



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Incident Report: Villager shot and killed in Pa'an District, October 2011

The following report was written by a villager trained by KHRG to document human rights abuses, and details an incident that occurred on October 29th 2011 in P--- village, during which soldiers from Tatmadaw IB #230 fired small arms at three civilians as they fled their house in P--- village, and two KNLA soldiers who had been cooking food in the house. Saw A---, a 36-year-old married farmer who had returned to P--- to help his wife's family harvest paddy, was shot in the head and killed as the group ran away from the house. The villager who wrote this report visited P--- village two weeks after the incident occurred to document the incident: the villager took the 32 photographs included in this report; spoke with Saw A---'s brother-in-law and mother-in-law, who were the other two civilians who fled the IB #230 soldiers and witnessed Saw A---'s death; and spoke with another P--- resident who heard the gunfire and witnessed the soldiers entering the house after the group fled. The full transcript of a recorded audio interview with Saw A---'s brother-in-law is available in the bulletin "Pa'an Interview: Saw C---, November 2011" published by KHRG on December 1st 2011.

Incident report | E--- village tract, Lu Pleh Township, Pa'an District (October 2011)

The following incident report is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹ This report was received along with other information from Pa'an District, including seven other incident reports, eight interviews, one situation update, and 137 photographs.²

Saw C---, 23 years old, reported that his older brother [in-law] Saw A---, 36 years old, was shot and killed. Burmese [Tatmadaw] soldiers from IB [Infantry Battalion]³ #230, TOC [Tactical Operations Command] #1, MOC [Military Operations Command] #12 in Kawkaeik, under the

¹ KHRG incident reports are written or gathered by villagers in Pa'an District who have been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma to document individual incidents of abuse 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 incidents of abuse that they consider important, by verifying information from multiple sources, assessing for potential biases and comparing to local trends.

² 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 Pa'an District will be available on the KHRG website. Until then, KHRG's most recent analysis of the situation in Pa'an District can be found in the recent Field Report, "Functionally Refoulement: Camps in Tha Song Yang District abandoned as refugees bow to pressure," KHRG, April 2010.

³ Note that the villager who submitted this report wrote 'Ka Ma Ya', or 'LIB', #230 in the original handwritten description of the incident.; however, the same villager reported on December 1st 2011 that it was in fact 'Ka La Ya', or 'IB', #230 that was involved in the incident. In the translated text above, 'LIB #230' has been replaced with 'IB #230' to reflect this newer information.

command of Battalion Commander Tha Teh Soe and Deputy Battalion Commander Bpye Khaing came and were on active temporary duty in Dta Greh Township and in the Thu Mweh Nee border area, based at M--- Camp. The incident happened on October 29th 2011, at about 8:00 am. It happened in P--- village, E--- village tract, Lu Pleh Township, Pa'an District.

On November 16th 2011, in the early morning, I started to leave L--- village and went to P--- village where the incident happened. It took me three hours to walk there and I arrived in P--- village at 8:15 am in the morning. I met with Saw C--- and he explained: *"Two weeks ago, the SPDC [Tatmadaw]⁴ came and shot at my house and it killed my older sister's husband. They also took my mother's six pairs of gold earrings, one gold ring and 20,000 baht."*⁵

Three people told me about this incident: Saw C--- [the victim's brother-in-law], Naw G--- [the victim's mother-in-law] and Saw H--- [a resident of P--- village]⁶. The first two of them [Naw G--- and Saw C---] ran through bullets and Saw H--- heard the gunfire and saw the SPDC soldiers who came and shot. They knew exactly what happened.



