

Buddhist monk and a teacher found dead in Monastery basement

Retaliatory attacks, fire and fatalities in Da Pa Yin Kwe village, Sagaing

REPORT BY MYANMAR WITNESS, 20 January 2023

[Warning: Graphic]

Key Event Details

- **Location of Incident:**
 - Kywei Pon village (ကြွယ်ပုံ) [22.066194, 95.681244] and Da Pa Yin Kwe village (တပုရင်းကွဲ/ဒီပဲယင်းကွဲ) [22.049150, 95.669937], Sagaing Township (စစ်ကိုင်း), Sagaing State (စစ်ကိုင်း)
- **Date/Time of Incident(s):**
 - 5-6 January 2023
- **Alleged Perpetrator(s) and Involvement:**
 - State Administration Council (SAC) - allegedly the 33 Light Infantry Division (LID)
 - Pyu Saw Htee (pro-SAC militia)
 - People's Defence Force (PDF) - reportedly the 3 Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) (under the control of Sagaing PDF 8 LID)
- **Conclusions:**
 - On 5 January 2023, PDF allegedly attacked SAC troops and Pyu Saw Htee in Kywei Pon village (ကြွယ်ပုံ), killing one Pyu Saw Htee member.
 - Social media users allege that, at around 0500 on 6 January 2023, SAC troops raided and opened fire in neighboring Da Pa Yin Kwe village (တပုရင်းကွဲ/ဒီပဲယင်းကွဲ), killing four people, including a monk and a teacher.
 - Myanmar Witness geolocated images of a deceased Buddhist monk and a teacher to the Shwe Gu Gyi monastery basement in Da Pa Yin Kwe village.
 - UGC shows 5.56mm bullets at the scene. Using the [Myanmar Witness' Small Arms Guide](#), the bullet's size matches the calibre of several assault rifle models used exclusively by the SAC's armed forces.
 - Myanmar Witness was unable to verify the deaths of two PDF members.
 - The SAC allegedly set fire to the village before retreating on 6 January. Myanmar Witness verified the presence of fire on 6 January using NASA's [Fire Information](#)

[for Resource Management System](#) (FIRMS) and Sentinel Hub.

Summary

On 5 January 2023, according to the [Irrawaddy](#), PDF 3 Light Infantry Battalion (LIB) (under the control of Sagaing PDF 8 Light Infantry Division (LID)) alongside the Da Pa Yin Kwe PDF attacked Kywei Pon village where SAC and Pyu Saw Htee forces were camped. During the attack one Pyu Saw Htee member was shot and killed by the PDF.

Following this, SAC armed forces ([reportedly](#) the 33 LID) allegedly [raided](#) the village of Da Pa Yin Kwe (တပုရင်းကွဲ/ဒီပဲယင်းကွဲ). According to [Khit Thit](#), from 0500 on 6 January 2023, there was a [continuous](#) exchange of fire and the use of heavy weapons by the joint Pyu Saw Htee and SAC armed forces. The SAC allegedly shot and killed four people, including Ashin Gandhasara (အရှင် ဂန္ဓသာရ), a Buddhist monk and graduate of Thitagu Buddhist University, and Ma Khaing Su Mon (မခိုင်စုမွန်), a teacher who was allegedly associated with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM). Ashin Gandhasara had reportedly travelled from Mandalay to Da Pa Yin Kwe village on the evening of 5 January and was staying at the Shwe Gugyi monastery.

Myanmar Witness has been able to verify:

- Myanmar Witness geolocated user-generated content (UGC) showing the deceased monk and teacher to the basement of the Da Pa Yin Kwe village monastery.
- Using NASA's FIRMS and Sentinel Hub, Myanmar Witness was able to verify that a fire took place on 6 January 2023 in Da Pa Yin Kwe village.

Background

Sagaing Township, in Sagaing State, has been the site of an ongoing conflict between the PDF, the SAC, and the pro-SAC Pyu Saw Htee. Da Pa Yin Kwe is [reportedly](#) a pro-democracy village, while Kwei Pon, only 1.5 kilometres away, is a pro-SAC village.

