



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

January 23, 2015 / KHRG # 14-10-NB1

Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1013 Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw steals villagers' livestock

This News Bulletin describes events occurring in Dwe Lo Township, Hpapun District in June 2014, particularly the repeated theft of villagers' poultry and livestock by Border Guard Force (BGF) Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw, from BGF Battalion #1013. Villagers have raised their concerns to KHRG as they have repeatedly witnessed Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw steal villagers' chickens, ducks and goats, despite receiving a salary from the Burma/Myanmar government. Animal husbandry is commonly practiced by villagers in Kayin State and is used to supplement their income. Villagers are reluctant to directly confront BGF Battalion #1013 regarding these incidents.

The Border Guard Force (BGF)¹ is under the control of the Burma/Myanmar military, also called the Tatmadaw. Because of this fact, BGF soldiers are also given a salary provided by the Burma/Myanmar government, just like Tatmadaw soldiers. However, despite receiving a salary, KHRG still receives reports of BGF soldiers stealing villagers' livestock. The villagers in L--- village have reported several incidents to KHRG regarding BGF Battalion #1013² Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw repeatedly stealing their poultry and livestock, as the BGF army camp is based beside the village. The villagers reported that although the BGF regularly steal their chickens, ducks and goats, the villagers dare not say anything in return as the armed groups are the ones holding weapons.

For instance, on June 15th 2014, BGF Battalion #1013 Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw, under the control of BGF Battalion #1013 Lieutenant Colonel Saw Hla Kyaing, quietly trapped and stole Naw S---'s chicken and duck. Naw S--- witnessed this incident herself, but since the BGF have the weapons, she dared not complain to them.

In addition, on June 22nd 2014, Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw again stole a 60-year-old U B--- villager's three chickens and brought them to his army camp and cooked them.

¹ Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burmese government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)" *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and, "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

² KHRG continues to receive reports discussing abuses involving BGF Battalion #1013 and #1014, including: "[BGF Battalion #1014 forced labour and forced recruitment, April to May 2012](#)," KHRG, June 2013; "[Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2011 to July 2012](#)," KHRG, April 2013; "[Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to September 2012](#)," KHRG, April 2013 and "[Papun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, July to October 2012](#)," KHRG, April 2013. Further reports detailing abuses involving these battalions are also available on the KHRG website.

Although U B--- was not home at the time, he highly suspects that it was Saw Hpah Ghaw, as other villagers have witnessed similar cases. Furthermore, on June 30th 2014, a villager witnessed Sergeant Saw Hpah Ghaw going to L--- villager Naw P---'s house and steal her three chickens and two ducks. Just like other villagers, Naw P--- dares not to complain to BGF Battalion #1013, as they have weapons.

Because of the abuses described above, the villagers have developed doubts about the ceasefire³ between the Karen National Union (KNU) and the Burma/Myanmar government, as abuses are still occurring. The villagers are not happy with the fact that state armed groups, such as the Tatmadaw and BGF, receive a salary from the Burma/Myanmar government, but are still stealing villagers' livestock. Animal husbandry is one way for villagers to receive a small income and is also a way for them to earn their livelihoods.

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

- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, February to June 2014," (December 2014)
- "Hpapun Incident Report: Landmine incident in Lu Thaw Township, May 2013," (December 2014)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, January to June 2014," (December 2014)
- "Hpapun Interview: Naw A---, January 2013," (December 2014)
- "Hpapun Situation Update: Lu Thaw Township, March to May 2014," (November 2014)

³ On January 12th 2012, a preliminary ceasefire agreement was signed between the KNU and Burma/Myanmar government in Hpa-an. Negotiations for a longer-term peace plan are still under way. For updates on the peace process, see the KNU Stakeholder webpage on the Myanmar Peace Monitor website. For KHRG's analysis of changes in human rights conditions since the ceasefire, see [*Truce or Transition? Trends in human rights abuse and local response since the 2012 ceasefire*](#), KHRG, May 2014.

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



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