, Naw K---, and O---’s village head gave permission to use the information.

Further background reading on the situation on landmines in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- KHRG, [\*Danger Beneath Our Feet - Landmine contamination in Southeast Burma and its impacts on villagers since the 2021 coup\*](#), December 2023.
- KHRG, [\*“Dooplaya District Situation Update: SAC shelling and air strikes causing 24 civilian casualties and damaging civilian property; extensive house burning and use of human shields; and a landmine explosion, in Dooplaya District \(October to December 2023\)”\*](#), February 2025.
- KHRG, [\*“Mergui-Tavoy District Short Update: Landmine explosions injured three villagers and affected villagers’ livelihoods, and KTLA shot and injured one villager, in K’Ser Doh Township \(October to December 2023\)”\*](#), January 2025.
- KHRG, [\*“Mu Traw District Incident Report: A villager stepped on landmine planted by the SAC in Lu Thaw Township, January 2024.”\*](#), December 2024.

### **About KHRG**

Founded in 1992, Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Burma. 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](http://www.khrq.org).