Notable clashes have occurred between the villages. In July 2022, [Mandalay Free Press](#) reported that the SAC armed forces raided Da Pa Yin Kwe Village, allegedly setting five houses on fire. They also claimed that one individual, 37-year-old Ko Zaw Lin (ကိုဇော်လင်း), was arrested, tortured, and burnt to death. Clashes also reportedly broke out in December 2022, according to [Sagaing Township True News](#). The events between the 5-6 January 2023, which were investigated by Myanmar Witness, represent the latest round of conflict between pro-democracy forces and the SAC and Pyu Saw Htee in this location.

The investigation walkthrough

The location



Figure 1: Location of the Da Pa Yin Kwe village [22.049150, 95.669937].



Figure 2: Map showing Da Pa Yin Kwe village [22.049150, 95.669937] and Kywei Pon village [22.066194, 95.681244]. The distance between the two villages is roughly 1.5 km.

Analysing the Incident [Warning: Graphic]

Following the circulation of graphic images on social media and allegations of civilian deaths within news media, Myanmar Witness has investigated claims that four individuals were killed during the raid on Da Pa Yin Kwe village on 6 January 2023. These claims included that:

- a monk and a teacher were killed and bodies left in the basement of the Shwe Gu Gyi monastery in Da Pa Yin Kwe village (Fully-Verified);
- two PDF personnel were killed in Da Pa Yin Kwe village (Unverified); and
- the SAC set fire to the village before retreating (Fires: Fully Verified).

Myanmar Witness investigators collected user-generated content (UGC) and media reports indicating the presence of four different human corpses. By studying the bodies and related content, Myanmar Witness was able to verify the first claim, related to the teacher and the monk, partially verify the second claim regarding the PDF personnel, and verify that fires occurred in this location.

A monk and a CDM teacher killed in Da Pa Yin Kwe village (Fully Verified)

According to news media, the bodies of Ashin Gandhasara, a highly revered Buddhist monk and graduate of Thitagu Buddhist University, and Ma Khaing Su Mon, a teacher who was allegedly associated with the Civil Disobedience Movement (CDM) were [found](#) in the basement of the Shwe Gu Gyi monastery.

[Mandalay Free Press](#) released a video of the aftermath of the attack, which allowed Myanmar Witness to geolocate the location, confirming that it took place in the Shwe Gu Gyi monastery. After analysing the footage Myanmar Witness concluded that the bodies were likely found in the basement of the building identified by a red rectangle in the figure below [22.052771, 95.671119].