This photo, taken on November 16th, shows Saw C---, 23, standing in front of his house, which he fled on October 29th under fire from soldiers from Tatmadaw IB #230. His brother-in-law, Saw A---, 36, who fled the house at the same time, was shot in the head and killed as he ran away. [Photo: KHRG]

On October 29th 2011, at about 8:00 am, in P--- village the Burma government [Tatmadaw] soldiers came and shot at some villagers because they saw those villagers were running. Saw C--- said: *"The incident also happened at the same time when two of the KNLA soldiers came and cooked with us, so that is why it happened. But the KNLA soldiers didn't bring anything, they just stayed as villagers."*⁷ The two KNLA soldiers cooked in the kitchen and Saw A--- sat in front of the house. As soon as he saw the Burmese military, he jumped out of the house and called 'Burmese!' so all of us in the house with my mother ran down [out of the house] and the Burmese soldiers started to shoot at us. We all ran down [out of the house] because we were afraid of the Burmese soldiers. If we hadn't run, we worried that the Burmese soldiers would arrest us, hit us and call us to follow them. Seven of the Burmese soldiers came and shot [at us] and their friends [other Tatmadaw soldiers] were waiting for them on the vehicle road which is not far from the village."

⁴ In Karen, the Burmese phrases *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) and *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) are commonly used to refer to the Burmese government or to Burma's state army, the Tatmadaw. Many older Karen villagers who were accustomed to using the phrase *Na Wa Ta* (SLORC) before 1997 continue to use that phrase, even though the SLORC has not officially existed since 1997. Similarly, despite the official dissolution of the SPDC in March 2011, many Karen villagers continue to use the phrase *Na Ah Pa* (SPDC) to refer to the Burmese government or to the Tatmadaw; see: "Mission Accomplished as SPDC 'dissolved'," Myanmar Times, April 4-10 2011. The term *Na Ah Pa* was used by the villager who wrote this report, and "SPDC" is therefore retained in the translation.

⁵ For the full transcript of an interview with Saw C---, conducted by the villager who wrote this report, see: "Pa'an Interview: Saw C---, October 2011," KHRG, December 2011.

⁶ In a separate unpublished report submitted to KHRG by the same villager who wrote this report, he mentioned that Naw G--- is 40 years old and Saw H--- is 60 years old, and further clarified that Saw H--- had been hunting outside of P--- when he heard the gunfire and, upon returning to P---, watched from a discreet location as the Tatmadaw soldiers entered the house Naw G---, Saw C--- and Saw A--- had fled.

⁷ The villager who wrote this report later clarified that the KNLA soldiers did not bring their guns with them into P--- village, but were likely wearing at least some items of their uniform.

The seven Burmese soldiers came [into P--- village], and two of them arrived beside the vegetable garden in front of the house, two were under the trees, one was on the bridge, and another two were on the slope of the hill. They looked at Saw C---'s house and shot at the people who ran. The places the Burmese soldiers stayed when they shot are shown below in the photos.



The photos above were taken in P--- village on November 16th 2011 by the villager who wrote this report. According to that villager, the photos were taken from vantage points used by IB #230 soldiers when they fired on Saw C---, Naw G---, Saw A--- and two KNLA soldiers when they fled Saw C---'s house, which is visible next to the vegetable garden (top left) and through the trees (middle left and right). [Photos: KHRG]

The soldiers did not shoot at the people who ran directly; they shot at them from behind and a bullet hit A---'s head. One side [of his head] was gone and he fell in the *tho gk'myo mu* [a plant producing small dark berries] vines as shown in the photos below. Saw C--- said A--- was hit on

the right [of his head] but C---'s mother, Naw G---, said the bullet hit him on the left side [of his head]. Saw H--- also said it hit the left [side of his head].



In the two photos above, also taken on November 16th, Saw C--- indicates the spot where Saw A--- fell when he was shot in the head from behind as they were running away from LIB #230 soldiers. According to Saw C---, the bullet blew off part of Saw A---'s head, and he fell to the ground immediately. [Photos: KHRG]

Before the bullet hit him, other bullets also hit the sides of trees, as shown in the photos below.



These photos where small arms fired by Tatmadaw IB #230 soldiers struck trees near the house which Saw A---, Naw G---, Saw C--- and two KNLA soldiers fled on October 29th. Saw C---'s house is visible behind the tree in the photo above right. [Photos: KHRG]

After they [Saw C--- and Naw G---] came back [to their house], the other two people [KNLA soldiers] did not come back. Only the P--- villagers went and took Saw A---'s dead body and put him in front of the house. His blood came out [on the ground] there and later the villagers burned [the ground where Saw A--- had bled]. The place that was burned is shown in the photos below. Saw C--- said the place where Saw A--- fell down [when he was shot] was on a slope so his blood swept down the slope and covered the leaves. That place was not burned.



