



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

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### Situation Update

March 31<sup>st</sup> 2025 / KHRG # 24-369-S1

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## Dooplaya District Situation Update: fighting, SAC air strikes and shelling causing destruction, displacement, and livelihood, healthcare and education challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township (April to July 2024)

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*This Situation Update describes events that occurred in Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) Township, Dooplaya District, from April to July 2024. During the first and second week of April, State Administration Council (SAC)'s Strategic Operations Command (SOC) located near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, was attacked by Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and People's Defence Force (PDF) combined troops. The SAC dropped bombs into the area surrounding the fighting, causing fear for villagers to live in their villages. On April 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, SAC conducted air strikes into A--- village, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, damaging a villager's house, an elementary school, and villagers' plantation fields, and forcing villagers to sleep outside of their village. On April 10<sup>th</sup> 2024, while there was fighting between SAC and armed resistance groups, the SAC conducted air strikes and shelling into the fighting and surrounding areas, causing fear for villagers nearby, such as those in D--- village, Ra Ma Tee (Myawaddy) village tract. On May 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, an SAC 120 mm shell landed inside E--- village, Noh Poe village tract, damaging a villager's rice barn and livestock. During June to July 2024, fighting happened between SAC's Aung Zeya Column and KNLA Cobra Column at the Asian Highway, impeding villagers to live in nearby villages. Moreover, schools in Kaw T'Ree Township were forced to close. The fighting and militarisation in the Township caused difficulties for villagers, and it became challenging for villagers to travel and purchase goods. Commodity prices also increased. Additionally, villagers got seasonal flu during the rainy season, and were unable to work easily.<sup>1</sup>*

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### April 2024: fighting, SAC air strikes and shelling into the surrounding area of Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town

Fighting happened on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 2024, at 5 am, between Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>2</sup> and People's Defense Force (PDF)<sup>3</sup> combined troops against State Administration

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<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in September 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 Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>3</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 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.

Council (SAC)<sup>4</sup> at Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. KNLA and PDF were attacking SAC's Strategic Operations Command (SOC)<sup>5</sup> army camp located near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town. The fighting lasted for two days. The fighting started on April 5<sup>th</sup> 2024, from 5 am to 1 pm, and again on April 6<sup>th</sup> 2024, from 5 am to 12 pm. The SAC SOC army camp was captured by the KNLA and PDF. [Fighting in the town and SAC attacks on nearby villages had already occurred in March 2024<sup>6</sup>]

During the fighting the SAC used [different types of] aircraft, including a fighter jet, to conduct air reconnaissance and dropped bombs into the fighting surrounding area, such as A--- village, Noh Poe village tract<sup>7</sup>, Kaw T'Ree Township.

Due to the fighting, many buildings in Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town were destroyed [burned and damaged]. Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town looked like a graveyard, filled with silence. Moreover, villagers who lived in the surrounding area of Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town were living in fear. Villagers who lived, on the southern side of the Asian Highway<sup>8</sup>, near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, were villagers from B--- village, E--- village, A--- village, T--- village, in Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. Those villagers did not dare to live in their village anymore.



These pictures were taken in April 2024 at Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The pictures display Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, burned by the SAC's aircraft dropping bombs into the town. All villagers fled from the town. [Photos: KHRG]

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<sup>4</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 and 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>5</sup> Strategic Operations Command; under regional command and comprises three to four battalions and a headquarters. It mostly covers an area for defensive purposes.

<sup>6</sup> See: KHRG, "[Dooplaya District Situation Update: SAC air strikes and shelling caused death, injury, damage, and displacement in Kaw T'Ree Township \(December 2023 to March 2024\)](#)", March 2025.

<sup>7</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>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 Kawkareik Town road construction threatens villagers' livelihoods," KHRG, March 2015.

