



Karen Human Rights Group

Documenting the voices of villagers in rural Burma

News Bulletin

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Human rights violations by Second Lieutenant Tha Beh of BGF Battalion #1014 in Hpapun District, between 2012 and 2015

This News Bulletin describes forced labour, violent abuse, threats, arbitrary taxation and demands, and fighting committed by Second Lieutenant Tha Beh of Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014 between 2012 and 2015. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh has committed numerous human rights violations in the regions under his influence, such as A---, B---, and C--- areas, in Pa Zwun Myaung village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. On January 13th 2014, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh violently abused a villager from G--- village, Bu Tho Township for logging without paying him a tax, resulting in the villager's arm being broken. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh also fined the villager 300,000 kyat (US \$257.07) after the abuse. Likewise, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh also punched a village head from K--- village and two other villagers on April 2nd 2014 when he found out that they were helping Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) soldiers during their sentry duty. The altercation culminated with Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's soldiers shooting at the village head, hitting him in the stomach and hand. The village head's hand had to be amputated as a result. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh continues to operate in the area with impunity from his superiors, causing some villagers to relocate in order to escape his abuse.¹

Border Guard Force (BGF)² Second Lieutenant Tha Beh is serving in Battalion #1014³ under the command of Maung Chit.⁴ He is originally from K--- village, but is active around A---, B---

¹ This News Bulletin was written by KHRG office staff and is based on information from a community member from Hpapun District who has been trained by KHRG to monitor local human rights conditions. It summarises information from four incident reports, three situation updates and three interviews received by KHRG between July 2013 and July 2014. In order to increase the transparency of KHRG methodology and more directly communicate the experiences and perspectives of villagers in southeast Burma/Myanmar, KHRG aims to make all field information received available on the KHRG website once it has been processed and translated, subject only to security considerations. For additional reports categorised by Type, Issue, Location and Year, please see the Related Readings component following each report on KHRG's website.

² Border Guard Force (BGF) battalions of the Tatmadaw were established in 2010, and they are composed mostly of soldiers from former non-state armed groups, such as older constellations of the DKBA, which have formalised ceasefire agreements with the Burma/Myanmar government and agreed to transform into battalions within the Tatmadaw. BGF battalions are assigned four digit battalion numbers, whereas regular Tatmadaw infantry battalions are assigned two digit battalion numbers and light infantry battalions are identified by two or three-digit battalion numbers. For more information, see "[DKBA officially becomes Border Guard Force](#)," *Democratic Voice of Burma*, August 2010, and "[Exploitation and recruitment under the DKBA in Pa'an District](#)," KHRG, June 2009.

³ KHRG has received numerous reports of human rights violations committed by soldiers from Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014, including killing, torture, violent abuse, explicit threats, arbitrary taxation and demands, and land confiscation. For more information, see "[Human rights violations by Border Guard Force \(BGF\) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014](#)," KHRG, July 2015.

⁴ Commander Maung Chit, also referred to as Maw Hsee, is the commander of Tatmadaw Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014 in Hpapun District. Maung Chit is not to be confused with Maung Chit Thu (typically referred to as Chit Thu), who is a senior level BGF commander overseeing battalions #1017, #1018, #1019 and

and C--- villages in Pa Zwun Myaung village tract, Bu Tho Township. According to reports received from KHRG researchers, his primary activities in the area include logging and arbitrary taxation, which negatively impact villagers. He has also been implicated as the perpetrator of various human rights violations against villagers, such as violent abuse, forced labour, and explicit threats toward villagers, which are detailed below.

Forced labour, logging and violent abuse

In early 2014, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh had initiated a logging operation and set up his camp in the forest near A--- village, B--- village, and C--- village area in Pa Zwun Myaung village tract, Bu Tho Township. On January 15th 2014, it was reported that when Second Lieutenant Tha Beh engages in logging there, he pays the villagers an unfairly low price for the logs, as well as occasionally takes logs forcibly from villagers.⁵ When logging in C--- village, Pa Zwun Myaung village tract, Bu Tho Township, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh demands the use of villagers' oxcarts or cars from the villages near the logging operation. He forces villagers to work for him without pay and he scolds, swears, hits, and punches the villagers if they are absent from their assigned work day.⁶

The extent of Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's abuse and forced labour was further described by Saw I--- from B--- village, Htee Tha Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township, who said, "*His attitude toward the civilians is not good. He does not smile and he always brings a stick with him [to hit villagers with].*"⁷ According to a villager interviewed by a KHRG researcher, the villagers, including the women and children, have been forced to do anything from making bricks and carrying them with their oxcarts or buffalo carts, to cutting bamboo, splitting firewood and carrying timber by oxcart, truck or even by foot.⁸

The BGF soldiers from Battalion #1014 also continue demanding forced labour from villagers for sentry and porter duty around the area.⁹ The village administrator did nothing to come up with a satisfactory solution for the villagers regarding this case. Consequently, many villagers who were in Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's area of influence have fled and relocated to H--- village and other nearby villages to escape Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's demands. Some displaced villagers have returned to their original village, but some remain displaced.¹⁰

