



**Karen Human Rights Group**

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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**Interview**

October 28, 2016 / KHRG #15-72-A3-I1

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**Thaton Interview: Naw C---, June 2015**

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*This Interview with Naw C---describes arbitrary arrest occurring in Thaton Township, Thaton District, on July 13<sup>th</sup> 2013. She described how her husband was arbitrarily arrested and interrogated by the Myanmar police in July 2013. One month earlier, before the incident happened, Tatmadaw came and encamped in her village and said that the reason they came into the area is related to the Yar Zar Min bus robbery case that happened in Mon State, Thaton Township, Thaton District on June 8<sup>th</sup> 2013 when the bus was heading from Kyaik Kha Mi to Yangon. The day after Tatmadaw left on the morning of July 13<sup>th</sup> 2013, between 10 and 20 members of the Myanmar police came to her house, questioned her and looked for the gun. She opened everything, but the police could not find any gun. After that the police pulled her husband out of his mosquito net and restrained his hands by tying them behind his back and pointing at him with a gun, and then interrogated her husband. Her husband was scared and could not speak.*

**Interview | Naw C---, (Female, 31), K--- village, Thaton Township, Thaton District (June 2015)**

*The following Interview was conducted by a community member trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It was conducted in Thaton District on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2015 and is presented below translated exactly as it was received, save for minor edits for clarity and security.<sup>1</sup> This interview was received along with other information from Thaton District, including six other interviews, one photo note, 78 photographs and 1 other document.<sup>2</sup>*

*[Introduction by the interviewer:]* On June 6<sup>th</sup> 2015, in M--- village, Sa Kan Gyi village tract, Thaton Township, Thaton District, I met with the wife of someone related to the Ya Za Min [robbery] case and interviewed her.

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<sup>1</sup> KHRG trains community members in southeastern 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 conducting interviews, community members are trained to use loose question guidelines, but also to encourage interviewees to speak freely about recent events, raise issues that they consider to be important and share their opinions or perspectives on abuse and other local dynamics.

<sup>2</sup> In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeastern 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.

**Ethnicity:** Karen  
**Marital Status:** Married  
**Occupation:** Farming  
**Position:** Villager

**What is your name?**  
Naw C---

**How old are you?**  
31 years old.

**Where do you live?**  
K--- [village].

**How many children do you have?**  
I have one child.

**How old is it [he/she]?**  
13 years old.

**Is it [he/she] going to school?**  
Yes.

**What did you work on [for livelihood] in the past?**  
I worked on farming, selling [goods] and fishing.

**We heard that your husband has been arrested regarding the Ya Za Min [robbing case]. How did it happen?**

One month earlier, before he was arrested, the Tatmadaw came [into my house] and said that [the reason they came is] related to the Ya Zar Min robbery case. I understood what they had explained to me but I did not know that the robbery had happened. I was busy with my work here; ploughing, collecting paddy and fishing. I was also busy with preparing for fishing as the rainy season was going to start. I also had to start ploughing the farm. They came to sit [visit] here for almost one month. They said [the reason they came here] is related to the robbery case. [They asked] if the robbers came this way. *'Didn't you see any strangers?'* [they said]. Maung<sup>3</sup> A--- [Naw<sup>4</sup> C---'s husband] said that he did not see any strangers, [he was] ploughing near the house [hut]. They told me the date [that the robbing case had happened]. In that whole month [of August], Maung A--- was working on [catching] fish for the whole month. The day after the Tatmadaw left [from the village], the police came into the village with a boat as there was a lot of water in rainy season. On July 13<sup>th</sup> [2015] in the morning on Saturday, they came to ask me [where] Maung D--- [was]. I told them that I did not know [where he was]. Then they were looking for the gun [at my house]. They also asked [where] U<sup>5</sup> B--- [was]. U B--- was working on a rubber plantation as a day labourer in K--- [village]. He built a hut and lived there. At that time [that they came, he was not in the village], I heard that he was going to N--- [village] to work as a day labourer as he is poor. I was [working as a] vendor [selling goods] at my house. They [the police] came to ask questions and they had been looking for things in my house and my house

