



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Pa'an Situation Update: September 2011

This report includes a situation update submitted to KHRG in September 2011 by a villager describing events occurring in Pa'an District in September 2011. It details an incident in which Tatmadaw and Tatmadaw Border Guard soldiers forced local villagers to porter military supplies and equipment while wearing Border Guard uniforms during a joint attack on a Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) encampment at Kler Law Hseh. The villager who wrote this situation update also reported that since this attack Border Guard soldiers have been based in the Kler Law Hseh area and have forced villagers to porter or make payments in lieu of portering, as well as perform forced labour on military-owned agricultural projects. The villager also reported two distinct incidents in which Tatmadaw and Border Guard troops have confiscated villagers' land in order to build a military camp and cultivate bean plantations.

Situation Update | T'Nay Hsah Township, Pa'an District (September 2011)

The following situation update was written by a villager in Pa'an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions. It is presented below translated exactly as originally written, save for minor edits for clarity and security.¹

On September 21st 2011 at around 8:45 am, Tatmadaw Border Guard Battalion #1019 led by Company Commander Pa Mee Cho, Battalion #1017 Commander Dih Dih and Burmese Army soldiers from LID [Light Infantry Division] #22 attacked the KNLA [Karen National Liberation Army] Battalion #101 camp at Kler Law Hseh on the Burma-Thailand border. During the attack, the Border Guard and Burmese Army soldiers used villagers they had arrested to porter for them and forced the villagers to wear Border Guard uniforms. The villagers were from Th--- and Sh--- villages. The fighting took place between around 8:45 am and 10:25 am, after which they managed to take over the KNLA Battalion #101 camp.

The September 21st attack

The [Border Guard and Tatmadaw] attack started on September 21st 2011 at around 8:45 am and finished at around 10:25 am, and won them the KNLA camp [at Kler Law Hseh]. The day that the Border Guard and Burmese Army attacked the KNLA camp [at Kler Law Hseh] was

¹ KHRG trains villagers in eastern Burma to document individual 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 situation updates, villagers are encouraged to summarise recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important, and present their opinions or perspective on abuse and other local dynamics in their area. 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.

World Peace Day [September 21st 2011]. The KNLA did not shoot back at the Border Guard and the Burmese Army soldiers because the Border Guard and Burmese army stayed in the villages [where civilians live]: [they] set up their mortars inside Sh--- village, and [stayed] about one minute's walk outside of Th--- village. The KNLA stayed on the nearby mountain. The KNLA did not fight back because they [the Border Guard and Tatmadaw soldiers] were in the villages. Two KNLA soldiers died. The Border Guard and Burmese Army soldiers fired over 50 mortar shells, including 81 mm and 60 mm rounds, as well as M79 40 mm [grenade launchers] and RPG-7s [anti-tank rocket-propelled grenade launchers].

The Border Guard and Burmese army soldiers arrested villagers and called them to serve as porters to carry their supplies and rations. They put Border Guard uniforms on all villagers who went and carried supplies for them. Villagers who did not want to go had to pay money. There were two types of payment: one for a month and one for 15 days. If you did not dare to go and you wanted to hire someone to go porter in your place, you had to pay 100,000 kyat (US \$122.70)² for a month or 50,000 kyat (US \$61.35) for 15 days.

Now that the Border Guard occupies the KNLA Battalion #101 camp, they order the villagers to porter rations and water from the village to the camp where they stay. They put Border Guard uniforms on the villagers and on the village head [when the villagers are bringing rations to the camp] so as not to mistake them for KNLA soldiers. There are five people [that regularly have to come to the camp] who the Border Guard order to wear Border Guard uniforms. They are Saw B--- [the Th--- village head], Saw M--- [the former Th--- village head], Saw G--- and another two villagers whose names are unknown. These village heads and the villagers are busy working for the Border Guard now. The above information was provided by two local sources who witnessed Th--- villagers wearing Border Guard uniforms while portering for Border Guard troops. [This paragraph has been partially redacted to protect the identity of KHRG sources.]

Land confiscation and forced labour

Border Guard Battalion #1017 Battalion Commander Dih Dih summoned village heads to meet him on September 26th 2011 and ordered 100 villagers from M--- and G--- to go and harvest his corn and sow beans in Za Ya Phyu [Th'Ro Wah] village. Battalion Commander Dih Dih have been confiscating land belonging to Shan people [who live in Karen State] to sow beans.

The Tatmadaw soldiers from LIB [Light Infantry Battalion] #358 also took villagers' land in M--- and G--- villages to build their army camp. These two villages are very close.

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

- *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)
- *Extrajudicial execution of two civilians in Pa'an District* (February 2011)
- *Human rights abuses and obstacles to protection: Conditions for civilians amidst ongoing conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts* (January 2011)

² All conversion estimates for the Kyat in this report 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 October 5th 2011, this unofficial rate of exchange was US \$1 = 815 kyat. This figure is used for all calculations above.

- *Protection concerns expressed by civilians amidst conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts* (November 2010)
- *Functionally Refoulement: Camps in Tha Song Yang District abandoned as refugees bow to pressure* (April 2010)

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.khrq.org>.

