



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Papun Incident Reports: November 2010 to January 2011

This report contains 12 incident reports written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by 12 different villagers living in hiding sites in Lu Thaw Township, Papun District between November 2010 and January 2011.¹ The twelve villagers described human rights concerns for civilians prior to and during displacement to their current hiding sites, including: deliberate firing of mortars and small arms into civilian areas; burning and destruction of houses, food and food preparation equipment; theft and looting of villagers' animals and possessions; and use of landmines by the Tatmadaw, non-state armed groups, and local gher der 'home guard' groups in civilian areas, resulting in at least one civilian death and two civilian injuries. The reports register villagers' serious concerns about food security in hiding areas beyond Tatmadaw control, caused by effective limits on access to arable land due to the risk of attack when villagers cultivating land proximate to Tatmadaw camps, depletion of soil fertility in cultivable areas, and a drought during the 2010 rainy season which triggered widespread paddy crop failure.² To address the threat of Tatmadaw attacks targeting villagers, their food stores and livelihoods activities, villagers reported that they form gher der groups to monitor and communicate Tatmadaw activity; utilise early-warning systems; and communicate amongst themselves and with non-state armed groups to share information about Tatmadaw troop movements. Two villagers stated that the deployment of landmines by gher der groups and KNLA soldiers prevents access to civilian areas by Tatmadaw troops and facilitates security for villagers to pursue their agricultural activities. Another villager described how his community maintained communal agricultural projects to support families at risk from food shortages. These reports were received by KHRG in May 2011, along with other information concerning the situation in Papun District, including 11 other incident reports, 25 interviews, 137 photographs and a general update on the situation in Lu Thaw Township.³

¹ KHRG incident reports are written or gathered by local villagers who have been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma to document human rights abuses using a standardised reporting format; conduct interviews with other villagers; and write general updates on the situation in areas with which they are familiar. When writing incident reports, villagers are encouraged to document abuses they consider important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

² For a detailed explanation of the factors contributing to perennial food insecurity, and the 2011 food crisis, in Lu Thaw Township, see: *Acute food shortages threatening 8,885 villagers in 118 villages across northern Papun District*, KHRG, May 2011.

³ When these documents have been processed and translated by KHRG and when sufficient information has been compiled and analysed, a full Field Report on the situation in Papun District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Lu Thaw Township, Papun District can be found in the recent Thematic Reports: *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State*, KHRG, August 2010; and *Acute food shortages threatening 8,885 villagers in 118 villages across northern Papun District*, KHRG, May 2011.

Incident report | Da--- village, Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (November 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw We---, a 34-year-old hill field farmer and head of Da--- village in Kay Bpoo village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw We---

Age: 34 years old

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill field farmer

Position: Village head

On November 2nd 2010, I met with the Da--- village head, whose name is Saw We---. He is 34 years old and lives in Kay Bpoo village tract. Saw We--- reported:

"In 2010, we never had to flee from the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw]. In the past we had to flee, and slept in the forest in the rainy season and in the dry season. We didn't have food, so we had to listen [monitor Tatmadaw activity] and steal our rice and things back [after fleeing]. We did not dare to make a light, and walked blindly. Now, the SPDC Army is located [based] in T'Ler Ker Koh in Kay Bpoo village tract, and it takes one and a half hours to get to our village. The people who take security always warn us that we have to be careful and keep an eye on our farms, and leave nothing [at the farms]. They warned us that they [the Tatmadaw] would put ka thi ['medicine', in this context likely implying poisoning of food supplies]. Nothing happened, but we always had to be careful. This year [in 2010], because it was dry, the civilians had to face a food shortage. Not only in my village but also other villages which are near my village complained about food shortages. I hope that our leaders will make an arrangement for us in any way they can. That is what I wanted to report."

Saw We--- (male, 34), Da--- village head, Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(November 2010)

Incident report | Ko--- village, Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (November 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Hs---, 51, who was the head of See Day village, Lu Thaw Township, before he fled to a hiding site at Ko--- village in Kay Bpoo village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Hs---

Age: 51

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Position: Village head

On November 2nd 2010, I met with a village head, Saw Hs---. He is 51 years old and lives in Kay Bpoo village tract. The village head reported:

"Since I fled from my village, See Day, in 1995 I have never had a chance to go back and stay in my village. I always have to face food shortages every year, because there

are no places to farm hill fields. This year [2010] was worse than previous years because there was a drought. We expect that our leaders will organise [support] for us. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] base is close to us. It takes only one hour to walk there from Ko--- [village]. The people responsible [for security] always notify us to stay alert. Moreover, they ask villagers to take care of their own security and monitor [Tatmadaw activities] for themselves. This is a big responsibility. We hope the situation will change as quickly as possible."

