



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

---

### Situation Update

March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2024 / KHRG # 24-205-S1

---

## Dooplaya District Situation Update: SAC air strikes and shelling caused death, injury, damage, and displacement in Kaw T'Ree Township (December 2023 to March 2024)

---

*This Situation Update describes events occurring in Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District, during the period from December 2023 to March 2024. On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, a State Administration Council (SAC) jet dropped two bombs on M--- village, Noh Poe village tract, killing two villagers and injuring one villager. On the same date, at night, SAC Infantry Battalion (IB) #275 fired mortar shells into M--- village, Noh Poe village tract, injuring two villagers. Due to the incidents, schools in M--- village were forced to close and villagers fled to other areas for their safety. Similarly, in January 2025, SAC soldiers fired mortar shells almost every evening into M--- village. In March 2024, armed resistance groups attacked an SAC LIB #355 army camp (near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town), and so SAC soldiers conducted indiscriminate shelling almost every evening into nearby M--- village, and the surrounding area, injuring a villager and damaging her rice barn. The shelling increased villagers' fears of returning to the village. The SAC also conducted multiple air strikes onto nearby K--- village and R--- village, Noh Poe village tract. These attacks injured at least three villages and killed one, and destroyed and damaged several houses and community buildings, including the schools and temples. Villagers were living in fear, afraid to cast a light at night. Fighting, shelling and air strikes happened around Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town continuously during that month, as well as near the Asian Highway (between Kaw T'Ree Town and Ra Ma Tee (Myawaddy) Town), forcing many villagers to flee. Due to the frequent fighting, air strikes, and bombings, at least one villager died and many houses from Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town and S--- village were damaged and destroyed. Some bombs also landed inside T'Nay Cha Township.<sup>1</sup>*

---

### December 2023 and January 2024: Air strikes and shelling in M--- area

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, in the evening time at 5 pm, a State Administration Council (SAC)<sup>2</sup> fighter jet dropped two bombs into [the area near] M--- village, Noh Poe village tract<sup>3</sup>, Kaw T'Ree Township, killing two villagers and injuring one villager. At 5 pm, Saw<sup>4</sup> A--- and Saw B---

---

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in May 2024. It was provided by a community member in Dooplaya 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.

<sup>2</sup> 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.

<sup>3</sup> A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

<sup>4</sup> 'Saw' is male honorific title in S'gaw Karen language.

were sitting face to face to have dinner at their hut in their plantation area, located on the western side of M--- area. Saw B--- explained: *“When the bomb exploded, everything went black as I closed my eyes tight and when I opened my eyes, I saw that Saw A--- was already lying on the ground [as he died instantly from his injuries]. When I moved beside him to help him, I realised that I had difficulties to move my left hand as I was also injured on my shoulder by the shrapnel.”*

The same bomb also killed U<sup>5</sup> C---, who was heading to [the communal] pasture field to tie his cows. U C--- was injured by shrapnel and died on the spot.



These photos were taken by a local villager on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023 at M--- village, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, at 5 pm, an SAC fighter jet dropped two bombs in M--- area, killing two villagers and injuring one, in their plantations. The photo on the top-left shows Saw A---, wearing a black shirt, who died due to the bomb. The photo on the top-right shows U C---, wearing a striped shirt, who was killed by shrapnel from the bomb. The photo on the bottom left shows the injured villager, Saw B---. [Photo: Local villager]

On December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, around 9:30 pm, SAC Strategic Operations Command (SOC)<sup>6</sup>, based near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, and Infantry Battalion (IB)<sup>7</sup> #275, based near the Asian Highway<sup>8</sup> near Ra Ma Tee [Myawaddy] Town, shelled into M--- village, injuring two villagers named Naw<sup>9</sup> D--- and Saw E---. The two villagers were sent to O--- clinic, in L---Town [in Tak

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

<sup>6</sup> Strategic Operations Command; under regional command, three to four battalions and a headquarters, covers an area mostly for defence.

<sup>7</sup> An Infantry Battalion (IB) comprises 500 soldiers. However, most Infantry Battalions in the Tatmadaw are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers. Yet up to date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. They are primarily used for garrison duty but are sometimes used in offensive operations.

<sup>8</sup> The Asian Highway Network is a United Nations Economic and Social Council for Asia and the Pacific-supported project that aims to link 32 countries in Asia across 141,000 kilometres of roadway. In Burma/Myanmar the project has involved land confiscation and forced labour. For more information about the Asian Highway Network, see [“Beautiful Words, Ugly Actions: The Asian Highway in Karen State, Burma”](#), KHRG, August 2016; [“The Asia Highway: Planned Eindu to Kawkaik Town road construction threatens villagers’ livelihoods”](#).