The next day, on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, at 7 pm, an SAC fighter jet conducted air strikes into A--- village, Noh Poe village tract, destroying the house of a villager named Saw<sup>9</sup> C---. Half of the house's roof and walls were destroyed. Moreover, one of the bombs landed inside a school compound, destroying one of the elementary schools in A--- village. The SAC also dropped bombs from aircraft into Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town's surrounding area, likewise into villagers' plantations as well. Villagers did not dare to live in their village and fled to sleep elsewhere. Therefore, as explained by a villager from A--- village, named Saw Aa---, no one was injured. [Moreover,] the SAC conducted air reconnaissance in A--- village almost every day from April to May 2024.



The photos were taken in April 2024 at A--- village, Noh Poe village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township. An SAC's fighter jet conducted air strikes into A--- village and destroyed a villager's house and one elementary school on April 7<sup>th</sup> 2024. The two photos on the top show the house that was destroyed and the two photos on the bottom show an elementary school from A--- village that was damaged. [Photos: KHRG]

On April 10<sup>th</sup> 2024, fighting happened between SAC and combined soldiers of KNLA and PDF, at Infantry Battalion (IB)<sup>10</sup>'s #275 army camp, nearby D--- village, therefore, villagers from nearby village such as D--- village, Ra Ma Tee village tract, did not dare to live, and were not able to live, in their village. [During the fighting SAC used aircraft to drop bombs and conducted indiscriminate shelling into the surrounding area, such as D--- village]. After IB #275's army camp was captured by the KNLA and PDF, [SAC] Aung Zeya Column<sup>11</sup> attacked [the armed

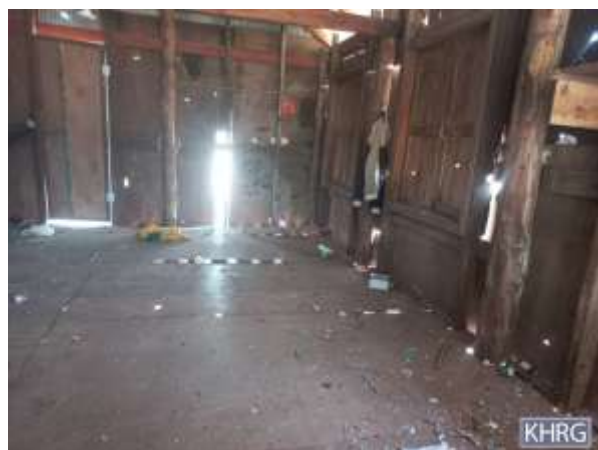
<sup>9</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>10</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>11</sup> The Aung Zeya Column is a State Administration Council (SAC) counteroffensive that was formed in April 2024 under the name 'Operation Aung Zeya'. Its aim is to retake control of the Asian Highway between Kaw T'Ree (Kawkareik) and the border town Myawaddy from Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) forces. The column is



resistance groups] to recapture the SAC's SOC army camp near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town, which was previously captured by KNLA and PDF on April 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> 2024.



The pictures were taken in April 2024 at D--- village, Ra Ma Tee village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. The pictures show that villagers' houses were destroyed due to air strikes conducted by the SAC while fighting happened between SAC and combined soldiers of KNLA and PDF at the SAC IB #275 army camp. [Photos: KHRG]

### **May 2024: SAC shelling into E--- village, nearby Thain Gan Nyi Naung Town**

On May 7<sup>th</sup> 2024, an 120mm artillery shell landed inside E--- village, Noh Poe village tract [near Thin Gan Nyi Naung Town], damaging the house and rice barn of Saw F--- and Naw<sup>12</sup> G---. Moreover, the explosion killed two pigs belonging to Naw H---. Due to this incident, villagers were living in fear.

Additionally, due to the previous fighting in April and shelling in May, in E--- village, villagers were unable to work on their plantation fields. The number of villagers who did not dare to live in the village increased. Villagers who have durian plantations and betel nut plantations could not go to their plantations [due to the general fighting].

### **June and July 2024: Fighting at the Asian Highway**

During June to July 2024, fighting [and other attacks including gun firing, indiscriminate shelling and air strikes] happened every week between KNLA Battalion #28 and Cobra Column<sup>13</sup> combined forces against SAC Aung Zeya Column, and SAC Light Infantry Division (LID)<sup>14</sup> #55 and #77 along the Asian Highway, in Kaw T'Ree Township. Due to the fighting, villagers from I-- village, N--- village, and Ab--- village, in Kaw Nweh village tract, Kaw T'Ree Township, did not dare to return to their villages.