Saw Hs--- (male, 51), Ko--- village head, Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(November 2010)

Incident report | Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (November 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw So---, a 25-year-old hill field farmer, who was the head of Ke--- village, Lu Thaw Township, before he fled to a hiding site in Kay Bpoo village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw So---
Age: 25 years old
Ethnicity: Karen
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Hill field farmer
Position: Former Ke--- village head

On November 2nd 2010, I met with the [former] Ke--- village head, whose name is Saw So---, 25 years old, in Kay Bpoo village tract. Saw So--- reported:

"This [coming] year, my villagers will have to face food problems because it was dry [in 2010]. That was a big problem, so we hope that our mo bpa koh na ['leader parents,' likely referring to KNU officials] will think about it and arrange [support] for our civilians. This year [in 2010], the rice became expensive until it was 300 baht (US \$ 10) for one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.) and 100 baht (US \$ 3.30) for one big tin of unhusked paddy grain (10.45 kg. / 23 lb.). We didn't have [a place to purchase] rice near here. It [the place to purchase rice] was in Ha--- [village], and it takes four days to go there and come back. Because of this, it caused trouble for our villagers. This year [in 2010], the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] activities decreased but we always have to stay aware. We, villagers, have to take security when the SPDC Army is near us."

Saw So--- (male, 25), in hiding in Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township (November 2010)

Incident report | Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (November 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Ht---, the 45-year-old former village head of Ma--- village, Lu Thaw Township, who is currently living in hiding in Kay Bpoo village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Ht---
Age: 45

Ethnicity: Karen
Marital Status: Married
Position: Village head

On November 2nd 2010, I met with the [former] Ma--- village head. His name is Saw Ht---. He is 45 years old. He is a resident of Kay Bpoo village tract. Saw Ht--- reported that since 1995 and until now, he has never gone back [to his original village]:

"I can not go back and stay in my village because the Burmese [Tatmadaw] camp is located at Ta Ler Gker Koh, close to our village. It takes 30 minutes to walk there. Villagers have experienced [Tatmadaw patrols] killing villagers and burning their paddy grain, rice, houses, animal pens and toilets. They [the Tatmadaw] are fighting their enemy, but they are just attacking villagers. So we need to take security to protect ourselves. Because there are only a few [KNLA] soldiers who take security [for villagers], they can't provide complete security to us. We also can not provide food for them. That is a problem. So we, villagers have to pick up our guns that we use for shooting or killing animals [hunting] and provide security for ourselves whenever the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] is operating. We can do our own work when they are far away from us. We expect our leaders and the international [community] to consider [what can be done] for us. We don't want to live in a country in which danger and killing exist."

Saw Ht--- (male, 45), Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township (November 2010)

Incident report | Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (November 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Sa---, a 45-year-old former village head of Bp--- village, Lu Thaw Township, currently living in hiding in Kay Bpoo village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Sa---
Age: 45
Ethnicity: Karen
Marital Status: Married
Position: Village head

On November 2nd 2010, I met with the [former] Bp--- village head. His name is Saw Sa---. He is 45 years old. He is a resident of Kay Bpoo village tract. This village head's village has been destroyed since 1995 and he has never gone back to his village. He reported:

"My village is located close to the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] camp which is based in Htaw Mu Bpleh. It is one hour away. I saw villagers had to flee and faced problems because of the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] attacks. So I organized and founded a gher der [Home Guard]. We monitor SPDC Army activities to prevent them from arresting us. We let each other know [about Tatmadaw movements]. We don't have a set [walkie-talkie] so we will have to find a way to buy one ourselves. When there is a lot of SPDC Army activity, we can't inform [communicate with] each other. So we tell each other to run when we fire [a gun] three times. That means: 'We can't come back and inform you.' So we give each other a sign in this way. This year [in 2010], we can say that the operations of the SPDC Army decreased. But they always have a plan. We expect our leaders and the international community will organise [arrange] for us to be able to go back and stay in our village."

Saw Sa--- (male, 45), Kay Bpoo village tract, Lu Thaw Township (November 2010)

Incident report | Mu--- village, Nah Yoh Htah village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (November 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Gk---, a 40-year-old hill field farmer and head of Mu--- village in Nah Yoh Htah village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Gk---
Age: 40 years old
Ethnicity: Karen
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Hill field farmer
Position: Village head

On November 2nd 2010, I met with the Mu--- village head, whose name is Saw Gk---, 40 years old, and who lives in Nah Yoh Htah village tract. Saw Gk--- reported:

"This [coming] year my village will have to face a big problem with food shortages because it was dry [in 2010]. We have about 100 households in my village. There are about 50 households of people who farm hill fields and didn't get enough food [in 2010]. So the villagers will have to find their own ways [to have enough food]. I think that our leaders will think about it and arrange something for our villagers. That is my hope from this report. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] activities decreased a lot [in 2010] and I hope that in the future it will be peaceful and we will stay peacefully. That was what I wanted to report."

