



# Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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## News bulletin

November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2010 / KHRG #2010-B11

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### **Civilians at risk from continued SPDC-DKBA conflict in Dooplaya District**

*Civilians in Dooplaya district continue to be at risk from conflict between the Tatmadaw and the DKBA. Civilians from Waw Lay report that one resident has been wounded by a mortar during an exchange on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 in Kawkareik Township. Other residents of Waw Lay have attempted to seek refuge in nearby Phop Phra District, Tak Province, Thailand. A villager that spoke to KHRG a few hours after the shelling reports that at least some villagers attempting to cross into Thailand are being prevented from doing so by the Royal Thai Army.*

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\*Update 9 am November 15<sup>th</sup> 2010: more villagers from Waw Lay confirm that they were prevented from crossing into Thailand on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2010. According to residents of Waw Lay, Thai soldiers told them that because shots were no longer being fired, they did not need to enter Thailand. Restrictions by Thai authorities were not sustained and some villagers were able to cross into Thailand later last night. Further mortar fire was also reported last night at 9 pm, near Ghneh Lay village, which is located in the vicinity of Waw Lay.

Civilians remain at risk as conflict continues in eastern Burma between the Tatmadaw, Burma's state army, and the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA). Mortars and small arms fire were exchanged at 6:40 pm on November 14<sup>th</sup> 2010 at Waw Lay village, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District. According to residents, mortars were fired at a nearby military position, with at least one mortar falling inside Waw Lay village. Waw Lay residents report that one civilian was injured by the shelling and is now receiving treatment in adjacent Phop Phra District, Tak Province, Thailand. His condition is unknown.

Fighting tonight follows earlier conflict between the Tatmadaw and DKBA in Dooplaya District. At least 2,500 civilians fled conflict in the Waw Lay area during November 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. Villagers interviewed by KHRG report that Tatmadaw mortars had landed in Waw Lay village and that they had been fired upon with small arms by Tatmadaw troops. According to staff working for organisations providing support to villagers seeking refuge in Phop Phra, Royal Thai Army soldiers forced most of these civilians to return against their will on November 10<sup>th</sup> 2010. Villagers interviewed by KHRG also confirmed that they did not wish or feel safe to return to Waw Lay at that time.

Because of security concerns related to continued conflict between the Tatmadaw, DKBA and other armed Karen groups in Dooplaya District, many civilians continue to seek refuge in the Phop Phra District. As of November 12<sup>th</sup> 2010, a consortium of community-based organisations (CBOs) in Phop Phra were providing support to 1,025 civilians from Waw Lay and other villages affected by conflict between the Tatmadaw and DKBA. These civilians are dispersed in small hiding places in Phop Phra, many actively seeking to avoid being returned by the RTA. At 6:30 pm, just ten minutes before mortars began being fired tonight, for example, sources in Phop Phra say that the RTA forced a family that had been hiding in a church in Oo Poh Hta village, Phop Phra, to return to Waw Lay. KHRG has not yet confirmed this report.

Some residents of Waw Lay have opted to stay in their village in spite of tonight's exchange, and have described to KHRG digging holes and constructing makeshift bomb shelters. Others, however, have attempted to flee to Phop Phra. Reports indicate that at least some were able to cross into Thailand. However, a villager in Waw Lay that spoke with KHRG at 8 pm on November 14<sup>th</sup> said that some villagers attempting to flee were not being allowed to cross into Thai territory. The villager said that civilians were sleeping near the bank of the Moei River, which makes up the border between Burma and Thailand in that area.

The situation is changing rapidly and KHRG has not yet confirmed the report that civilians currently attempting to avoid conflict in Waw Lay are being prevented from doing so. However, KHRG expects conflict between the Tatmadaw and DKBA to continue and civilians in the area will be in continued need of protection.

Waw Lay village was the home of Na Kha Mway, who commands sections of the DKBA that have recently been in conflict with Tatmadaw forces. Fighting between the Tatmadaw and these DKBA units has been occurring elsewhere in Dooplaya District, including in Myawaddy and Three Pagodas Pass, two major towns at border crossings located north and south of Waw Lay along the border between Thailand and Burma.

Further reading:

- *DKBA burns village and forces residents to relocate in Pa'an District (June 2010)*
- *SPDC shelling destroys villagers' rubber plantations in Dooplaya District (May 2010)*
- *Cross-border DKBA attack displaces households in Thailand (April 2010)*
- *Functionally Refoulement: Camps in Tha Song Yang District abandoned as refugees bow to pressure (April 2010)*
- *Joint SPDC/DKBA attacks, recruitment and the impact on villagers in Dooplaya and Pa'an Districts (May 2009)*
- *Insecurity amidst the DKBA - KNLA conflict in Dooplaya and Pa'an districts (February 2009)*
- *DKBA soldiers burn down huts, detain villagers and loot property in Thailand (January 2009)*

Recent photos from the area are presented in *KHRG Photo Gallery 2009* and *KHRG Photo Gallery 2008*. These and other KHRG reports and maps of the region can be found on the KHRG web site at <http://www.khrg.org>.



# Karen Districts



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Scale: 1 cm to 22 km  
1 in. to 35 miles