



Short Update

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Kler Lwee Htoo Short Update: Arbitrary arrest and killing, July 2021

This Short Update describes events that occurred in Moo (Mone) Township, Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District between July 12th and July 16th 2021. A local villager was arrested by the State Administration Council (SAC) for sending Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) participants to attend basic military self-defence training at the local Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) base, and on suspicion of making or using explosives. Karen National Union (KNU) authorities summoned the local SAC village administrator to question him about the arrest. Receiving no response, the local Karen National Union (KNU) village tract administrator and two commanders from the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) went to arrest the SAC village administrator and were attacked by SAC troops while bringing him back to the KNLA camp. One local villager who had accompanied them was shot dead during the attack.¹

On July 12th 2021, State Administration Council (SAC) troops² from Infantry Battalion (IB)³ #60, which is based at Thee Boh army camp in Ler Doh Town, came to arrest a local villager: Saw C--, 40 years old, from A--- village, Htee Law Khee village tract,⁴ Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. He was arrested for sending Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM)⁵ participants to the

¹ The present document is based on information received in July 2021. 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 term most commonly used in referring to Myanmar's armed forces is Tatmadaw. The term has been used by KHRG throughout its reporting history, and most consistently during periods of civilian government. Since the February 1st 2021 coup and the military's establishment of the State Administration Council (SAC) as the executive governing body of Myanmar, Myanmar's armed forces have also come to be referred to as the SAC military. KHRG uses the term SAC military in specific reference to the Myanmar military since the February 1st 2021 coup. During previous periods of military rule, KHRG also used the names adopted by the military government in referring to the Tatmadaw (i.e. SLORC [State Law and Order Restoration Council] between 1988 to 1997, and SPDC [State Peace and Development Council] from 1998 to 2011), because these were the terms commonly used by villagers in KHRG research areas.

³ An Infantry Battalion (Tatmadaw) 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.

⁴ A village tract is an administrative unit of between five and 20 villages in a local area, often centred on a large village.

⁵ On February 2nd 2021, healthcare workers across Myanmar spearheaded a Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) and initiated labour strikes to protest against the February 2021 military coup. The movement quickly spread to other branches of public service, eventually turning into to a nationwide, large-scale civil disobedience campaign.

Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)⁶ base, and on suspicion of making or using explosives. Since the coup, he has sent youths from the villages in both Karen National Union (KNU)⁷-controlled and mixed control areas to attend 10 days of basic military self-defence training at the local KNLA base. The group that was sent also included CDM participants. Saw C---'s brother said that he does not believe that Saw C--- has been involved with explosives, adding that he thinks his brother may have been accused of that because he had attended basic military training in the past. Saw C---'s family and friends could initially contact him after his arrest, but since July 17th 2021, no one has been able to contact him, and his family is worried.

According to an update from August 7th 2021, Saw C---'s family have been able to send food and medicine for him but cannot meet him in person. He is now in Toungoo Town prison. The original charges were modified, and he is now simply being charged under Section 505(a) of the Penal Code.⁸ He is being kept with others who have been arrested and charged under this same section of the Penal Code, and thus remains separated from people charged with other types of crimes. The judiciary process is currently suspended [so there is no news of when he might appear in court or be released].⁹ His brother is trying to obtain his release, and met with a police officer from Nant Thar Kwin village, but there is nothing more that the family can currently do.

