



## Incident Report

April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2021 / KHRG # 21-56-I1

## Kler Lwe Htoo District Incident Report: Two villagers killed, one injured in a landmine explosion in Ler Doh Township, March 2021

*This Incident Report describes events that occurred near T--- village, Kheh Kah Hkoh village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District in March 2021. On March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, two local villagers died and another one sustained slight injuries in a landmine explosion. The victims were travelling to Ler Doh Town to purchase goods when one of their motorbikes hit a landmine. Because of this incident, local villagers are now too afraid of landmines to go to their plantations. They want the local authorities to clear the area of landmines, but these have yet to take any action regarding this issue.<sup>1</sup>*

### Part 1 – Incident Details

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Landmine explosion
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	March 1 <sup>st</sup> 2021
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	D--- place, <sup>2</sup> three miles [4.83 km] away from T--- village, Kheh Kah Hkoh village tract, <sup>3</sup> Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District

Victim Information		
<b>Name</b>	Saw <sup>4</sup> E---	Naw <sup>5</sup> M---
<b>Age</b>	24	19
<b>Sex</b>	Male	Female
<b>Nationality</b>	Karen	Karen
<b>Family</b>	Single	Single
<b>Occupation</b>	Motorbike repairman	Shopkeeper
<b>Religion</b>	Animist	Animist
<b>Position</b>	Villager	Villager

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in March 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.

<sup>2</sup> Place refers to the name given by local communities to a specific location. It is smaller than what local communities refer to as an area

<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 a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

<sup>5</sup> Naw is a S'gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person's name.

<b>Village</b>	T--- village, Kheh Kah Hkoh village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District	T--- village, Kheh Kah Hkoh village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District
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## Part 2 - Information Quality

### **1. Explain in detail how you collected this information.**

We interviewed the aunt of one of the victims who was killed in the landmine explosion. She gave us information about the incident.

### **2. Explain how the source verified this information.**

The source is a relative of one of the victims.

## Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

### **Describe the Incident(s) in complete detail.**

On March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021, 24-year-old Saw E--- and 19-year-old Naw M--- died in a landmine explosion. Both of them were from T--- village, Kheh Kah Hkoh village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. They were travelling to Ler Doh Town to purchase goods for their shop when the incident happened [the two victims were in a relationship]. Saw K---, an 18-year-old villager from the same village, was accompanying them.

At 7:30 PM, the motorbike both victims were riding on hit a landmine at D--- place, three miles away from T--- village. Saw E--- and Naw M--- died on the spot. Saw K---, who was riding on another motorbike, sustained slight shrapnel-induced injuries to his lips and legs [he had fully recovered by the time of drafting]. Saw K--- immediately returned to the village and informed the victims' families and the local authorities about the incident, after which they went to the incident location and brought back the corpses of the victims to the village.

This was not the first landmine incident in the area. In February 2021 [KHRG could not establish the exact date], a villager from T--- village sustained slight injuries to his hands and legs in a landmine explosion near D--- place. According to Naw B---, Naw M---'s aunt, the loads he was transporting on his motorbike prevented him from getting more seriously injured [by shielding him from the blast and shrapnel]. In the past, other villagers were killed or injured in landmine explosions because they had to travel through former battlefields to work for their livelihoods or buy food in town.

The Committee for Internally Displaced Karen People (CIDKP) has been conducting regular mine risk education workshops for the local villagers from 2006 to 2020. Local households would typically send one of their members to attend these workshops so they can share what they have learned with their family. Therefore, most villagers are aware of the danger posed by landmines and unexploded ordnance; and they know how to protect themselves from it.

Local villagers were also told by the local [Karen National Union - KNU]<sup>6</sup> authorities to avoid using the road from the western part of the village to Ler Doh Town [along which both incidents happened] due to landmine contamination. The last time they were warned was in January 2021. Although local villagers now generally avoid this particular road, some still use it to go and buy food in town [because it is faster than the alternate route]. Villagers from T--- village

<sup>6</sup> 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.

do not know which armed actors planted these landmines, but they think that they were planted during past rounds of fighting between the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA)<sup>7</sup> and the Tatmadaw.<sup>8</sup>

According to Naw B---, local villagers have stopped going to certain areas and using the contaminated road since the incident: *"We are now afraid to use that road because of the two [landmine] incidents that happened in the same area. We do not dare to go to the areas surrounding the village. We are so worried. Even though we were told not to use the prohibited road, we need to go to town to buy goods. If we don't, we will have nothing left to eat. Since the last landmine incident, the villagers are afraid and they do not feel safe enough to go to the areas surrounding the village."* The villagers in T--- village rely on farming for their livelihoods, but they are now too afraid of [landmine contamination to] go to their fields.

Villagers were informed about the presence of landmines in the areas surrounding the village, but they have never heard of any authorities taking action to remove them. According to Naw B---, the local community now want the landmines to be removed so they can live without fear: *"I think there are still a lot of landmines in the area. Villagers' livestock and villagers were injured in landmine explosions. I think these landmines [...] should be removed so that we can be free from the fear of landmine explosions. The villagers living in this village buy their food in town. How can we survive without being able to travel to buy food? Our lives on this earth are short. The past is the past. During this NCA [Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement]<sup>9</sup> period, we want to work on the lands we inherited from our ancestors. In these conditions, there will be no development in our lives. That is so discouraging."*

The families of the victims now want counselling [they want to be encouraged to overcome their grief]. Tatmadaw Infantry Battalion (IB)<sup>10</sup> #92 is based near T--- village. Their Commander encouraged [offered his condolences to] the victims' families. In addition, he gave them three sacks of rice and a sack of beans. The victims' families also received [financial] support from relatives living in other countries. [The families did not express the need for further support.]

#### **Part 4 - Permission for Using the Details**

**Did the victim(s) provide permission to use this information? Explain how that permission was provided.**

A relative of one of the victims gave KHRG permission to use this information.

<sup>7</sup> The Karen National Liberation Army is the armed wing of the Karen National Union.

<sup>8</sup> Tatmadaw refers to the Myanmar military.

<sup>9</sup> On October 15th 2015, after a negotiation process marred with controversy over the notable non-inclusion of several ethnic armed groups, a Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA) was signed between the Burma/ Myanmar government and eight of the fifteen ethnic armed groups originally invited to the negotiation table, including the Karen National Union. It was followed by the adoption of a Code of Conduct by the signatories in November 2015. In February 2018, two additional armed ethnic groups signed the NCA under pressure from the Burma/Myanmar government.

<sup>10</sup> 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.



These photos were taken on March 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 in T--- village, Kheh Kah Hkoh village tract, Ler Doh Township, Kler Lwee Htoo District. They show the bodies of the two victims who died in the landmine explosion. [Photos: Local villager]

Further background reading on landmine contamination in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Doo Tha Htoo District Incident Report: Child seriously injured in a landmine explosion in Thaton Township, January 2021”](#), March 2021.
- [“Mu Traw District Situation Update: Militarisation, indiscriminate shelling, displacement and landmine contamination in Bu Tho Township, May to July 2020”](#), December 2020.
- [“Southeast Myanmar Field Report: COVID-19, armed conflict, landmines and sexual violence, January to June 2020”](#), September 2020.

### 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](http://www.khr.org).

# Kler Lwee Htoo (Nyaunglebin) District