<sup>9</sup> ‘Naw’ is a S’gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.

province], Thailand. Naw D--- was severely injured [exact injuries unknown], thus she was referred to L--- General Hospital. Following the incident, villagers did not dare to live in the village, thus, some villagers left their plantations and farms without harvesting and were displaced to Internally Displaced People (IDP) camps [in P--- village, in P'Loo village tract, and Q--- village, Thay Baw Boh village tract].

In January 2024, two SAC Strategic Operations Commands (SOCs), based near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, IB #275, based near Myawaddy Town, and Light Infantry Battalion (LIB)<sup>10</sup> #355, based near the Asian Highway (near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town), fired mortar shells almost every evening during the month of January into M--- village, Noh Poe village tract, and the surrounding areas. Some of the shells landed on M--- village, as well as on villagers' farmland areas. Thus, farmers worked on their farmland in fear [of attacks]. [No casualties were recorded as villagers were displaced from the village.]

### **Impact on schools in M--- village**

Schools located in M--- village, Noh Poe village tract, operating under the Karen Education and Culture Department (KECD)<sup>11</sup>, were forced to close due to the general risk of shelling from ongoing attacks on a middle school in M--- village. The academic year of KECD's schools usually starts during the first week of July and ends in the last week of March. Parents, village authorities, and teachers were worried for students attending the 2023-2024 academic year, therefore the middle school closed in December 2023.

In addition, villagers did not dare to live in their village. Some villagers fled to P--- IDP camp, P'Loo village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township [in December 2023]. Some [villagers] fled to Q--- IDP camp, Thay Baw Boh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. [Some] villagers did not dare to return to their homes until March 2024.

### **March 2024: Air strikes and shelling in M--- village, K--- village and R--- village**

Starting March 5<sup>th</sup> 2024, an SAC fighter jet conducted reconnaissance and dropped at least five bombs in a week [onto K--- village and R--- village, Noh Poe village tract]. A helicopter came [and conducted reconnaissance] at least three times in the same week, when fighting happened. A bomber also came almost every day [in the month of March] and dropped bombs. Therefore, villagers from Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, were constantly living in fear [and some fled to the IDP camps mentioned above].

On March 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>12</sup>'s Cobra Column<sup>13</sup> soldiers; KNLA Company #1 and Company #2, under Battalion #28; and People's Defence Force (PDF)<sup>14</sup>

---

<sup>10</sup> A Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) comprises 500 soldiers. Most Light Infantry Battalions are under-strength with less than 200 soldiers, yet up-to-date information regarding the size of battalions is hard to come by, particularly following the signing of the NCA. LIBs are primarily used for offensive operations, but they are sometimes used for garrison duties.

<sup>11</sup> The Karen National Union's Education and Culture Department is the education department of the Karen National Union. Its main goals are to provide mother tongue education services to rural Karen populations in Southeast Myanmar, as well as to preserve the Karen language, culture and history. Despite being an important education provider in the region, it is not officially recognised by the Myanmar government.

<sup>12</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>13</sup> The Cobra Column is one of eight armed resistance forces that have emerged since March 2022 under the joint command of the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and the People's Defence Force (PDF). The Cobra Column operates largely under KNLA Company #1, Battalion #27.

<sup>14</sup> The People's Defence Force (PDF) is an armed resistance established independently as local civilian militias operating across the country. Following the February 1st 2021 military coup and the ongoing brutal violence enacted by the junta, the majority of these groups began working with the National Unity Government (NUG), a body

[soldiers] attacked [SAC] LIB #355 army camp [located near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town]. Following the attack, on the same day, [SAC] LIB #275 fired 120 mm shells indiscriminately into M--- village. One of the shells exploded inside M--- village and injured Naw F--- (58 years old) on her thigh and damaged her rice barn. She was sent to a hospital by KNLA soldiers from Battalion #28, Company #1. Other shells landed on the surrounding area of the village. Due to the frequent indiscriminate shelling, villagers [who had returned in March] did not dare to live in their village [anymore], so they all fled outside of their village.

Additionally, at 3:20 pm [on March 7<sup>th</sup>], the SAC conducted an air strike via helicopter on the fighting area [in SAC LIB #355 army camp]. Later, on the same day, at 9:30 pm, the SAC conducted air strikes with two fighter jets, so villagers were scared. Villagers from M---, Y---, Z---, and K--- villages, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, were scared [to live in the villages].