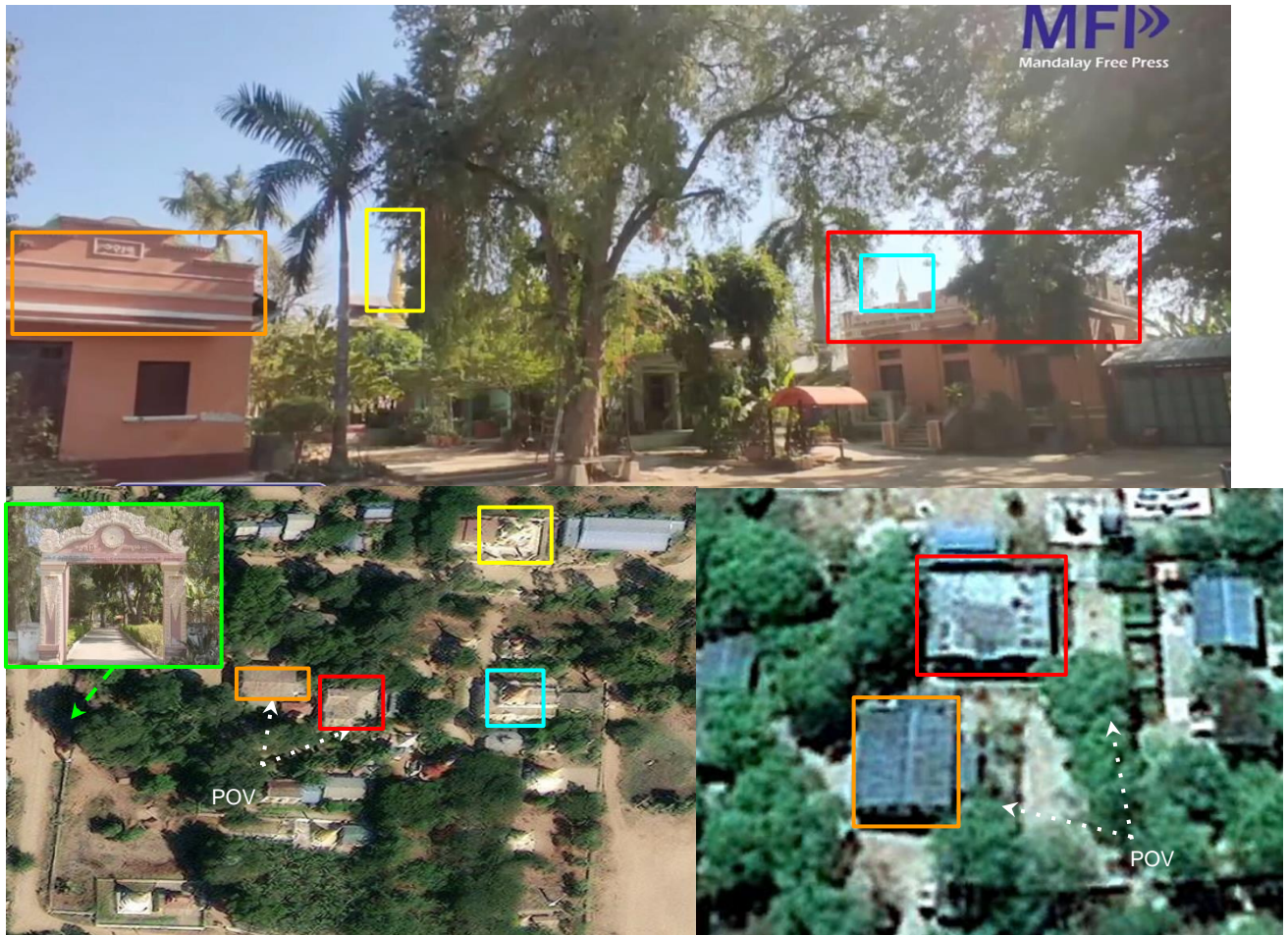


Figure 3: Geolocation of the [Mandalay Free Press](#) video showing the aftermath of the attack and the monastery grounds.

Myanmar Witness was able to identify the red building by cross-referencing images of the deceased monk and teacher (Figure 4) and still frames of the [Mandalay Free Press](#) video (Figure 5).



Figure 4: A monk's and a woman's corpses were allegedly found in the basement of the monastery (source: [Mandalay Free Press](#)).



Figure 5: Still images taken from the [Mandalay Free Press](#) video used to geolocate the images of the deceased individuals. The images show the aftermath of the incident and the interior structure of the building where the basement was located. The bottom two images show the ground floor of the building and the entrance to the basement. The white line in the top image corresponds with the location of the bodies as seen in Figure 4.

The bodies of the monk and teacher allegedly suffered from multiple bullet wounds, which are visible within the UGC analysed by Myanmar Witness. According to local villagers, 5.56mm KAPASA (ကပာ) bullets were found at the scene. Spent bullets can be seen strewn across the floor in UGC and the Mandalay Free Press video (see yellow box in Figure 5).

If the claim about the bullet is legitimate (this remains unverified without further information), according to [Myanmar Witness' Small Arms Guide](#), the bullet's size matches the calibre of several assault rifle models used by the SAC's armed forces: MA-11, MA-12, MA-1, MA-2, MA-3, MA-4, and M-16. With the exception of the M-16, all of these models have been consistently employed exclusively by the military.



