

THE ASHES OF RAKHINE

ONGOING ATROCITIES AGAINST ROHINGYA IN THE RAKHINE STATE

Finding Report

November 2023
- August 2024



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Prepared by

Rohingya Human Rights Initiative

New Delhi, India

November 2023 – August 2024

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report was initiated in response to the atrocities committed in Rakhine State, Myanmar. In the early days of the crisis, testimonies were gathered remotely, often under challenging and urgent conditions. These firsthand survivor accounts formed the foundation of the report and guided its development. The work reflects the contributions of many dedicated volunteers who generously offered their time, skills, and commitment to documenting these violations. Their efforts were essential in ensuring that the voices of those affected are preserved with accuracy, respect, and care.

We gratefully acknowledge the dedication and hard work of multiple team members at the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, whose contributions to the research, writing, editing, and design were instrumental to the creation of this report. The photographs included were taken by a Rohingya genocide survivors in Buthidaung, Rakhine State, Myanmar, specifically for this publication. We extend our deepest gratitude to the Rohingya genocide survivors, eyewitnesses, and grassroots activists who shared their time, knowledge, and lived experiences. Many remain unnamed here for their safety, but their courage and testimony are at the heart of this work.

The Rohingya Human Rights Initiative also stands in solidarity with activists in internally displaced persons (IDP) camps in Sittwe, Rakhine State, and in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, as well as with all Rohingya human rights defenders working at the local, national, and international levels—often at great personal risk.

Finally, we offer sincere thanks to the supporters of the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative. Your unwavering commitment and generosity make this work possible.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the Arakan Army (AA) seizing control of over eighty per cent of the Rakhine State, including the Rohingya majority townships in the northern Rakhine state and expelling Myanmar's military forces, our report highlights the atrocities committed by this brutal armed group against the Rohingya people. Despite its stated goal of establishing self-governance for the Rakhine ethnic majority, the AA has systematically targeted the already vulnerable Rohingya population, perpetuating violence, discrimination, and gross human rights abuses. This report documents atrocities against the community during the period between November 2023 and August 2024. It highlights the systematic human rights violations perpetrated, including the destruction of villages, sexual violence, forced conscription, and mass killings.

The operations involved the deliberate destruction of Rohingya villages through arson and looting, forcing thousands to flee their homes and further displacing an already vulnerable population. Entire communities were targeted and left without shelter or access to basic necessities, exacerbating the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State.

Sexual violence emerged as a widespread and systematic tactic of terror. Rohingya women and girls were subjected to mass rapes and other forms of sexual abuse, often carried out in the presence of family members to instil fear and humiliation. Survivors reported horrifying accounts of these atrocities, underscoring the gendered nature of the violence.

The AA has also engaged in the kidnapping and forced conscription of Rohingya men and boys. Many were taken from their homes under the pretence of investigation or interrogation, only to be forced into servitude or used as human shields in military operations. Families were left shattered, with no knowledge of their loved ones' whereabouts.

In the second section, the report further examines the Houyaseri (Htan Shauk Kan) village massacre in Buthidaung township in April 2024, a grim reminder of the AA's atrocities. In this atrocity, 346 Rohingya men, women, and children were brutally killed after the village was cordoned off, leaving no avenue for escape. Survivors recounted indiscriminate shootings, targeted executions, and

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the burning of houses and bodies to erase evidence. The massacre represents one of the darkest chapters in the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya people.

This report draws on survivor testimonies, eyewitness accounts, and ground investigations to present a detailed account of the AA's crimes. It underscores the urgent need for accountability and international intervention to address the gross human rights violations and prevent further atrocities against the Rohingya community.

1. INTRODUCTION

Minara (name changed) is a 15-year-old girl and a survivor of the August attack in the Mangni fara¹ (Maung Ni) village of Maungdaw, Rakhine state, Myanmar. On August 5, 2024, their village was targeted by the AA. During the attack, along with her mother and sister, Minara sustained severe injuries. They received emergency medical relief from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) also known as Doctors without Borders. She described how the people from her village fled in fear for their lives. She and her family members were eventually admitted to a hospital in Bangladesh, suffering from severe injuries that resulted in amputations.

The story of Minara's family is just one among countless from the community that has endured indiscriminate violence perpetrated by the AA in recent years. From 2019 onwards, the AA increased its operations against the Myanmar military, adding more violence and contributing to further human rights abuses. This increased the suffering of the Rohingya community, as they became collateral victims of escalating conflicts in the region. The AA, as reflected in the views of its leader Twat Mrat Naing, promulgates the idea of establishing an autonomous federal Rakhine state governed by indigenous ethnic Rakhine people. In 2017, the group's leader expressed a deeply sentimental appeal for freedom and sovereignty, stating that the liberation aspiration is deeply enshrined in the hearts of all Arakanese. He proclaimed, "[Every Arakanese carries a dream in their hearts—that one day they will become free citizens of our fatherland. The land of Arakan belongs to us.](#)" In theory, this doctrine is also supported by a belief called 'way of Rakhita' that envisages [unity among various ethnic groups](#) to fulfil this dream. However, in reality, this so-called inclusive doctrine that allows people of Rakhine to fight irrespective of their ethnicity and religious identity fails to integrate the Rohingya ethnic minority of the region. Despite lofty claims of unity, the group, in its operations against the Myanmar military, has inflicted tremendous atrocities on the ethnic Rohingyas.