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<sup>3</sup> Maung is a Burmese male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>4</sup> Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>5</sup> U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

became messy. They said that they were looking for the gun. I also showed them everything, my suit [clothing] boxes and opened [everything] for them. Everything was messy in my house. The time that they came, Maung A--- was not awake. They cut off the string of the mosquito net and they forcibly pulled him. Maung A--- pulled himself back [resisted] because he was going to wear his longyi. As he was pulled suddenly, he was startled. There were about 20 police coming [in our house]. Even the villagers who saw them were scared of them. As Maung A--- was very scared of them [as he was questioned], I was trying to answer [the questions] for him but I was told [not] to interrupt them. He was very scared already as he was told to put his hands behind his back and lie with his face down on the floor and he was pointed [at] with a gun. As he was scared, he could not speak a word. He was asked about Maung D---, but he did not know [about him]. Maung A--- was asked if he is of Mon ethnicity. He is not Mon [ethnicity]; he is mixed race Mon and Karen [ethnicity]. He was asked if his longyi was a Mon longyi. It was not a Mon longyi. Then, they took a bag of ours. They also searched for money. They checked my money that I got from [working as a] vendor and the money that I kept for the village's fundraising. I told them that it was the village fundraising money, so they did not touch it. They took Maung A--- down to the ground floor [and] they checked [searched] him. I do not know what they had to check [search for] with him; then he was taken to the boat mooring area. The village head also did not know about this. A while after he was taken, the village head came to my house.

The Tatmadaw went to sit [stay] at I--- [village]. They phoned the village head and said that they took a villager from K--- [village] but they did not know who he was [his name]. When the village head came to visit my house, he knew that it was Maung A--- that they took with them. The village head missed [did not meet] him.

**What was Maung A--- working on in the past?**

He was working on a plantation and fishing.

**What time did they come to arrest him: in the night time or in the day time?**

It was about 5 o'clock in the morning.

**Do you know where Maung A--- is now?**

I know; I have been to [visit] him once.

**Where was he when you visited him?**

He is in Myaung Mya prison.

**Is he still there now?**

Yes.

**Do you have any problems going to see him?**

No, I did not have [any problems]. After I arrived there, people let me see him.

I had to wait for the [right] time. As the time that I arrived there was 12 o'clock, the prison was closed. I had to wait until the afternoon to see him.

**How much did it cost [for travelling] when you went to see him?**

I went with one of my friends and in total it cost 110,000 kyats (US \$85.39)<sup>6</sup>. I bought him food and left 20,000 kyats (US \$15.52) with him.

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<sup>6</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the 26 October 2016 official market rate of 1288.13 kyat to US \$1.

**Do you think Maung A--- was involved in the robbing case?**

He was not involved at all. He was at home and was busy with work on the date that the robbing case happened. Everyone knows that the robbing case is not related to him. You can ask anyone [about him]. His history and background [behaviour] were always very good.

**Since Maung A--- is not home, what are the difficulties that you have to face?**

I am in trouble as he is not [at] home. It costs money to follow [visit] him. Doing family business [working for our livelihood] requires both of us, husband and wife, in order to run [a business] well. Since my husband is not here, how can I do family business [as] only me, the wife? The money that we had saved is gone as I have to follow [visit] him. My siblings also have to support me. Now, my relatives have to send my children to school. It is very difficult for my livelihood [since he is not here].

**I heard that he was sentenced to death, is it true?**

They [the prison authority] said that he would be sentenced to death. However, they later said that they have not given that order [made that decision] yet; they said that they will give an order later in Nay Pyi Taw. I am not sure whether the order will be death [sentence] or release.

**Since you guarantee that Maung A--- was not involved in the robbing case, how do you want this case to be addressed for your husband?**

He was not even involved in the robbing but he has to suffer from it. It is not good for him. I want this case to be addressed correctly and quickly. [His] dignity has also gone. [His] social [life] and economic [situation] have collapsed. So help [us] so that he will be released quickly.

**Now, I was asking you [about] what I wanted to know. You also answered me [about] what you have suffered. Thank you so much.**

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

- “Ongoing militarisation in southeast Myanmar,” (October 2016)
- “Thaton Field Report: January to December 2015,” (August 2016)
- Hidden Strengths, Hidden Struggles: Women’s testimonies from southeast Myanmar, (August 2016)
- “Thaton Situation Update: Thaton Township, July to October 2015,” (April 2016)
- “Thaton Situation Update: Bilin Township, October 2015,” (February 2016)

# Doo Tha Htoo ( Karen)



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