



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Incident Report

December 19th, 2023 / KHRG # 23-218-I1

Mu Traw District Incident Report: Two villagers injured by landmine explosions, February 2023

This Incident Report describes events that occurred in Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw (Hpapun) District in February 2023. On February 16th 2023 at 9 am, Saw Y--- (55 years old) and Naw W--- (32 years old) from H--- village, Ma Kah Heh village tract, stepped on landmines when they went to cut bamboo. From the landmine explosion, Saw Y--- was injured on his right leg and Naw W--- was injured on both of her legs, resulting in amputations. They were treated at two different hospitals. No organisation has provided support to the victims, but H--- villagers provided some support for food and medical costs. Saw Y--- and Naw W--- have been facing problems to secure their families' livelihoods after they were injured. The landmine contamination in the surrounding areas creates fear for villagers living in H--- village.¹

Part 1 – Incident Details

Type of Incident	Landmine incident
Date of Incident(s)	February 16 th 2023, 9 am
Incident Location (Village, Township and District)	H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract ² , Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Victim Information		
Name	Saw ³ Y---	Naw ⁴ W---
Age	55	32
Sex	Male	Female
Ethnicity	Karen	Karen
Marital status	Married	Married
Occupation	Plantation worker	Laundry attendant

¹ The present document is based on information received in July 2023. 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 Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name

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

Religion	Buddhist	Buddhist
Position	Villager	Villager
Village	H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District	H--- village, Meh Klaw village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District

Perpetrator Information				
Name(s)	Rank	Company/Battalion/Division	Based at	Commander's Name
Unknown	Unknown	Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) ⁵ Battalion #15	Dwe Lo and Lu Thaw Township	Unknown

Part 2 - Information Quality

1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.

The researcher learned about the incident from a villager who lives in the same village as the victims, and who visited them in the hospital.

2. Explain how the source verified this information.

The source [interviewed villager] verified this information by meeting with the victims of the landmine explosion at the hospital, getting their first-hand testimony.

Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail. For each incident, be sure to include 1) when the incident happened, 2) where it happened, 3) what happened, 4) how it happened, 5) who was involved, and 6) why it happened. Also describe any villager response(s) to the incident, the aftermath and the current living situation of the victims. Please use the space prepared below, and create an attachment if needed.

On February 16th 2023 at 9 am, two villagers, father and daughter, from H--- village, Ma Kah Heh village tract, Bu Tho Township, Mu Traw District, went to cut bamboo to fence their farmlands. When approaching the place to cut bamboo, Saw Y--- (55 years old) stepped on a landmine, injuring his right leg [that had to be amputated]. His daughter, Naw W--- (32 years old), stepped on another landmine when she went to help her father. Her legs were seriously injured by the landmine's explosion, resulting in amputations of both legs.

Hearing the sound of an explosion, H--- villagers learned about the incident, and contacted other villagers nearby, as well as local Karen National Union (KNU)⁶ leaders working in the area. After hearing about the incident, the local KNU leaders and some villagers from H--- village went to get the two injured villagers from the incident location [close to the village] and

⁵ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁶ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Burma 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.

brought them back to the village. The two victims were later sent by car to a hospital managed by the State Administration Council (SAC)⁷ located in Hpapun Town. One of the victims explained that the SAC healthcare workers did not want to provide proper care to them because it was not an SAC landmine that the injured villagers stepped on. To be able to receive proper healthcare, [H---] villagers discussed among themselves and agreed to provide food, such as chicken and other, to [SAC] healthcare workers [to ensure the victims received treatment].

Residents of H--- believe that the landmines that injured Saw Y--- and Naw W--- were planted by KNLA soldiers from Battalion #15 because the KNLA had informed some villagers about the planting of landmines in the area beforehand. KNLA soldiers had informed some villagers one week earlier when they planted the landmines in the surrounding area, where Saw Y--- and Naw W--- had stepped on the landmines. The KNLA also asked A--- villagers, from Ma Htaw village tract, Dwe Lo Township, to inform villages nearby about the contaminated area. The place of this landmine incident is located close to SAC Infantry Battalion (IB)⁸ #19 and #642 camp. The villagers from H--- village, including the victims, have never attended Mine Risk Education (MRE) training [The Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) is running an MRE program in the region].

Neither Saw Y--- nor Naw W--- received support from any organisation since they were injured from the landmines' explosion. In the fourth week of February 2023, after one week at the SAC-managed hospital in Hpapun Town, they were sent to another hospital in town [unknown name]. It has not been possible to contact the victims since they were visited and interviewed in the [first] hospital [in Hpapun].

Saw Y--- and Naw W--- did not receive any support even after they had been discharged from the hospital [as explained by a local villager]. Saw Y--- used to secure his family's livelihood by working as a daily labourer and Naw W--- used to wash clothes at hospitals and houses for her income before the 2021 military coup. The victims are facing difficulty securing their livelihoods because their [injured] legs were amputated and so they cannot work.

Villagers living in H--- village are afraid to work on their farmlands because of landmine contamination in the surrounding areas, and it has created more fear now that two villagers have been seriously injured from landmine explosions.

Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details

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

Permission to share this info was provided by the victims to the villager that visited them at the hospital, with whom the researcher conducted the interview.

⁷ 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.

⁸ An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Burma military are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.



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

- ["Hpa-an District Short Update: Landmine explosions in T'Nay Hsah Township, January to June 2023"](#), August 2023
- ["Why would they target us?": Exploring patterns of the Burma Army's retaliatory abuses against villagers across Southeast Burma"](#), June 2023
- ["Dooplaya District Short Update: Indiscriminate shelling and a landmine explosion in Noh T'Kaw Township, June to September 2022"](#), April 2023

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the 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.

Mutraw (Hpapun) District