The AA, very similar to the Myanmar military's approach, rejects the Rohingya as an ethnic minority in Myanmar and treats the community as Bengalis and outsiders. On the one hand, we see that the AA proposes that the oppression of

¹ Fara refers to a village

[Arakan's minority groups](#) and discrimination based on religion and race are unacceptable and will not be tolerated, however, the very same group has also perpetrated unimaginable violence on the ethnic minority communities, including the Rohingya. From 2019-2024, the clashes between the AA and Myanmar's military killed countless and displaced thousands of their families. For instance, during intensified fighting in northern Rakhine, the community faced immense threats from the group that forced them to vacate townships like Buthidaung and Maungdaw. The community in these two towns, along with their surrounding villages, faced severe atrocities from April 2024 onwards, including killings, the burning of property, and sexual violence.

In this report, we focus on the state of Rakhine, particularly the Maungdaw district, and provide an in-depth analysis of how the AA uses violence to target Rohingyas. Recognizing atrocities, the report tries to chronicle a few experiences of the Rohingya community in Rakhine State between November 2023 and August 2024. The testimonies demonstrate underlying AA agendas and contextualize their atrocities within a broader framework of efforts to eradicate Muslim identity and exploit the region's strategic and economic resources. One is able to locate AA's persecution of the Rohingyas in the larger context of Rakhine's abundant natural resources. Driven by ideological and material ambitions, the ethnic Buddhist group aims to annihilate the local Muslim community of the Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships and transform the region into a Buddhist-dominated area.

2. METHODOLOGY

The evident inability of human rights organizations and the media to access Rakhine State, especially Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships, poses a great challenge in documenting abuses of the AA. It has prevented the collection and dissemination of information and plunged the towns into darkness. This report draws on the testimonies of victims fleeing the violence.

The research for this report was conducted over a period of eight months between May and December 2024. To collect these testimonies, a remote data collection strategy was employed, including online interviews and phone conversations conducted across countries like Bangladesh, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Thailand. A total of 30 interviews were carried out with informants aged

between 15-50. Interviews focused on various human rights violations such as sexual violence, property destruction, physical abuses, torture, killings etc and other abuses. Five Rohingya sexual abuse victims were interviewed who survived and later fled to refugee camps in Bangladesh. Interviews in Bangladesh were conducted in person by the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (R4R, also known as ROHRIngya) ground staff. Because of restrictions in Rakhine State, interviews were conducted over the phone. A total number of twenty victims from Rakhine were interviewed for the report. Similarly, the remaining interviews were also conducted over the phone from other countries.

The questions posed to the interviewees were open-ended to avoid leading them to any particular conclusions. Victims interviewed for this report were interviewed in the Rohingya language and informed of the purpose of the interview. Free, prior and informed consent was obtained from all victims and survivors interviewed. These interviews were then translated and transcribed into English language by bilingual R4R staff. From there, the authors of the report conducted contextual analysis. Interviewees for this report declined to publish any personal identifying details like name, place of birth, and details of family members living inside Rakhine state to ensure their safety.

This report also draws on satellite imagery relating to the atrocities provided by various expert groups and international human rights organizations such as Human Rights Watch. In addition to satellite images, we also received first-hand images of the destruction from our ground staff. The images attached to the report capture the widespread destruction of property and villages. This evidence supplements testimonies collected from survivors, and captures the scale and patterns of destruction.

3. CONTEXT

In 1948, after Myanmar attained its independence from British rule, the majority of Myanmar's population became ethnic Burmese, alongside a small number of people from other religious ethnic groups. Among the numerous minorities who became part of the Buddhist majority nation are the Rohingya, a large Muslim minority group mainly residing in Rakhine's coastal region. The persecution and violent discrimination of the community has a history extending beyond the last few decades. After taking over control, the [Myanmar state in its military rule](#)

(1962-2010) ruled through a policy of discrimination and marginalization of the Rohingya community. Myanmar's military pursued an agenda of persecution, which resulted in the forced mass migration of the community to the neighbouring region of Bangladesh and other countries. For decades, the Burmese government used laws and administrative violence to strip away Rohingyas right to citizenship and place in society. In 1982, the military regime, under the leadership of its president General Ne Win, passed a new citizenship act that based automatic [citizenship almost exclusively on membership of an indigenous ethnic group](#). Rohingya was not listed as one of the [135 “national races”](#) of Burma, rendering them stateless in their historic homeland of Arakan. This intentional exclusion perpetuates an ideology that holds that the community has no roots in their indigenous homeland and should be identified as Bengali immigrants. This is reflected in the statement of General Ne Win about the new citizenship law, [“the foreigners who had settled in Burma at the time of independence have become a problem, so we made this law to solve the problem.”](#) The law was initiated to disenfranchise the community in the 1970s. Operation Nagamin in 1978 was carried out with the aim of verifying the status of the citizens. However, the military used this as a tool to identify, isolate and eventually terrorize the community by wreaking violence on their villages, property and life. It is during this time that the Myanmar government began to reject the nomenclature Rohingya. The registration list changed their status from Rohingya to Bengali immigrants. In 2015, the government invalidated all Temporary Registration Cards and imposed new [National Verification Cards](#) (NVCs). To get these cards, the Rohingyas must first declare themselves as foreigners. This systematic denial of citizenship and a place in society made the community an outsider and a prime target for violence. They have been systematically denied citizenship by successive governments, which continue to claim that the Rohingyas are illegal immigrants [from Bangladesh](#).