Saw Gk--- (male, 40), Mu--- village head, Nah Yoh Htah village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(November 2010)

Incident report | Pe--- village, Nah Yoh Htah village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (December 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Ta---, a 27-year-old hill field farmer and head of Pe--- village in Nah Yoh Htah village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Ta---
Age: 27
Ethnicity: Karen
Marital Status: Married
Occupation: Hill field farmer
Position: Village head

On December 26th 2010, I met with Saw Ta---, 27 years old, the Pe--- village head in Nah Yoh Htah village tract. Saw Ta--- reported:

"In my village, there are 15 households and there are 91 people. We all farm hill fields. They [villagers] do not all have enough food. In 2010, it was dry and the entire crop of paddy died so they didn't get enough food. This year [in 2011], we have to pay 300 baht

(US \$10) for one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.) and 100 baht (US \$3.30) for one big tin of unhusked paddy grain (10.45 kg. / 23 lb.) so it causes us a big problem. For the SPDC [Tatmadaw] located in Htaw Mu Pleh Meh, it takes half an hour for them to walk to our village. If they want to shoot at us with big guns, they will arrive and it will happen. But this year [in 2010] we have never had to flee. The people who are in charge [probably a reference to KNU/KNLA officials] told us that they [the Tatmadaw] aim to be active [conduct military operations] and we always have to be in full awareness. So we hope in the future we will stay in peace. That was what I wanted to report."

Saw Ta--- (male, 27) Pe--- village head, Nah Yoh Htah village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(December 2010)

Incident report | De--- village, Nah Yoh Htah village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (December 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Lo---, the 60-year-old head of De--- village, Nah Yoh Htah village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Lo---

Age: 60

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Hill field farmer

Position: Village head

On December 26th 2010, I met with the De--- village head, named Saw Lo---. He is 60 years old. He is a resident of Nah Yoh Htah village tract. Saw Lo--- reported that there are 16 households and 108 people in his village. All the villagers are farmers. Because of the drought [in 2010], not everyone has enough food. This year, the price of rice is going up and one big tin of paddy grain (10.45 kg. / 23 lb.) costs 100 baht (US \$3.30) and one big tin of rice (16 kg. / 35.2 lb.) is 300 baht (US \$10).

"Our village has a farm and it produces 260 big tins of paddy grain (2717 kg. / 5977 lb.). The school also has a sugar cane plantation. The sugar cane plantation provides 320 viss (512 kg. / 1126 lb.) of naw gkway aye [solid sugar produced by boiling and cooling sugar cane juice]. These [agricultural projects] help villagers who do not have food from starving. They can borrow [food] and give it back at the end of year. These will be easy for villagers. I want to request [organisation name censored for security] to [activity censored for security] for villagers to gain more knowledge about helping and solving problems for each other, and to protect themselves from SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] attacks."

Saw Lo--- (male, 60), De--- village head, Nah Yoh Htah village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(December 2010)

Incident report | Ht--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (December 2010)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Naw D---, a 43-year-old schoolteacher from Ba--- village

currently in hiding at Ht--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Naw D---

Age: 43

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Schoolteacher

On December 28th 2010, I met with a Ba--- village schoolteacher. Her name is Naw D--- and she is 43 years old. She is a resident of Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. Naw D--- reported:

"There were several houses in my village. But we had to flee, so we stay separately. In the place where I live now, in Ht---, there are four households and 35 people. Now the households do not have enough rice. The paddy plants died because of the drought [in 2010]. So no households have enough rice. We hope our leaders will arrange something [support] for us. The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] is located in Hta Mu Bplah Meh. It is not far from the place I live. It takes one hour to walk. The men have to become gher der [Home Guards] and monitor [Tatmadaw activity] so that villagers are able to do their work. This year, the Tatmadaw shelled six mortars and shot a lot of small weapons at the time when people were spreading paddy grain in their hill fields. No one got injured [at that time]. Two people got injured by SPDC [Tatmadaw] landmines.⁴ The first one was Saw Mo---, 15 years old. He lived in Lo--- [village]. The other one was Saw T---. He was killed [by the landmine]. He was 40 years old. He lived in Ba--- village. He was hit at Thay Kah Bper on May 10th 2010. And the other villager was hit on May 25th 2010 in Yay Gho Kee. So, we always have to be alert."