On the evening of July 12th 2021, following the villager's arrest, the local KNU authorities from Moo Township summoned the Htee Law Khee (Yay Leh) village administrator, Shit Thein, who was appointed by the State Administration Council (SAC).¹⁰ They asked to meet with him on July 13th 2021 to question him about the arrest. The Ta Ma village tract secretary, who works on administrating taxation and other issues, summoned him two or three times but he [Shit Thein] did not go to meet with them. Therefore, on the night of July 16th 2021, KNLA Deputy Company Commander Saw Wah Loh; [KNU] Ta Ma village tract secretary, Pa Doh Saw Kwa La; and KNLA Platoon Commander Saw Kaw Hser went by motorbike to arrest the Htee Law Khee administrator, Shit Thein, in Htee Law Khee village, Htee Law Khee village tract, Moo Township. They were accompanied by two villagers. One of the villagers was from A--- village and the other was from D--- village [who joined the KNU village tract secretary and KNLA officers along the way]. On their way back [from A--- village heading to the KNLA army camp], they were met by two military trucks and 25 soldiers from SAC IB #60, led by Battalion Commander Zayar Lin, upon reaching Haw Hkoh Gaw and Ler Doh junction. This was at 8:30 pm. The SAC troops fired at them [the KNLA commanders, KNU village tract secretary and the villagers, including the SAC village administrator, Shit Thein]. [It is unknown whether the KNLA commanders shot back.] According to the villagers, the village administrator's family informed the SAC that they [the KNU] were taking the village administrator to the KNLA base. The village administrator escaped during the shooting. [According to local reports, he also fled from the area the following

⁶ The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

⁷ 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 Myanmar 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.

⁸ Following the February 1st 2021 military coup, the State Administration Council revised various sections of the Penal Code. Section 505(a) was revised to include much broader language, and is being widely used to penalize those encouraging members of the civil service or security services to join the Civil Disobedience Movement. Under the revised Section 505(a), any attempt to "hinder, disturb, damage the motivation, discipline, health and conduct" of the military personnel and government employees and cause their hatred, disobedience or disloyalty toward the military and the government is punishable by up to three years in prison.

⁹ According to other reports received by KHRG, court proceedings have been suspended due to COVID-19.

¹⁰ 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 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.

day.] The KNLA commanders, KNU village tract secretary and one of the villagers were able to flee [the shooting], leaving behind their motorbikes at the junction. The other villager, Saw B---, 40 years old, from D--- village, was shot in the chest and died at around 11:00 pm. He is survived by his wife and five children. His wife has heart disease and regularly gets seizures, making it difficult to raise their children alone.

On July 20th 2021, the local leaders organised a funeral service and made a monument for Saw B--- in Maw Lay area, Plee Hta village tract, Moo Township. This monument claims that he is a martyr for his people, and that he fought for self-determination and the removal of the SAC from power.



This photo was taken on July 20th 2021 in Maw Lay area, Plee Hta village tract, Moo Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. It shows the tombstone for Saw B---, the D--- villager who was killed by SAC IB #60 on July 16th 2021 at Haw Hkoh Gaw and Ler Doh junction.

Further background reading on the situation in Kler Lwee Htoo District since the February 1st military coup¹¹ can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Short Update: Increased militarisation and fighting between the Tatmadaw and the KNLA prevent IDPs from returning home in Lew Doh Township, March to May 2021”](#), May 2021.
- [“A Worrisome Escalation: Tatmadaw airstrikes kill at least 16 villagers, displace thousands in Mu Traw and Kler Lwee Htoo districts, March 2021”](#), May 2021.
- [“Kler Lwee Htoo District Incident Report: One villager injured, another one missing after being shot at by the Tatmadaw in Moo Township, May 2021”](#), June 2021.

About KHRG

Founded in 1992, the Karen Human Rights Group is an independent local organisation committed to improving the human rights situation in Southeast Myanmar. 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.khr.org.

¹¹ On February 1st 2021, the Burma Army deposed the democratically elected government led by the National League for Democracy (NLD). The military proclaimed a year-long state of emergency and transferred power to Min Aung Hlaing, the Commander-in-Chief of Myanmar's Armed Forces. Based on unproven fraud allegations, the Tatmadaw invalidated the landslide victory of the NLD in the November 2020 General Election and stated it would hold new elections at the end of the state of emergency. The coup d'état occurred the day before the Parliament of Myanmar was due to swear in the members elected during the 2020 election. Elected President Win Myint and State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi were detained, along with ministers, their deputies and members of Parliament.

Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District



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