In addition to demanding forced labour, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh has also been reported to abuse villagers who refuse to pay his arbitrary logging tax. On January 13th 2014, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh violently abused Maung J---, a villager from G--- village, in addition to fining him 300,000 kyat (US \$257.07)¹¹ for doing logging without paying tax to him. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh broke the villager's arm during the abuse. According to the reports received from a KHRG researcher, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh has not been punished for the abuse and injury that he had caused. After the incident, the victim did not dare to go back home and instead

#1020 in Ko Ko, Hpa-an District. See, "[Human rights violations by Border Guard Force \(BGF\) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014](#)," KHRG, July 2015.

Maung Chit Thu (typically referred to as Chit Thu), who is a senior level BGF commander overseeing battalions #1017, #1018, #1019 and #1020 in Ko Ko, Hpa-an District.

⁵ This information was included in an unpublished report received by KHRG in July 2014.

⁶ This information was included in an unpublished report received by KHRG in August 2014.

⁷ See, "[Hpapun Interview: U A---, January 2014](#)," KHRG, October 2014.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ This information was included in an unpublished report received by KHRG in August 2014.

¹⁰ See, "[Hpapun Incident Report: "Forced labour and violent abuse in Bu Tho Township, January 2014](#)," KHRG, August 2014.

¹¹ All conversion estimates for the kyat in this report are based on the July 30th 2015 official market rate of 1,167 kyat to the US \$1.

decided to stay with the Karen National Liberation Army (KNLA) and to rely on them for protection.¹²

On April 2nd 2014, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh had also committed violent abuse against the B-- village head and two other villagers who were on sentry duty. On April 1st 2014, Officer Hpah Mwee from the KNLA asked B-- village head from Htee Tha Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township to send a letter to one of his privates who lives in K--- village. Instead of sending the letter himself, the village head asked a villager who was on sentry duty to send the letter for him. In the letter, Hpah Mwee asked his private to return as soon as possible after receiving the letter. The next morning, when Second Lieutenant Tha Beh found out about this, he ordered the village head and the sentry villager to come and meet him. When Second Lieutenant Tha Beh met the sentry and the village head he punched them angrily without saying anything to them. Meanwhile, K--- village head also arrived on Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's orders and Tha Beh punched him without asking him any questions, as well. Since he kept punching K--- village head continuously, the K--- village head fell down. When he fell down, he desperately brandished his machete in an attempt to cut Second Lieutenant Tha Beh. Tha Beh's two privates responded by shooting with their AR-15 assault rifles. The village head was shot twice, once in his hand and once in his stomach. The village head's hand had to be amputated in the hospital as a result of this injury, while Second Lieutenant Tha Beh suffered a wound to his leg, as a result of the bullet exiting the villager's hand and hitting him in the leg.¹³

Threats and destruction of villager property

Both Second Lieutenant Tha Beh and his subordinate soldiers have made explicit and violent threats against villagers, in addition to confiscating villager property arbitrarily. On one occasion, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh confiscated a forest area which U A---, a villager from M--- village, Htee Tha Daw Htah village tract, Bu Tho Township had purchased from a village elder. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh confiscated the land simply because the village elder dared to complain about his abusive behaviour. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh continued to violently threaten U A--- to stop him from logging in that area:

“Officer Tha Beh told me not to log trees from that forest [area] and that he would shoot me with a gun if I log trees from that forest [area]. [If I did log trees], he would tell people to come after me and he said that he would cut off my head in front of the villagers and then take it [my head] around the village.”¹⁴

As a result of these threats, U A--- has fled to S--- village and dares not go back to live in M--- village out of fear that Second Lieutenant Tha Beh would cut his throat.

Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's soldiers have also been implicated in various abuses against villagers while under his command, demonstrating a lack of disciplining on his part, as they have not been punished for their actions. Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's subordinate soldiers have physically and verbally threatened villagers for no reason other than being frustrated and were also involved in two incidents where negligence had resulted in the accidental firing of a grenade launcher and the detonation of a landmine.¹⁵

In the first incident, after losing a fight, BGF Battalion #1014 physically and verbally threatened villagers in L--- village. The incident took place on August 30th 2013, when a fight broke out between the KNLA and BGF. According to the agreement between the KNLA and BGF, the

¹² See, [“Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, November 2013 to February 2014,”](#) KHRG, September 2014.

¹³ This information was drawn from an unpublished interview received by KHRG in October 2014, however, similar information was included in a previously published KHRG Incident Report, [“Hpapun Incident Report: Violent abuse in Bu Tho Township, April 2014,”](#) KHRG, November 2014.

¹⁴ See, [“Hpapun Interview: U A---, January 2014,”](#) KHRG, October 2014.

¹⁵ See, [“Hpapun Interview: Daw A---, July 2013,”](#) KHRG, May 2015.