Figure 6: Myanmar Witness analysed images of the deceased monk released by [Demo Poukkwe](#). Gunshot wounds were visible on his left cheek and his thigh.

PDF Killed in Da Pa Yin Kwe village (တပုရင်းကွဲ/ ဒီပဲရင်းကွဲ) (Unverified)

[Khit Thit](#) media also reported that the bodies of two members of PDF 3 LIB (under the control of Sagaing PDF 8 LID) were also found following the attack. They were identified as Ko Phoe Tote (ကိုဖိုးတုတ်) (40 years old) and Ko Myo Tun (ကိုမျိုးထွန်း) (35 years old). They were allegedly shot and killed by the SAC armed forces during the attack.



Figure 7: Two dead bodies, allegedly PDF members located in Da Pa Yin Kwe village, posted online by a local Facebook account (source redacted due to privacy concerns). Yellow and Red lines were added to the images by Myanmar Witness to demonstrate the clothing matches which helped with the identification of the bodies across multiple sources of UGC.

Myanmar Witness collected and analysed UGC showing the two dead bodies. However, there were insufficient geolocatable features in the background of the footage. As a result, Myanmar Witness could not verify that these fatalities were the result of the SAC attack on Da Pa Yin Kwe village.

The SAC set fire to the village before retreating (Fires: Fully Verified)

According to media reports, the SAC armed forces and Pyu Saw Htee retreated back to Kwei Pon village in the morning. As they retreated they allegedly set fire to structures within the village. The active fires were captured in a video posted by a local individual's Facebook account (source analysed for veracity, however, redacted due to privacy concerns). The buildings allegedly continued to burn for a few hours.



Figure 8: Videos posted by a local facebook account showing active fires allegedly in Da Pa Yin Kwe village (Source redacted due to privacy concerns) [Unverified Location and Time].

Using NASA’s Fire Information Resource Management System (FIRMS), Myanmar Witness was able to identify high heat signatures in Da Pa Yin Kwe village on 6 January 2023 around 1100 local time (Figure 9), consistent with the allegations made by locals on social media.

