



**Incident Report**

February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 / KHRG # 19-82-I3

**Hpapun District Incident Report: *Torture, forced child marriage and multiple instances of child rape in Bu Tho Township, May to October 2019***

*In mid-May 2019, a 17-year-old girl was forced by her adoptive mother to marry a 48-year-old man against her will in H--- village, G--- village tract, Bu Tho Township. Beforehand, the victim was tortured by her adoptive mother to coerce her into accepting to marry him. Between May and October 2019, the girl faced multiple instances of rape and fled several times to escape from sexual violence, but was always forced to come back and remarry her husband. On September 16<sup>th</sup> 2019, the village authorities did not approve her request to divorce and gave her three months to reconsider. Acting on witchcraft allegations, the KNPF arrested the husband on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2019, after which they came to know about the forced marriage and sexual violence cases. Their investigation led to the arrest of the adoptive mother on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2019, but she was ultimately sentenced to a fine and released on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2020. Due to the traumatic events she experienced, the victim is now suffering from mental health issues. However, nothing has been done to ensure that she can access psychological counselling services.<sup>1</sup>*

**Part 1 – Incident Details**

<b>Type of Incident</b>	Torture, forced child marriage and multiple instances of child rape
<b>Date of Incident(s)</b>	May to October 2019
<b>Incident Location (Village, Township and District)</b>	H--- village, G--- village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District

<b>Victim Information</b>	
<b>Name</b>	Naw <sup>2</sup> N---
<b>Age</b>	17
<b>Sex</b>	Female
<b>Nationality</b>	Karen

<sup>1</sup> The present document is based on information received in November 2019. It was provided by a community member in Hpapun 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 staff.

<sup>2</sup> Naw is a S’gaw Karen female honorific title used before a person’s name.

<b>Occupation</b>	Farmer
<b>Religion</b>	Christian
<b>Village</b>	H--- village, G---village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District

<b>Perpetrator Information (Civilian)</b>		
<b>Name(s)</b>	<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Village</b>
Naw P---	Farmer and local Catholic religious figure	H---, G--- village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District
Saw <sup>3</sup> B---	-	L--- village, Pa Heh village tract, Bu Tho Twonship, Hpapun District

## Part 2 - Information Quality

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

A KHRG field researcher interviewed the victim, Naw N---

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

The source experienced this incident first hand.

## Part 3 – Complete Description of the Incident

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

In mid-May 2019, Naw N---, a 17-year-old girl from H--- village, G---village tract, Bu Tho Township was forced by her adoptive mother, Naw P---, to marry Saw B---, a 48-year-old man from L--- village, Bu Tho Township. The girl vigorously refused the marriage at first, so Naw P-- - subjected her to numerous forms of torture and abuse. These included beatings, repeated submersion of her head in water and forcing her to eat stale food meant for dogs. As Naw N--- could not take any more suffering and was dependent on her adoptive parents' support, she eventually had to marry Saw B--- against her will.

After the marriage, Naw N--- could stay in her adoptive mother's house. She was raped multiple times by her husband. She reported to a KHRG field researcher that he treated her like a prostitute or a sex slave. She eventually fled to her older sister's and other villager's houses to escape the sexual violence and put an end to her suffering. However, her adoptive mother ordered her to return home and forced her to marry that man again on June 10<sup>th</sup> 2019 [in this community, fleeing from one's husband is considered as an informal divorce]. As Saw B--- raped her again after that, she fled a second time.

On June 12<sup>th</sup> 2019, Saw B--- attempted to rape Naw N--- when she was alone at her older sister's house. He forcibly grabbed and kissed her. Her shirt was torn apart and her sarong also fell off. After several attempts to escape, she managed to grab her sarong back and to run to her adoptive father Saw F---'s old hut covering herself with the sarong. She noticed that some men witnessed the incident, but they did not try to help her.

<sup>3</sup> Saw is a S'gaw Karen male honorific title used before a person's name.

Naw N--- described the incident: *"I came back from fetching firewood and he [Saw B---] was in the house. However, I did not know that he was inside. He grabbed my hands when I opened the door to enter the house. He grabbed me and attempted to rape me. I tried to escape from him but I could not at first. I had to try again and again. My sarong also fell off. Later, I could escape from his attempts. Then, I grabbed my sarong and ran to my father. Now we are waiting for the decision from the village tract head."*

Naw P--- forced Naw N--- to marry Saw B--- a third time on June 16<sup>th</sup> 2019. However, the girl suffered the same abuses and fled again. The local authorities, such as village leaders and the village tract administrator knew about the girl's situation, but they did not take any action to protect her. Instead, they even took part in the marriage ceremonies. The girl asked the local authorities to formally divorce on September 16<sup>th</sup> 2019, but they just gave her three months to reconsider and took no further measures to ensure her protection from Saw B---. She was forced to marry him one last time on September 20<sup>th</sup> 2019.

Afterwards, Saw B--- associated with three individuals (U<sup>4</sup> M---, U D--- and a hermit) to make the girl fall in love with him by using witchcraft. As Naw N---'s mental health started deteriorating severely as a result of the numerous abuses she faced, the local population thought that changes in her behaviour were caused by witchcraft and started marginalising her. When her adoptive father Saw F--- noticed her behaviour changes, he assumed that she had been victim of witchcraft and investigated the case with the Karen National Police Force (KNPF)<sup>5</sup> in Bu Tho Township.

The KNPF arrested Saw B--- and U M--- on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2019. After interrogating them, the KNPF came to know about the forced marriage and multiple instances of rape. After further investigation, Naw P--- was arrested on December 12<sup>th</sup> 2019. Ultimately, Naw P--- was ordered to pay a fine of 2,000,000 kyats [USD 1384.76]<sup>6</sup> by the Bu Tho Township Karen National Union<sup>7</sup> Court. She was released on January 31<sup>st</sup> 2020 after she paid it. It remains unclear what action will be taken against Saw B---.

The victim never reported her case to the police because she was afraid of her adoptive mother and still traumatised by the torture she inflicted upon her. She also lacked knowledge about criminal law and the justice system, and she felt too ashamed to share her feelings with others. Naw N--- is now staying with her neighbour's family without receiving psychological counselling services. She now has a strong adverse response to loud noises or unpleasant information. Therefore, she needs proper psychological support to try and overcome the traumatic events she experienced.

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

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

The victim allowed KHRG to use this information. Her adoptive father, who was sitting beside the victim during the interview, also agreed to it.

<sup>4</sup> U is a Burmese title used for elder men, used before their name.

<sup>5</sup> The Karen National Police Force is the law enforcement agency of the Karen National Union. It was established in 1991.

<sup>6</sup> All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the February 5<sup>th</sup> 2019 official market rate.

<sup>7</sup> The Karen National Union is the main Karen group opposing the government.

Further background reading on the issue of sexual violence against women in Southeast Myanmar can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- [“Dooplaya Incident Report: Multiple instances of child rape and domestic abuse in Noh T’Kaw Township, 2010 to 2019”](#), (January 2020)
- [“Hpa-an Incident Report: Arbitrary detention and lack of fair trial in sexual violence-murder case in T’Nay Hsah Township”](#), (December 2019)
- [“Nyaunglebin Incident Report: Child rape by a Myanmar police officer in Kyaukkyi Township, August 2019”](#), (November 2019)
- [“Hpa-an Incident Report: Rape case in Nabu \(T’Nay Hsah\) Township, 2018 Rainy Season”](#), (September 2019)

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