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being overseen by deputy junta chief Soe Win and is comprised of over 1,000 troops. Since the operation started, there have been daily attacks along the Asian Highway.

<sup>12</sup> 'Naw' is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

<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 of KNLA's Brigade #6.

<sup>14</sup> A Light Infantry Division (LID) of the Burma Army is commanded by a brigadier general and consists of ten light infantry battalions specially trained in counter-insurgency, jungle warfare, search and destroy operations against ethnic insurgents. They were first incorporated into the Tatmadaw in 1966. LIDs are organised under three Tactical Operations Commands, commanded by a colonel, three battalions each and one reserve, one field artillery battalion, one armoured squadron and other support units. Each division is directly under the command of the Chief of Staff (Army).

### **Education challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township:**

Schools were forced to close in E---, J---, K---, and L--- villages, in Noh Poe village tract. Similarly, not only schools from M---, N---, O---, L---, and P--- villages, in Kaw Nweh village tract, were also forced to close in 2024, but also schools from Q--- village, Maw Ma village tract, and R---, S---, Ac--- and Ad---villages, in Aung Hpa village tract, were to close as well. The above listed villages were unable to open their schools, therefore, many children were unable to learn. The children were unable to study due to the ongoing conflict. In other words, their rights to schooling were violated.

Education is the basic foundation of a country's development; however, 2024-2025 academic year was disrupted [in many villages]. It violated children's rights. The violation of children rights to education is impacting the worlds' [future] development as well. There were parents who could not send their children to schools [due to their livelihood difficulties caused by the constant fighting as well.]

### **Livelihood challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township:**

Due to the constant fighting in Kaw T'Ree Township, the number of villagers leaving their homes and plantations increased in 2024. Due to the political situation [and ongoing civil war], commodity prices in the towns had increased, in comparison, and local products' prices had decreased. The Myanmar currency has weakened. Moreover, hyperinflation has become a challenge [for the civilians] as well.

Traveling is difficult for villagers because if villagers travel through a good [bigger, paved] road, they encounter SAC soldiers, so villagers take the mountain track. Villagers from Kaw T'Ree Township who lived near the Asian Highway, such as in '33 Pagodas' (Khoh Ther Si Ther Pler) village tract, Maw Ma village tract, Aww Hpa village tract, Kya K'Wa village tract, and Ah Kyaw village tract did not dare to purchase goods from Kaw T'Ree Town so they purchase goods from Kruh Tuh Town, Kruh Tuh Township, Dooplaya District. [Villagers] did not dare to travel through the Asian Highway so they avoided using it and they travel through mountain tracks. For people who did not have vehicles to travel, it [traveling is] difficult for them.

### **Healthcare challenges in Kaw T'Ree Township:**

During the rainy season, in June 2024, almost all villages from Kaw T'Ree Township were displaced to displacement sites and forests but some remained in their village. Almost every villager got seasonal flu. Due to the seasonal flu, villagers encountered challenges to travel and do work to support their livelihood.

### **Conclusion**

The above written information has presented human rights violations in Kaw T'Ree Township, Dooplaya District. As KHRG researcher was traveling in the area, this information was verified [by local villagers]. This documentation contain information from April to June [2024].

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

- [“Mu Traw District Short Update: SAC air strikes destroying civilian houses and property and causing displacement and livelihood challenges in Bu Tho and Dwe Lo Townships \(April 2024\)”](#), February 2025.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: SAC drone strikes and indiscriminate shelling caused casualties, destruction, and livelihood and education challenges in Ler Doh Township \(November to December 2024\)”](#), March 2025.
- [ကဘီယုဟဲလံ Aircraft coming! : Impacts of air strikes on local communities and villagers’ protection strategies in Southeast Burma since the 2021 coup.](#), November 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.khrq.org](http://www.khrq.org).

