



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Short Update

October 8, 2015 / KHRG #15-48-D1

Hpa-an Short Update: Nabu Township, April to March 2015

This Short Update describes the general situation in Nabu Township, Hpa-an District during the period between April and March 2015, including updates on health and education, as well as improvements to villagers' freedom of movement.

- *Since the preliminary ceasefire was signed in 2012, the villagers have been freer to work for their own living, rather than being subjected to forced labour. Villagers have also been able to travel more freely, as the number of landmines being planted in the area has also been decreasing.*
 - *Prior to the preliminary ceasefire, there were only Karen National Union (KNU) funded schools in Nabu Township. Since 2012, the Burma/Myanmar government has opened many of their own schools there, however villagers see this situation as unstable, as the nationwide ceasefire has not been signed yet and it is unclear if students will be able to depend on the Burma/Myanmar government teachers in the long term.*
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Short Update | Nabu Township, Hpa-an District (April to March 2015)

The following Short Update was received by KHRG in June 2015. It was written by a community member in Hpa-an District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It 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 Hpa-an District, including four incident reports and 23 photographs.²

Areas' situation

Thein Sein's troops [Tatmadaw], KNLA-PC [Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC)],³ BGF [Border Guard Force],⁴ DKBA [Democratic Karen

¹ KHRG trains community members in southeast Burma/Myanmar 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, community members 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.

² In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast Burma/Myanmar, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's website.

³ The KNU/KNLA Peace Council (also called the Karen Peace Council or KPC), is an armed group based in Htoh Gkaw Ko, Hpa-an District, which split from the Karen National Union (KNU) in 2007 and subsequently refused to comply with orders from the then-SPDC government to transform its forces into the Tatmadaw Border Guard. See: "[KPC to be outlawed if it rejects BGF](#)," *Burma News International*, August 30th 2010.

⁴ 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 Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions

Benevolent Army]⁵ and the KNU [Karen National Union] are based in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township, Hpa-an District.

Thein Sein's troops are based in T'Nay Hsah and Meh Pleh [villages] and Kaw T'Ree Town. The [Light Infantry Battalions (LIBs)],⁶ which are [battalions] #548, #549 and #547 under the control of MOC [Military Operations Command]⁷ #12, are based in T'Nay Hsah army camp in Kaw T'Ree [Town]. The name of BGF [Battalion] #1016's army camp is K'Lah Kon; it is based in Hser Boh Kon Loh Baw village tract. The BGF [Battalion] #1020 is based in Maw Naw Koo [village] and BGF [Battalion] #1019 is [based in] Hpah Kloo village tract. DKBA's troops are based in Kaw T'Ree [Town] and Myawaddy areas.

Villagers' situation

Since the KNU and Thein Sein's [Burma/Myanmar] government signed the ceasefire agreement,⁸ the villagers are a bit freer to work on farms and cultivations and can travel a bit [more] freely. The forced labour [incidents] and the dangerous [planting of] landmines have been diminishing.

Education

In terms of education in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township, the situation of schools [is that they are] still running the same as before Thein Sein's [Burma/Myanmar] government and the KNU [had signed the ceasefire agreement]. Some KNU schools, KNU-PC [KNU/KNLA-PC] schools, and many Thein Sein [Burma/Myanmar] government schools are located there. The KNU and Thein Sein [Burma/Myanmar] government have not finished their [nationwide ceasefire] discussions yet, therefore the situation of the schools is not stable. [In the past there were only KNU schools, but after the ceasefire has taken place, the schools which are funded by the Thein Sein's government are also based in there],⁹ therefore the situation of the schools is not stable because some teachers are from the KNU and some teachers are from the [Burma/Myanmar] government.

Healthcare

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.

⁵ The Democratic Karen Benevolent Army (DKBA), formerly the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, was formed in December 1994 and was originally a breakaway group from the KNU/KNLA that signed a ceasefire agreement with the Burma/Myanmar government and directly cooperated at times with Tatmadaw forces. The formation of the DKBA was led by monk U Thuzana with the help and support of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the name of the military government in Burma/Myanmar at that time. For more information on the formation of the DKBA, see "[Inside the DKBA](#)," KHRG, 1996. The DKBA now refers to a splinter group from those DKBA forces reformed as Tatmadaw Border Guard Forces, also remaining independent of the KNLA. As of April 2012, the DKBA changed its name from "Buddhist" to "Benevolent" to reflect its secularity.

⁶ Light Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Light Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Primarily for offensive operations but sometimes used for garrison duties.

⁷ Military Operations Command. Composed of ten battalions for offensive operations. Most MOCs have three Tactical Operations Commands (TOCs), made up of three battalions each.

⁸ 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. In March 2015, the seventh round of the negotiations for a national ceasefire between the Burma/Myanmar government and various ethnic armed actors have begun in Yangon, see "[Seventh Round of Nationwide Ceasefire Negotiations](#)," *Karen National Union Headquarters*, March 18th 2015. Following the negotiations, the KNU held a central standing committee emergency, see "[KNU: Emergency Meeting Called To Discuss Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement And Ethnic Leaders' Summit](#)," *Karen News*, April 22nd 2015.

⁹ This information was obtained from local KHRG staff when following up on this Situation Update.

As for healthcare in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu Township], the sicknesses that the villagers [have experienced] there are only fever and malaria. If they get a serious disease they have to go to the hospital in Kaw T'Ree, Kruh Tu or Hpa-an [towns].

There are nine armed groups in T'Nay Hsah [Nabu] Township, Hpa-an District. They have no special activities. I will gradually let KHRG know if they [start] having special activities.

Further background reading on the situation in Hpa-an District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- "Fighting between Tatmadaw and DKBA soldiers along the Asian Highway displaces villagers in Dooplaya District, July 2015," (September 2015)
- "Hpa-an Incident Report: Violent abuse and killing committed by BGF soldiers in Myaing Gyi Ngu Town, Hlaingbwe Township, April 2015," (August 2015)
- "Hpa-an Incident Report: Explicit and violent threats in Myaing Gyi Ngu Town, Hlaingbwe Township, April 2015," (August 2015)
- "Hpa-an Situation Update: Paingkyon Township, June to October 2014," (August 2015)
- "Hpa-an Incident Report: Land confiscation in Paingkyon Township, May 2015," (August 2015)

Hpa-an District



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