

Interview

Karen Rebel Leader Warns Myanmar Regime of More Fighting

Sunday 6 June 2021, by [Saw Kyaw The](#), [The Irrawaddy](#) (Date first published: 3 June 2021).

Karen Rebel Leader Warns Myanmar Regime of More Fighting. Fresh clashes have erupted in Myawaddy District in Karen State with seven armed groups involved in the fighting.

The military regime and Karen Border Guard Force (BGF) are fighting five groups — the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army (DKBA) splinter group, People's Defense Force (PDF), Karen National Union/Karen National Liberation Army-Peace Council (KNU/KNLA-PC), Karen National Defence Organization (KNDO) and a BGF splinter group.

The clash broke out on Tuesday in Phlu village after the DKBA splinter group reportedly detained three policemen, including the police chief of Waw Lay town, and a firefighter. The fighting has forced over 400 residents into Mae Sot across the Thai border.

The DKBA splinter group chief Brigadier General Saw Kyaw Thet recently told The Irrawaddy about the fighting.

The Irrawaddy: How was the fighting?

General Saw Kyaw The: The fighting was intense on Tuesday and Wednesday. The enemy has deployed more troops. Clashes took place because they trespassed on our territory.

They use numerous 120mm artillery rounds. Tensions remain high.

We heard that your group raided a police station in Waw Lay and detained construction workers. Was it the case?

Waw Lay is in KNU territory. The fighting took place with the group led by Major General Nar Damya. We don't know much about the Waw Lay case. But in Phlu village, it is our group that is fighting the regime.

Which other groups are joining your group in the fighting in Phlu?

The DKBA is not fighting there alone. Four other groups including the PDF, KNU/KNLA (PC), KNDO and the splinter group from the BGF, which consists of over 50 troops, are fighting with us.

Who leads the BGF splinter group? When did they join your group?

It is still early to reveal his name. They have taken weapons and ammunition along with them when they left the BGF. They will fight the military council. They left because they oppose the regime. They joined us around 10 days before the fighting.

Under which agreement are the five groups cooperating? Are they only cooperating around Phlu?

We are working together based on trust as an alliance. We are not just cooperating in Phlu, but also in Kawkaik and across Karen State. We are present in almost all parts of Karen State.

We have teamed up and we stand by the people and are working in Karen State. If the military council stands down, we will not do anything. But if they don't, fighting will continue until it gives power to the elected government.

We heard helicopters were seen in the west of the Dawna mountain range on June 1. The military has used airstrikes. Are your groups defended from airstrikes?

Airstrikes are not a problem for us.

What about military tensions in Phlu?

There won't be peace in the area. Military tensions will only grow higher.

Military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing recently visited Hpa-an and talked about continuing work on the Hat Gyi dam. What is your view on it? Is DKBA active in Myaing Gyi Ngu where the dam will be built?

The entire Karen population oppose the dam. Peace has gone in the area now. If the hydropower project is to be implemented, only our people will suffer. I oppose the project.

Our troops are active in Myaing Gyi Ngu. If the military council continues the dam project, conflict will be inevitable. If they insist on continuing the project, it could start more fighting.

P.S.

• The Irrawaddy 3 June 2021:

<https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/karen-rebel-leader-warns-myanmar-regime-of-more-fighting.html>