

Situation UpdateFebruary 1st 2023 / KHRG # 22-154-S1**Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Air strikes, displacement and humanitarian aid, January to April 2022**

This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Hsaw Htee (Shwegen) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District during the period between January and April 2022. It includes information regarding air strikes, indiscriminate shelling, displacement, property damage, healthcare services, education support, and humanitarian aid distribution. Air strikes and fears of air strikes by the State Administration Council (SAC) have led many villagers in Hsaw Htee Township to flee their homes. In response to displacements, the Karen Office for Relief Development (KORD), Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW), Free Burma Rangers (FBR) and Stronghold Rescue and Relief provided humanitarian support, including healthcare services, food, financial support and school supplies [sports equipment and clothing] in three village tracts: Htee Wa Bway Hkhee, Blaw Hkoh, and Meh K'Tee Hkhee village tracts, Hsaw Htee Township from January to April 2022.¹

Introduction

This situation update describes the current situation regarding human right violations in Hsaw Htee (Shwegen) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District. The update covers the activities of the [State Administration Council (SAC)²] military and ethnic armed groups, as well as humanitarian support provided by NGOs [and local CBO/CSOs]. The information in this situation update was collected between February 1st 2022 and April 30th 2022.

SAC air strikes

Since the military seized power [in February 2021], armed conflicts have been occurring throughout the cities and ethnic armed group areas [areas controlled by ethnic armed organisations]. Fighting is still going on and the military junta [SAC] has been conducting air strikes in conflict-affected areas.

Furthermore, the military junta [SAC] conducted air strikes, indiscriminately bombing places and buildings where civilians live causing fear among villagers. Villagers in Htee Wa Bway Hkhee,

¹ The present document is based on information received in May 2022. It was provided by a community member in Kler Lwee Htoo District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor human rights conditions on the ground. The names of the victims, their photos and the exact locations are censored for security reasons. The parts in square brackets are explanations added by KHRG.

² The State Administration Council (SAC) is the executive governing body created in the aftermath of the February 1st 2021 military coup. It was established by Senior General Min Aung Hlaing on February 2nd 2021, and is composed of eight military officers and eight civilians. The chairperson serves as the de facto head of government of Burma/Myanmar and leads the Military Cabinet of Myanmar, the executive branch of the government. Min Aung Hlaing assumed the role of SAC chairperson following the coup.

Blaw Hkoh, and Meh K'Tee Hkee village tracts in Hsaw Htee Township had to seek refuge in forests as a precautionary measure. From February to the present [April 2022], over half of the villages in Hsaw Htee Township have had to displace to forests for their security and villagers still dare not return to their villages, especially to sleep over night. [The KHRG researcher was unable to confirm air strikes in Hsaw Htee Township in February 2022. Free Burma Rangers (FBR)³, however, reported an air strike on January 13th 2022 in Shwe Nyaung Pin village, in Mu Traw (Hpapun) District, which killed three and seriously wounded two villagers.⁴ This air strike took place near the border with Kler Lwee Htoo District. It is likely that these attacks led to the displacement of villagers in Hsaw Htee Township.]

On March 19th 2022, the military junta [SAC] conducted one air strike in Hsaw Htee Township. The enemy [SAC] aircraft dropped two bombs in Kaw Muh Der area at 2 am. As a result, two villagers' houses were damaged from the bomb explosion fragments: the zinc rooftops of the houses were damaged. Villagers from T'Keh Poo, Kaw Mu Der, Htee Maw Kweh Hkee, Thay Hkoh Hser Der and other nearby villages had to be afraid of [were in danger due to] the air strike because of their proximity to the incident location. Therefore, the villagers dared not [did not feel secure] to sleep in their village anymore and they had to displace to the forest. In seeking refuge [fleeing] for their security and sleeping in the forest, villagers are facing various consequences [challenges], especially children and mothers with newborn babies.

Health care and education

Regarding health care for rural residents in [Hsaw Htee Township], the Karen Department of Health and Welfare (KDHW), which is one of the Karen National Union (KNU)⁵ administrative departments, has been providing healthcare services to local civilians. For example, they [KDHW health workers] have provided COVID-19 vaccinations [to villagers].

On January 25th 2022, Free Burma Rangers (FBR), which is known as a supportive [humanitarian aid] organisation, conducted a mission in areas of Hsaw Htee Township. Their activities included providing medical supplies, patient care [healthcare services]. They also participated in community education development. They [FBR] engaged in providing health care and supporting education in the following three locations: Blaw Hkoh, Htee Wa Bway Hkee and Meh K'Tee village tracts in Hsaw Htee Township. They provided healthcare services to over 1,000 patients and also distributed sports equipment such as caneball [Chinlone] equipment, volleyballs and footballs [soccer balls] to three schools. They [FBR] also distributed clothing to schools [to the students].