BGF may not cross over to the area that was designated as KNLA territory. However, the BGF did not follow the rules they agreed upon, and so a fight took place in L--- village, Htee Tha Daw Hta village tract, Bu Tho Township. The BGF ultimately had to retreat as they could not win the fight against the KNLA. After the fighting, frustration ran high among the BGF soldiers and they took out their anger on the villagers and their village head, threatening them both verbally and physically. As a consequence, the leader of C--- village, in Htee Tha Daw Hta region migrated to Thailand as he was afraid BGF Second Lieutenant Tha Beh would further abuse him. Another village head, Saw M---, who lives in the downstream part of N--- village remains in the area, but he has not gone to meet with Second Lieutenant Tha Beh again following the incident.¹⁶

In addition to arbitrary and frustrated threats, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's soldiers have also been implicated in abuses against villagers due to negligence and carelessness. According to an interview with villager Daw A--- from Bu Tho Township, on January 15th 2013, Sergeant Major Hpah Day Day demanded a full gallon of petrol from Daw A---'s husband who is a boat driver. However, the family did not have a full gallon of petrol and so Daw A---'s daughter told him they would provide as much as they have which is about three or four bottles of petrol. Sergeant Major Hpah Day Day declined the offer and started pointing his M79 grenade launcher angrily at Daw A---'s daughter, who was carrying her baby in her arms. He said, "*Should I shoot you in the head with this M79?*" And Daw A---'s daughter stood up to him, saying "*You really want to shoot us and you don't understand that gunshots kill people?*" Then he opened and loaded the M79 and placed it on the ground, facing the woman and her baby. Before Daw A---'s daughter had the chance to leave the place, a grenade came out of the launcher, and although it did not explode, it hit both Daw A---'s daughter and the baby and they had to be sent to the hospital. Daw A--- reported that Sergeant Major Hpah Day Day refused to meet with her after the incident and although he agreed to pay 240,000 kyat (US \$205.66) for their medical fees, they received only 100,000 kyat (US \$85.69). According to the villagers, Sergeant Major Saw Day Day was drunk when he committed the abuse toward the villager. Another un-named officer from BGF Battalion #1014 came to apologise to Daw A--- for the incident, but asked Daw A--- not to report this incident to any authorities.¹⁷

In another instance, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's soldiers were involved in a landmine detonation incident. Previously, between the end of 2012 and the beginning of 2013, Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's subordinates planted landmines in X--- village, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, in Naw O---'s sugarcane plantation, which is about a two or three minute walk from her house. One of these landmines detonated under Naw O---'s buffalo on February 5th 2013. Rather than compensating or apologising to the villager, the BGF soldiers who are under Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's control killed and ate the buffalo after it was hit by their landmine.¹⁸

Fighting

On March 13th 2013 at 2 pm, there was fighting between the KNLA and the BGF when BGF soldiers entered P--- village, Bwah Der village tract, Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District. The BGF soldiers from Battalion #1014 led by Second Lieutenant Tha Beh did not follow the rule they had agreed on with the KNLA, as they crossed over the delimited boundary. The KNLA started shooting at them, engaging in a skirmish. During the fighting, a father and a one month old baby were injured. Shrapnel from a M79 grenade launcher hit the father on his right elbow and his child was hit on his right temple. The local villagers did not know if they were hit by shrapnel from a BGF or KNLA grenade launcher, but the fighting was nonetheless a result of Second Lieutenant Tha Beh's orders which violated the agreement with the KNLA.¹⁹

¹⁶ See, "[Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, August to November 2013](#)," KHRG, August 2014.

¹⁷ See, "[Hpapun Interview: Daw A---, July 2013](#)," KHRG, May 2015; and "[BGF #1014 Warrant Officer injures villagers and steals property in Hpapun District, January and May 2013](#)," KHRG, October, 2013.

¹⁸ See, "[Hpapun Interview: Daw A---, July 2013](#)," KHRG, May 2015.

¹⁹ See, "[Hpapun Situation Update: Bu Tho Township, March to May 2013](#)," KHRG, December 2013.

Although Second Lieutenant Tha Beh has committed multiple human rights violations, such as violent abuse, forced labour, and arbitrary taxation, he has not been held accountable or punished for what he has done by his Battalion Commander Maung Chit and continues to operate with impunity in the area.

Further background reading on the situation in Hpapun District can be found in the following KHRG reports:

- “Hpapun Interview: Saw A---, January 2015,” (August, 2015)
- “Explicit threats and the indiscriminate firing of mortars and small arms by BGF soldiers in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, June 2015,” (August, 2015)
- “Human rights violations by Border Guard Force (BGF) Battalion #1014 in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, May 2012 to March 2014,” (July 2015)
- “Violent abuse and killing committed by BGF soldiers in Bu Tho Township, Hpapun District, March to May 2015,” (July 2015)
- “‘With only our voices, what can we do?’: Land confiscation and local response in southeast Myanmar,” (June 2015)

Mu Traw (Hpapun) District



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