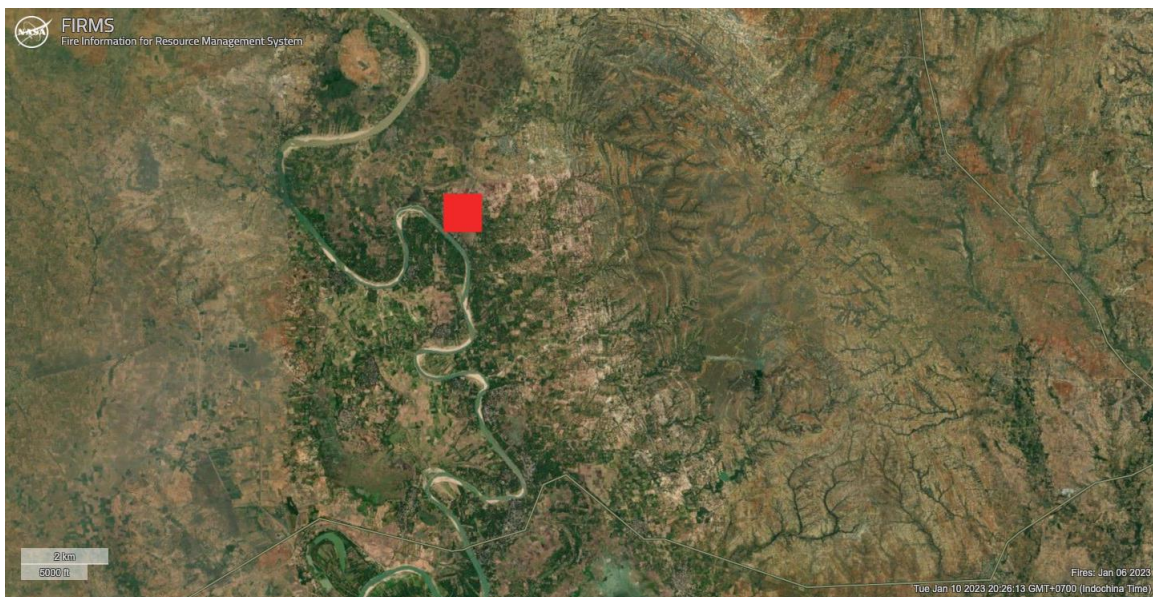


Figure 9: [FIRMS](#) detected a high heat signal at Da Pa Yin Kwe village on 6 January 2023, at 1106 local time.

By comparing satellite imagery of the area provided by [Sentinel Hub](#), Myanmar Witness was able to identify further information to verify that fires took place in Da Pa Yin Kwe village. Myanmar Witness investigators compared satellite imagery from 5 January 2023 (pre-attack) and 10 January 2023 (post-attack). This revealed burn marks in the northern area of the village, which is located near the monastery (see Figure 10), and contributes to the conclusion that fires took place in the village. Without further evidence, the perpetrator of the incident cannot be confirmed.

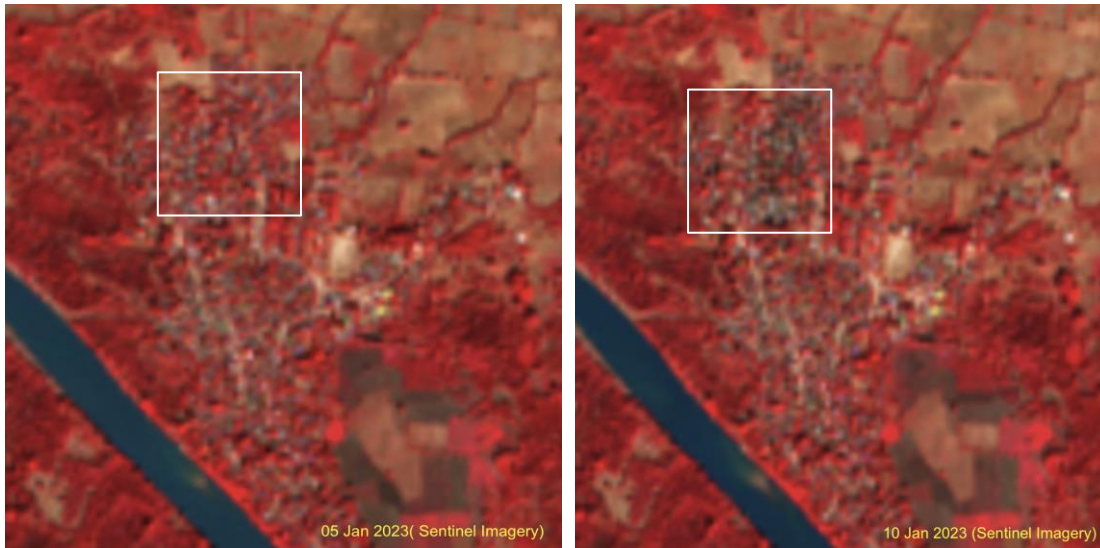


Figure 10: Sentinel Imagery of Da Pa Yin Kwe village on [5 January 2023](#) (Left) and [10 January 2023](#) (Right).

Future Monitoring

This attack in Da Pa Yin Kwe village represents just one of many attacks [reported on and investigated](#) by Myanmar Witness since the February 2021 Coup, where fire has been used and there have been civilian casualties. As demonstrated by Myanmar Witness' ongoing [fire trend monitoring](#), the use of fire in rural communities continues to increase. Myanmar Witness will continue to monitor reports and news related to this incident and any retaliatory attacks.

Abbreviations

Civil Disobedience Movement	CDM
Fire Information Resource Management System	FIRMS
Light Infantry Battalion	LIB
Light Infantry Division	LID
People Defence Forces	PDF
State Administrative Council	SAC
User-Generated Content	UGC