This photo was taken in March 2024, at M--- village, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. On March 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, SAC Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) #275 fired 120 mm shells into M--- village, injuring one villager. The picture shows the injury sustained by Naw F--- on her leg from shrapnel after SAC shelling struck her rice barn. [Photo: KHRG]

On March 8<sup>th</sup> at 3:30 am, the SAC [exact Artillery Unit unknown] conducted air strikes four times into M--- village. They also conducted shelling every few days at different times of the day [until the end of March]. At 7:30 am, sounds of gunfire and shelling appeared. [No villager was injured as they had already left the village, prior to the incident.] Shelling did not happen every day but [SAC] LIBs #275, #357, #356, and Strategic Operations Command based near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town fired shells every two to three days into M--- village and K--- village, Noh Poe village tract, and the villages' surrounding areas, until March 31<sup>st</sup> 2024.

On March 20<sup>th</sup> 2024, at 5 pm, an SAC aircraft [fighter jet] dropped bombs into K--- village, Noh Poe village tract, and killed a villager, Saw G--- and injured two women from K--- village, and damaged 5 houses, an elementary school inside a church compound, an animist temple, and one middle school.<sup>15</sup>

---

claiming to be the legitimate government of Burma/Myanmar, which then formalized the PDF on May 5th 2021 as a precursor to a federal army.

<sup>15</sup> KHRG, [“Dooplaya District Incident Report: SAC air strike killed a villager, injured three, and destroyed houses and two schools, in Kaw T'Ree Township, March 2024”](#), August 2024.





These photos were taken in March 2024 at K--- village, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The two photos on the top display villagers' houses that were destroyed due to the SAC air strike on March 20<sup>th</sup> 2024. The photo on the bottom left displays the destruction of an elementary school, which was located inside a church compound. The photo on the bottom right displays a middle school in K--- village that was destroyed due to the air strike. [Photos: KHRG]

On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024, an aircraft dropped bombs [exact number unknown] into R--- village, Noh Poe village tract, damaging 5 houses. One bomb landed into a church area [damaging the church walls] and damaging an [animist] temple [causing no injuries to villagers because they had already fled].



These photos were taken in March 2024 at R--- village, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. On March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024, the SAC dropped a bomb on R--- village, damaging a church, temple, and 5 houses. The photo on the left shows the damaged church. The photo on the right displays a villager's damaged house. [Photos: KHRG]

Saw H---, a villager whose house was damaged [by the air strike on March 22<sup>nd</sup> 2024], said that due to the air strikes, villagers from R--- village and K--- village, were afraid to live in their villages as they have a deep fear of aircraft [air strikes]. There were three types of aircraft that came and did reconnaissance during March [2024]: villagers witnessed fighter jets, helicopters and bombers conducting reconnaissance in Kaw T'Ree Township.

These [aforementioned incidents] are human rights violations that have happened in Kaw T'Ree Township (a Karen National Union (KNU)<sup>16</sup>-controlled area), Dooطلا District, in Southeast Burma. Due to such [attacks], villagers did not dare to turn on their lights at nighttime. They [villagers] have to live in the dark. For villagers, reconnaissance and air strikes into villages are terrifying. Villagers were not only afraid to stay in the village but also afraid to travel.

### **March 2024: Fighting in S--- village and Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town**

On March 5<sup>th</sup> 2024, combined troops of KNLA and PDF soldiers attacked one of the SAC's police stations in S--- village, near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, in Kaw T'Ree Township. [The distance between the two, S--- village and Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, is around 250 metres away.]

From March 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, the fighting [firing guns, shelling and air strikes] happened continuously. On March 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, fighting happened on a road near the Asian Highway which is located between Kaw T'Ree Town, and Ra Ma Tee [Myawaddy] Town, Hpa-an District. The combined soldiers of KNLA and PDF attacked [SAC] LIBs #355, #356, and #357, and [SAC's] Thin Gan Nyi Naung Strategic Operation Command, which are all under the command of Strategic Operation Command #12. [Due to the fighting], villagers left their homes, belongings and properties, and fled to other places. Some fled to Myawaddy. Some fled to the borderland, to L-- Town [Thailand]. Some fled to Hpa-an District.

On March 13<sup>th</sup> 2024, a KHRG field researcher went to S--- village and witnessed many houses that had been burned, damaged or destroyed due to the fighting, air strikes, and bombs dropped [by the SAC] in S--- village. On March 14<sup>th</sup> 2024, when the field researcher went to S--- village [again], no one was in the village [as villagers had fled to safer areas to shelter]. During the fighting [that occurred from March 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>], [SAC] LIB #275 fired mortar shells into the fighting area [near the Asian Highway], which did not hit their opponents: KNLA and PDF. However, [the mortar shells] damaged many buildings of villagers in S--- village.

