



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

Photo Set

October 8, 2015 / KHRG #15-6-PS1

Toungoo Photo Set: Militarisation in Thandaunggyi Township, December 2014 to February 2015

This Photo Set depicts events and issues in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District reported to KHRG between December 2014 and February 2015, including militarisation, land confiscation, as well as military activity by both the Tatmadaw and Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA). Villagers report being concerned regarding the Tatmadaw's resupply of rations into remote areas of Thandaunggyi Township during the ceasefire period, as well as the Burma/Myanmar government's prioritisation of the construction and repair of roads used by the military over other public roads.

Photo Set | Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District (December 2014 to February 2015)

The following photos were taken by a community member in Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. They are presented below, censored where necessary for security purposes.¹ The eight photos below were received along with other information from Toungoo District, including 396 other photos, a general update on the situation in Toungoo District, five incident reports and 21 interviews.²

1. Tatmadaw soldiers using horses to transport rations into remote areas in Thandaunggyi Township

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.

² This Photo Set was compiled by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Toungoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. 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.



The above photos were taken on December 21st 2014 in Thandaung Myo Thit Town, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. They show the Burma/Myanmar Tatmadaw transporting horses, which were then used to transport rations to the frontline, where transport by truck over the rough terrain is not possible. Each truck can carry six horses, and there were 25 trucks, amounting to 150 horses. The local community in Thandaung Myo Thit Town reported that this occurred while they were celebrating the Karen New Year on December 21st 2014. As it is during the ceasefire period, the local villagers reported being worried about this activity by the Tatmadaw. *[Photos: KHRG]*

2. Road construction for military purposes



These photos were taken on December 23rd 2014 in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. They show road construction from Shwe Nyaung Pin village to Ba Yint Naung Tat Myo Town, where the Tatmadaw has a base. Villagers report that the Burma/Myanmar government participates in development activities, but they only prioritise repairs to the roads that the Burma/Myanmar military uses and they do not repair the roads used solely by the public. *[Photos: KHRG]*

3. Militarisation and Karen Revolution Day celebration



The photo on the left was taken on December 28th 2014. It shows a Burma/Myanmar Tatmadaw fence and 'no trespassing' sign in Thandaunggyi Town, Toungoo District. The local villagers in Thandaunggyi Town cultivate the land that they inherited from their forefathers, passed down to the present day. But in the year 2000, Tatmadaw Infantry Battalion (IB) #124 entered Thandaunggyi Town and built a camp on the land belonging to the villagers. The villagers no longer have access to this land for their livelihoods. The photo on the right was taken on January 31st 2015 in Taw Pya K'LAY village, Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District, and shows the celebration of Karen Revolution Day. The Karen National Union (KNU) wanted to build mutual understanding between them and the local people, and they also wanted to get suggestions from the local villagers about how to implement the peace process. Therefore they tried to go from one village to another campaigning and they also wanted to celebrate Karen Revolution Day with the local community, but the Operations Commander of Tatmadaw Light Infantry Battalion #603 did not allow them to, so they had to hold celebrations for the 66th anniversary of Karen Revolution Day in a small village. Although the villagers wanted to enjoy the celebration as they had never experienced it before, they were afraid and worried about repercussion from the Tatmadaw so some villagers failed to come, and for those that wanted to see the leaders of Brigade #2 (Toungoo District), they missed their big opportunity. [Photos: KHRG]

4. Tatmadaw uneasy about KNLA movements



These photos were taken on February 1st 2015 in Thandaunggyi Township, Toungoo District. The photo on the left shows Tatmadaw soldiers patrolling the road near Shwe Nyaung Pin village. The photo on the right shows KNU soldiers from Battalion #2 passing over a road as they go from one village to another to meet with the local villagers. However, the Tatmadaw has put security patrols on the both sides of the road where the KNU soldiers are travelling and the local villagers report feeling afraid. [Photos: KHRG]

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

- “Toungoo Interview: Naw A---, January 2015,” (August 2015)
- “Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014 to February 2015,” (July 2015)
- *‘With only our voices, what can we do?’: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar*, (July 2015)
- “Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi Township, July to November 2014,” (April 2015)
- “Toungoo Situation Update: Thandaunggyi and Htantabin townships, November 2014,” (February 2015)

The map displays the Taw Oo (Toungoo) District in Shan State, Myanmar. It is bordered by the Mandalay Region to the north, Bago Region to the west, Kayah State to the east, and Kayin State to the south. The district is divided into several townships: Daw Hpa Hko (Thandaungyi) Township, Thandaung Town, Thandaungyi District, Baw Ga Li Town, and Hiaw Ta Htoo (Tartabin) Township. Major towns and villages are marked, including Taw Oo, Thandaung Town, Thandaungyi District, Baw Ga Li Town, and Hiaw Ta Htoo (Tartabin) Township. The map also shows the Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District to the south. A legend in the bottom left corner identifies symbols for Village, Town, Road, Railway, River, Karen Township, and States and Regions. A scale bar at the bottom indicates distances from 0 to 20 Km. An inset map in the top right corner shows Myanmar's location in Southeast Asia, with neighboring countries like China, India, Bangladesh, and Thailand labeled.

5