



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

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Mu Traw District Short Update: A landmine explosion killed one monk and left another injured in Bu Tho Township (January 2025)

This Short Update describes events occurring in Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, in January 2025. On January 11th 2025, two monks named U R--- and U A---, who carried out their monastic services in K--- village, Meh Pree Hkee village tract, Bu Tho Township, were hit by a landmine explosion on Ler Kwel road, between Meh Pree village tract (Bu Tho Township) and H--- village (Lay Hpoh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township). Due to the landmine explosion, U R--- was killed while U A--- had to be hospitalised in Yangon. Local Karen National Union (KNU) authorities had given a verbal warning to villagers to avoid the road due to their planting of landmines in the area. The two monks, having travelled safely on that same road before, took their usual route and were struck by the landmine. The conflict between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the State Administration Council (SAC) soldiers also escalated in the area, impacting villagers' lives and livelihoods. Villagers continue to be warned about landmine contamination verbally by the KNU, without any physical signs posted.¹

On January 11th 2025, two monks serving at a monastery in K--- village, Meh Pree village tract², Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District, were hit by a landmine [planted by the Karen National Union (KNU)³] on Ler Kwel road, located between Meh Pree village tract (Bu Tho Township) and H--- village (in Lay Hpoh Hta village tract, Dwe Lo Township). One of the monks was U⁴ R--- (30 years old), from N--- village, Htee Th'Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township. The other monk named U A--- (25 years old) is from E--- village, Hpawh Ghaw village tract, Hpa-an Township, Doo Tha Htoo District. U R--- had been serving as a monk for ten years, while U A--- has been serving for one year. Both monks carried out their monastic services in K--- village.

¹ The present document is based on information received in February 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.

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

³ 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.

⁴ 'U' is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

Due to the landmine explosion, U R--- was killed on the spot. As for U A---, he was hospitalised in Yangon [at a hospital administered by the State Administration Council (SAC)]⁵. There is no further information [obtained by KHRG] about U A--- after he was hospitalised in Yangon.

Prior to the incident, local Karen National Union (KNU) leaders, including Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁶ members, the village head administrator, and the security head of T--- village tract, had issued a [verbal] warning to all villagers [in the area]. They announced a 15-day notice before planting landmines along Ler Kwel road and the surrounding areas of H--- village. Villagers were instructed to use an alternative road. After this warning period, the KNU local leaders proceeded to plant the landmines [in the areas surrounding H--- village, including along the road].

Local villagers do not go to the restricted road anymore after the local KNU leaders had warned them. However, believing there would be no problem to take the restricted road to K'Ma Moh Town, the two monks had departed from K--- village along Ler Kwel road. They had used that restricted road twice to go to K'Ma Moh Town before the landmines were planted. When they were about to depart this time, people [K--- villagers] told them not to go on that road [because landmines were planted there]. They [the two monks] responded that it was okay and then they went on [that road]. On the same day they travelled [January 11th 2025], [they] were hit by the landmine and killed and injured.

[As reported to KHRG by the KNU head of security for T--- village tract,] on the day that local [KNU] leaders planted landmines, they did not inform villagers because they thought it was not necessary to inform villagers again as they had already announced a 15-day notice. [Reportedly,] the local KNU leaders planted landmines to protect themselves and civilians from invasion of SAC soldiers, as the Meh Pree village tract area is located near K'Ma Moh Town [where SAC soldiers are based].

After January 2025, the conflict between KNLA combined forces and SAC soldiers has also escalated in the area. The situation has made traveling, living, and working more challenging for villagers compared to previous years.

Landmine locations are not marked [with signs], and only verbal warnings have been given to villagers regarding areas contaminated with landmines. Additionally, villagers in the area have never received Mine Risk Education (MRE) training.

⁵ The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 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.

⁶ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

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

- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: A landmine explosion killed a villager in Dwe Lo Township \(December 2024\)".](#) March 2025.
- ["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.
- ["Mu Traw District Incident Report: A villager stepped on landmine planted by the SAC in Lu Thaw Township, January 2024.".](#) December 2024.
- [*Danger Beneath Our Feet - Landmine contamination in Southeast Burma and its impacts on villagers since the 2021 coup*](#), December 2023.

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.