Naw D--- (female, 43), Ht--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(December 2010)

Incident report | Wa--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (January 2011)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Ra---, the 51-year-old former village head of Lo--- village, Lu Thaw Township, who is currently living in hiding at Wa--- village in Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Ra---

Age: 51

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Position: Former village head

On January 31st 2011, I met with the [former] Lo--- village head who is *bpwah khay aoh gk'mwee* [a person who has fled somewhere other than his or her original village] and lives in a *bpwah khay aoh gk'mwee* site [in hiding] at Wa---. His name is Saw Ra--- and he is 51 years old. He is a resident of Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. Saw Ra--- reported that there are 17 households and 114 villagers [in Wa---]. Villagers farm hill fields but none of them have enough food because of the drought [in the 2010 rainy season].

⁴ Naw D--- did not explain how she knew that the landmines that injured the two villagers had been planted by the Tatmadaw.

"We want our leaders to give us a suggestion in some way. We fled from our village several years ago because the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] was killing villagers, burning down the village, taking villagers' property from their hiding places, shooting buffalos and eating villagers' pigs, chickens and ducks. The SPDC Army base in Htaw Mu Bpleh Meh is located close to our old village. It takes 15 minutes [on foot]. We have not been able to go back to our village, until now. To be able to do our work, we plant landmines to protect ourselves. It is very helpful for villagers to be able to do their own work. The [activity censored for security] was very good for our villagers. We hope the [activity censored for security] will be conducted more in the future."

Saw Ra--- (male, 51), Wa--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(January 2011)

Incident report | Wa--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (January 2011)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Naw R---, a 35-year-old teacher currently in hiding at Wa--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Naw R---

Age: 35

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Schoolteacher

On January 31st 2011 I met with a schoolteacher, [originally] from Lo--- village, who is *bpwah khay aoh gk'mwee* [a person who has fled somewhere other than his or her original village] and lives in a hiding site for displaced [villagers] at Wa---. Her name is Naw R--- and she is 35 years old. She is a resident of Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. Naw R--- reported:

"The SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] is still close to the place where we live. The SPDC Army occupies a camp in Htaw Mu Bplah Meh and it is one hour on foot from us. We do not have places to farm hill fields close to our village. At the place where we farm hill fields, the SPDC Army can see us and can shoot at us with small weapons [guns]. But the gher der [home guards] and Army [KNLA] take security. They plant hundreds of landmines to frighten and prevent the SPDC Army from coming here easily. We can do our own work year by year. In the past, in our village [Lo---] and wherever we fled and stayed, the SPDC Army came and burned down our village and our shelters. They ate our pigs and chickens. They shot our buffalos. They took our property, like shirts and blankets, if they saw them in our hiding places in the jungle. They broke our gk'tee [clay pots used to store water] and cooking pots. They took our kla [a kind of machete] that we use to cut grass in our hill fields, and made them ler hsw [the soldiers used the machetes in the same manner that villagers use stones to support a cooking pot in a fire, burning them and thus weakening the blades]. We are reporting this and we hope that there will be an arrangement for us to be able to stay in peace."

Naw R--- (male, 35), Wa--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(January 2011)

Incident report | Ne--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township, Papun District (January 2011)

The following incident report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions, based on information provided by Saw Mo---, a 30-year-old teacher currently in hiding at Ne--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. The report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.

Name: Saw Mo---

Age: 30

Ethnicity: Karen

Marital Status: Married

Occupation: Schoolteacher

On January 31st 2011, I met with the Ne--- village schoolteacher. His name is Saw Mo--- and he is 30 years old. He is a resident of Ler Muh Bplaw village tract. Saw Mo--- reported that he could come to school without disruption this year [in 2010]:

"In previous years they [teachers and students] had to flee once or twice a year because of the SPDC Army [Tatmadaw] attacks. We have contacted the gher der [Home Guards] and we have asked them to fire [their guns] three times if the situation is strange [not safe], so that we can let the students know in time and inform them to run back to their homes. I want to request [organisation name censored for security] to [activity censored for security] for villagers to learn and get more knowledge."

Saw Mo--- (male, 30), Ne--- village, Ler Muh Bplaw village tract, Lu Thaw Township
(January 2011)

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

- *Acute food shortages threatening 8.885 villagers in 118 villages across northern Papun District* (May 2011)
- *"Tatmadaw attacks destroy civilian property and displace villagers in northern Papun District,"* (April 2011)
- *Self-protection under strain: Targeting of civilians and local responses in northern Karen State,* (August 2010)
- *"Southern Papun District: Abuse and expansion of military control,"* (August 2010)
- *"Central Papun District: Village-level decision-making and strategic displacement,"* (August 2010)
- *"Central Papun District: Abuse and the maintenance of military control,"* (August 2010)
- *"Southwestern Papun District: Transitions to DKBA control along the Bilin River,"* (August 2010)

LU THAW TOWNSHIP, PAPUN DISTRICT
Map by KHRG (Karen Human Rights Group)