These photos show the site proximate to the house and vegetable garden (above left) to which Saw A---'s body was moved shortly after he was shot in the head and killed. According to Saw C---, Saw A---'s body was later bathed and prepared for burial, at which time the area where his body had lain was burned in order to clean away the blood (above right). The small area that was burned is visible in both photos above. [Photos: KHRG]

After that, people bathed him [Saw A---] and sent him to the grave. After that, Saw C--- went and showed me Saw A---'s grave, which was near the vehicle road where the Burmese soldiers had waited for their friends who went and shot at Saw A---'s parents-in-law's house in P--- village. Saw A---'s grave is shown in the photos below. Those photos also are of Saw C---, who went and showed me his older brother [in-law]'s grave. When we came back to their place [P--- village], I took a picture of him.⁸ Saw C--- said: *"When my brother A--- was sent to his grave, the pastor didn't arrive and didn't dare to come. Only a few people went and sent him to his grave. My older brother and older sister have three children. The oldest one is a girl, who is six years old."*



⁸ This photo is included with the full transcript of an interview with Saw C--- the report "Pa'an Interview: Saw C---, November 2011" published by KHRG on December 1st 2011.



The photos above show the grave of Saw A--- (top left) and offerings left at the grave (above right). These photos were taken on November 16th 2011, two weeks after Saw A--- was killed. Freshly-turned earth on top of Saw A---'s grave is seen in the middle photos, while the bottom photos show Saw C--- walking along the path between Saw A---'s grave and P--- village, while returning from showing Saw A---'s grave to the villager who wrote this report and took these photographs. *[Photos: KHRG]*

When it happened his [Saw C---'s] older sister didn't stay in the house [in P--- village]. She went and worked on a flat field in L---, which is called Kw--- [in Burmese]. His [Saw C---'s] older brother [Saw A---] had come back to stay with his parents-in-law for a few days to harvest [paddy] and help his parents-in-law to carry the paddy. When I went to P---, I didn't meet with Saw A---'s wife, Naw T---, because, she stayed far away [from P---] near the Burmese soldiers based in E---, so it is not easy for me to go there.

Also, Saw C--- said the Burmese soldiers took six pairs of his mother's gold earrings, one golden ring, 20,000 baht (US \$667) and 10,000 kyat (US \$13).⁹ It was not sure that the 10,000 kyat was taken. Naw G--- would know better than her son [Saw C---], and she did not say that 10,000 kyat was taken. For the gold earrings, gold ring and 20,000 baht, [Naw G--- was sure] these were taken. His [Saw C---'s] mother had 20,000 Baht for sure. Saw C--- told me that his mother bought the six pairs of gold earrings three years ago and, among them, one pair had cost 3,000 baht (US \$100). As for the gold ring, that cost 10,000 baht (US \$333) four years ago. These things, now, maybe would be more than double the cost.

⁹ All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this interview are based on the fluctuating informal exchange rate rather than the government's official fixed rate of 6.5 kyat to US \$1. As of November 29th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 770 kyat.



The photos above were taken on November 16th inside the house Saw A---, Saw C--- and Naw G--- fled on October 29th as they were shot at by soldiers from IB #230. Examples of damage caused by small arms fired inside the house is visible in all four photos. [Photos: KHRG]

Further background on the current situation in Pa'an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- *Pa'an Interview: Saw C---*, November 2011, (December 2011)
- *Pa'an Situation Update: September 2011* (October 2011)
- *Pa'an Situation Update: June to September 2011* (October 2011)
- *Pa'an Situation Update: September 2011* (October 2011)
- *Displacement Monitoring: Regular updates on protection concerns for villagers in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts and adjacent areas of Thailand* (October 2011)
- *Pa'an Situation Update: April 2011* (September 2011)
- *Pa'an interviews: Conditions for villagers returned from temporary refuge sites in Tha Song Yang* (May 2011)

Recent photos from the area are presented in *KHRG Photo Gallery 2010* and *KHRG Photo Gallery 2010-B*. These and other KHRG reports and maps of the region can be found on the KHRG web site at <http://www.khrg.org>.