On March 16<sup>th</sup>, Naw I--- and Saw J---, a husband and wife, told the KHRG researcher about the above [incidents in an] interview. The couple lives in S--- village, next to Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, near the Asian Highway, between Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooطلا District, and T'Nay Cha Township, Hpa-an District. The couple are daily labourers, and as they did not have enough money to flee, they remained in S--- village. According to the couple, other villagers fled to Ra Ma Tee [Myawaddy] Town. Some [villagers] fled to T'Nay Cha Township, Hpa-an District, some fled to P--- IDP camp, in P'Loo village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, and some fled to the borderland, in L--- Town, Thailand.

This fighting [from March 7<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> 2024] involved Cobra Column Company #1 and #2 (under the command of Battalion #28, from Dooطلا District), along with PDF combined troops, and KNLA Battalion #101 (from Hpa-an District), who attacked the SAC's Thin Gan Nyi Naung Strategic Operation Command, [including] LIBs #355, #356, and #357 army camps. The SAC used

---

<sup>16</sup> The Karen National Union (KNU) is the main Karen political organisation. It was established in 1947 and has been in conflict with the government since 1949. The KNU wields power across large areas of Southeast Myanmar and has been calling for the creation of a democratic federal system since 1976. Although it signed the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) in 2015, following the 2021 coup staged by Burma Army leaders, the KNU officially stated that the NCA has become void.



aircraft to do reconnaissance and dropped bombs every day into villages [in Noh Poe village tract]. Some bombs also landed on Aa--- village and Ab--- village, Pu Htee Wa Ba Blaw village tract, in T'Nay Cha Township, Hpa-an District.

Although the conflict [between the SAC and the KNLA] is [an ongoing] civil war, the military government [SAC] uses helicopters, fighter jets and bombers [against civilians]. They [the SAC] bombed and damaged S--- village and the surrounding areas of the village. They [the bombs] landed inside Hpa-an District as well, including: Ab--- village, Aa--- village, and Ac--- village, Pu Htee Wa Ba Blaw village tract, T'Nay Cha Township, Hpa-an District. In March 2024, fighting occurred every day and bombs were dropped almost every day. From March 7<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, the fighting did not stop. Likewise, air strikes also did not stop.

The fighting [in Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town in the month of March] displaced more than 5,000 villagers. There were increased numbers in injuries [exact number unknown] and there was also at least one death of a villager in S--- village due to the fighting. [The fighting resulted in one villager being shot. However, as villagers fled the area, the KHRG researcher could not follow up on the details and condition of the injured.] As of July 30<sup>th</sup> 2024, the villagers have not returned to their village.



The four photos were taken in March 2024 in S--- village, near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The SAC regularly conducted air strikes from March 7<sup>th</sup> to March 18<sup>th</sup> 2024, resulting in villagers' houses being damaged. [Photos: KHRG]

### **Shelling in Maw Ma village tract and Kaw Nweh village tract**

From January to March 2024, [SAC] Infantry Battalion (IB) #97 fired shells into both Maw Ma village tract and Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, almost every day. Villagers from

Maw Ma village reported to a KHRG field researcher that they heard firing sounds. [Villagers did not dare to travel to check where the shell landed.] Therefore, villagers were afraid to travel to purchase goods in Kaw T'Ree Town.<sup>17</sup>

Further background reading on the situation of air strikes in Southeast Burma/Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [ကဘီယုဟဲလ် Aircraft coming! : Impacts of air strikes on local communities and villagers' protection strategies in Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup](#). November 2024.
- [Schools Under Attack: Challenges to the Right to Education in Southeast Burma \(June 2023 – February 2024\)](#). July 2024.
- ["Doooplaya District Incident Report: SAC air strike killed a villager, injured three, and destroyed houses and two schools, in Kaw T'Ree Township, March 2024"](#). August 2024.
- ["Doooplaya District Short Update: SAC shelling killed a villager and damaged houses in Kruh Tuh Township \(May and September 2023\)"](#). September 2024.

### About KHRG

Founded in 1992, 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](http://www.khrg.org).

---

<sup>17</sup> KHRG, ["Doooplaya District Situation Update: SAC shelling, militarisation and air strikes causing casualties, displacement, and education, healthcare and livelihood challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township \(January to August 2024\)"](#). December 2024.