³ Founded in 1997 in response to Tatmadaw offenses, Free Burma Rangers (FBR) is a multi-ethnic humanitarian relief organisation that specialises in providing emergency health care, shelter, food and clothing to civilians in war zones and prioritises assisting IDPs. In addition to their relief activities the FBR also conducts capacity building trainings (sometimes jointly with KHRG), documents human rights violations and advocates regularly on the situation in Burma/Myanmar. There are currently 71 active FBR teams that go on 2-4 missions a year.

⁴ Free Burma Rangers (FBR), "[Burma airstrike killed three villagers and severely wounds two including a 6 year old boy](#)", January 2022.

⁵ The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the Burma/Myanmar government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Burma and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement in 2015, relations with the government remain tense.



This photo was taken on February 28th 2022 in Htee Wa Bway Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. Fearing air strikes by the SAC military [likely the January 13th 2022 air strikes in nearby Mu Traw District], villagers fled to the forest. [Photo: KHRG]

This photo was taken on February 2nd 2022 in Meh K'Tee Hkee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The photo shows the IDPs who sought refuge in the forest due to air strikes by the military junta [likely the January 13th 2022 air strikes in nearby Mu Traw District]. [Photo: KHRG]

Humanitarian aid

[During the period between February and April 2022], humanitarian aid was distributed to civilians [in Hsaw Htee Township] twice. The assistance [humanitarian aid] providers are the networking groups [local CSOs and CBOs] that take actions [are operating] only in Kaw Thoo Lei⁶ [KNU-controlled] areas. The KNU also provided protection and support for the civilians. I [the KHRG researcher] recorded only two instances of assistance [humanitarian aid] provision [during this time period].

In March 2022, Karen Office for Relief Development (KORD) provided support to displaced villagers in Hsaw Htee Township. They [KORD] donated 330,000 kyats [USD 157.14]⁷ to every displaced person in two village tracts: Blaw Hkoh village tract and Meh K'Tee village tract. KORD met with local authorities of Blaw Hkoh village tract on March 20th 2022 to provide financial assistance. Their assistance covered over 103 households, consisting of over 1670 people in Blaw Hkoh village tract. On March 22nd 2022, KORD had a meeting with the local authorities of Meh K'Tee village tract. After the meeting, they distributed some support. Altogether, they provided support for over 800 households in Meh K'Tee village tract. The arrangement of this mission in our areas [Hsaw Htee Township] was led by P'doh [governor] Saw A---, the chairman of KORD.

Displacement

In February 2022, the military junta carried out operations in the area of Kyeh Htoh (Kyaikto) Township, Doo Tha Htoo (Thaton) District. The local civilians living on the border of Hsaw Htee

⁶ The term Kaw Thoo Lei refers to Karen State as demarcated by the Karen National Union (KNU), but the exact meaning and etymology is disputed. See: Jonathan Falla. *True Love and Bartholomew: Rebels on the Burmese Border*, Cambridge University Press: 1991.

⁷ All conversion estimates for the kyat are based on the February 1st 2023 2022 mid-market exchange rate of 1,000 kyats to USD 0.48 (taken from <https://wise.com/gb/currency-converter/mmk-to-usd-rate>).

Township [in Kler Lwee Htoo District] and Kyeh Htoo Township [in Doo Tha Htoo District] began to have fear and concern due to indiscriminate shelling by the Burma [SAC] military. As a result, they fled to Htee Wa Bway Hkhee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township. Some local villagers sought refuge in the forest.

In Kaw Ka village, Th'Waw Thaw village and Hk'Maw Hkway village, Htee Wa Bway village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, over 531 local civilians displaced to the forest [KHRG was unable to obtain information regarding the date(s) of displacement]. On February 27th 2022, an organization [NGO] known as Stronghold Rescue and Relief provided some support [mainly food] to displaced people. They distributed a sack of rice and two litres of oil to each family.



This photo was taken on February 27th 2022 in Htee Wa Bway Hkhee village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. The photo shows IDPs from Kyeh Htoo Township, Doo Tha Htoo District who received food from an NGO, Stronghold Rescue and Relief. *[Photo: KHRG]*



This photo was taken on March 20th 2022 in Blaw Hkoh village tract, Hsaw Htee Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. It shows a meeting between KORD staff and local leaders and civilians [IDPs] to discuss humanitarian aid. *[Photo: KORD]*

Further background reading on the human rights situation in Kler Lwee Htoo District in Southeast Burma can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: Arbitrary taxation, education, health care, SAC activity and indiscriminate shelling, March to June 2022](#), January 2023.
- [Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers were seriously injured in a landmine explosion in Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District, July 2022](#), November 2022.
- [Kler Lwee Htoo District Situation Update: SAC air strikes, shelling and fighting, displacement, insecurity, and livelihood, education and healthcare challenges in Ler Doh Township, February to May 2022](#), August 2022.
- [Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC airstrikes destroyed two houses and resulted in the displacement of villagers in Ler Doh and Hsaw Htee townships, March to April 2022](#), June 2022.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Burma. KHRG trains local people to document and gather evidence of human rights abuses, and publishes this information to project the voices, experiences and perspectives of local communities. More examples of our work can be seen online at www.khrg.org.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

