



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Rape and violent threats in Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, April 2014 to May 2015

This News Bulletin describes a rape case and ongoing threats in B--- village, Kyaw Hkee village tract, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District, that took place between April 2014 and May 2015. A 17-year-old villager from B--- village, named Naw A---, who at the time was 16 years old, reported that she was raped and subsequently fell pregnant by 26-year-old Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh who is already the father of two children. According to Naw A---, Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh raped her at her house when her adoptive mother and brother were out. After finding out she was pregnant, Naw A--- reported the rape to the village leaders, who dismissed the case as they believe Naw A--- to be feeble-minded. Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh did not take responsibility for the rape and he has kept denying that it was him. Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh said it was Naw A---'s adopted brother that she calls Kyaw Kweh who had raped her. This news bulletin also describes the villagers' reactions to Naw A--- and what the victim's adoptive family did after the case. As of the end of May 2015, the case was re-opened and investigations have begun. The case was re-opened by the Karen Women Organisation (KWO) and the village tract leaders, and has been transferred to the Karen National Police Force (KNPF) for further investigation.

On April 12th 2014, 16-year-old Naw A--- from B--- village, Kyaw Hkee village tract, Kawkareik Township, Dooplaya District reported she was raped by Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh and as a result, fell pregnant. Naw A---, now 17 years old, subsequently gave birth to a child. Even though Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh did not take responsibility for the crime, Naw A--- reported the case to the village leaders after she found out that she was pregnant. As the village leaders and other villagers believe that Naw A--- is feeble-minded, they did not take serious action and the case was not resolved. The case was later reopened by the Karen Women Organisation (KWO) and is still ongoing.

The rape took place in Naw A---'s house and according to the victim, it was perpetrated by Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh, who already has two children. Naw A--- claimed that when he tried to rape her she was applying *thanaka*¹ to her face in her room. She told him that she would tell her mother if he tried to rape her and according to Naw A--- Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh said, "If you shout I will stab you." She tried to stop him by saying, "I will get pregnant if you rape me." He replied, "It is okay, you are not going to get pregnant." After the reported rape, he was lying in the living room when her adoptive mother and adopted brother, Kyaw Keh, came home. They saw him lying in the living room, but they did not know that he had just raped her. Naw A--- stated that when he raped her he was not drunk. She said that she had been raped three times previously by Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh before this particular event. There had been other times that he came to her house to try and rape her when her mother and brother

¹ *Thanaka* is a white paste with a yellow hue applied to the face and sometimes arms by women (and less commonly men) of many different ethnicities across Burma/Myanmar. It comes from grinding the bark, wood or roots of a *thanaka* tree with a little water. The paste is believed to protect and cool the skin in the sun, as well as to improve one's complexion. See "[Beauty That's More Than Skin Deep](#)," *The Irrawaddy*, August 2011.

were out working, but she managed to get away before he could find her. When she was first raped she kept silent and did not tell anybody as she was embarrassed, but as the incidents became more frequent and she fell pregnant she decided to report the abuse to her mother. When her mother and other people in the village found out and asked Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh, he refused to admit any guilt and stated to the villagers and Naw A--- that he would hit Naw A---'s head against the stilts of a house for damaging his reputation. He also said that Naw A--- was raped by her brother, Kyaw Kweh, whom she lives with. When the KHRG researcher found out about this case he reported it to the village tract leaders as the village leaders had not taken action. They subsequently asked the local KWO to conduct an investigation into the case. According to the researcher, Naw A--- is currently receiving medical treatment to treat her rape injuries as well as postnatal care in Nu Poe (Noh Poe) refugee camp and the rape case has been transferred to the Karen National Police Force (KNPF)² by the KWO to conduct further investigations.

According to Naw A---'s adoptive mother, *"I adopted Naw A--- when she was two years old. Her real mother passed away and her real father is in Thailand. She was 16 years old when she was first raped. Her upbringing was not good. She was bullied, hung up³ and thrown into water when she was young before I adopted her. She smelled when I took her. She had a [bloated] stomach.⁴ Her real mother told me that evil spirits had taken over her body. She [Naw A---] would go out looking for food during night time. When I took her home and fed her a big meal she just slept, I did not see any evil spiritual action. I [have] raised her since she was young [and] in [a] difficult situation and now when she has grown up she has been raped. I [do not] feel good about it."* She also said that there is nobody supporting her daughter following the rape, except the KWO office in Nu Poe refugee camp who give her assistance when Naw A--- and her daughter go to the camp.⁵



This photo shows Naw A--- who was reportedly raped by Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh. Naw A--- has been described as a feeble-minded underage girl by some of her fellow villagers and the village head. The KHRG researcher who met with her does not believe Naw A--- to be feeble-minded. She was 16 years old when the incident occurred. She lives in Dooplaya District, Kawkaik Township in B--- village. [Photo: KHRG]

Her adoptive mother met with Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh's sister to talk about what happened to her daughter. Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh's sister stated, *"I will talk about it with my brother when he comes back and if he says no [he did not do it], I will go and yell at Naw A---."* Naw A---'s mother then stated, *"On another day she [Saw Hpah Kyaw Eh's sister] told me that she will go to Saw C--- [a traditional doctor] and bring back the medicine with the tiger logo. She told me that grandma [me] should feed her this and I replied, no, I dare not feed her this medicine. His sister said that it is for the abortion [and will not harm Naw A---]. I said the baby is moving*

² The Karen National Police Force was established by the Karen National Union in 1991.

³ In Burma/Myanmar hanging a child on hooks and beating them is an uncommon form of punishment. This is what happened to Naw A---, however in this case Naw A--- was abused as her mother thought that she was possessed by an evil spirit.

⁴ Her stomach was likely bloated due to severe malnutrition.

⁵ This information was included in an interview received by KHRG in May 2015 from a KHRG community member from Dooplaya District. This interview is currently unpublished.

in the womb already, I dare not to feed her.”⁶

The KHRG researcher mentioned that the local villagers have said that Naw A--- is locally known as a feeble-minded girl. The researcher believes that Naw A--- is not a feeble-minded girl as she is able to accurately tell the story of what happened to her and buy things well, as she is educated to a level where she can accurately manage money.

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

- *‘With only our voices, what can we do?’: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar*, (June 2015)
- Press Release: *‘With only our voices, what can we do?’: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar*, (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya situation update: Kyainseikgyi Township, December 2014,” (June 2015)
- “Dooplaya interview: Saw A---, April 2014,”(June 2015)
- “Dooplaya short update: Kyonedoe Township, February 2014,” (June 2015)

⁶ This information was included in an interview received by KHRG in May 2015 from a KHRG community member from Dooplaya District. This interview is currently unpublished.

Dooplaya District



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