The citizenship regime locked in a system of persecution which intensified into episodes of state-sponsored violence and terror. Between 2012 and 2017, the military junta systematically targeted the Rohingya community through violent crackdowns, and mass atrocities. The most severe wave of violence occurred during the [2017](#) genocide, in which a significant number of Rohingyas were killed in coordinated attacks by the military and local Buddhist mobs. In addition to mass killing, women and girls were subjected to systematic sexual violence, often

in front of their families. Aerial [imagery](#) of the time shows violence and mass migration of the community, which resulted in around seven lakh Rohingya fleeing northern Rakhine State. The coup in 2021 further solidified the fate of the Rohingyas in Rakhine state. Trapped between the AA and the Junta, the community faced further threats and violence in the hands of these military and paramilitary forces.

4. ARAKAN ARMY'S MODE OF OPERATION

The AA are locked in a power struggle with the Tatmadaw (Myanmar military) in the pursuit of “[self-determination, national equality, justice, and freedom](#)” . However, this struggle is not free of anti-minority and anti-muslim sentiment. Despite the Rohingya community's ancestral roots in Arakan, the AA denies Rohingya as a community belonging to Rakhiinne. Rohingyas are often referred to as *Kallar*, a slur referring to people of South Asian appearance.

Trapped between the AA and the Junta, the community suffered the worst forms of violence from both ends. Rohingya villages which were used by the AA to launch attacks against the Tatmadaw were in turn targeted by the Tatmadaw. This brought such villages to the frontlines of the conflict and resulted in massive civilian losses. Rohingyas thus became collateral damages in a conflict in which they had very little or no stake at all.

Interviewees stated that the villagers are not allowed to move between villages, often facing verbal or physical abuse when requesting permission to travel. This practice is similar to that which was imposed by the Tatmadaw to control the movement of Rohingyas. An interviewee described how the AA's travel permission document, locally known as '*Tokenza*', is needed to cross the checkpoints on the way. Along the way, villagers can still face interrogation regarding the location and duration of their travel, despite possession of a *tokenza*. Even villagers who manage to acquire such travel passes remain unsafe. An interviewee who was taking refuge in Seing Nyein Pyar village since May 2024 travelled to a neighbouring ward with valid *tokenza* from the AA. However, while returning, he was abducted by the AA.

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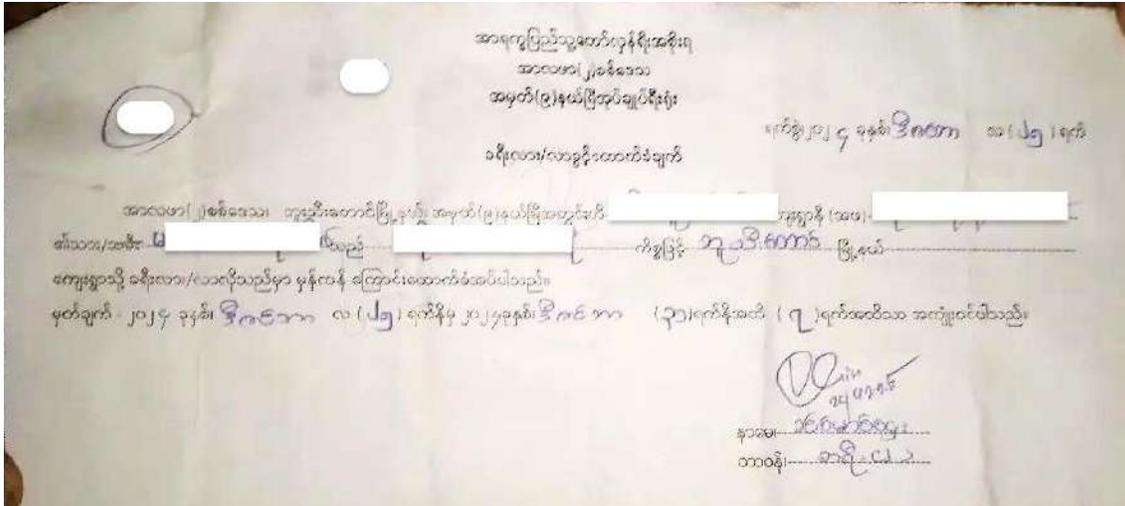


Image 1: A tokenza for a motorcycle transportation permit written in the Rakhine language. (Source: R4R)

In addition to this mandatory pass system, one account revealed that the group imposes strict curfew measures at night, starting from 6 pm to 6 am. Even individuals holding valid passes are required to arrive at and depart from the village within the designated time frame. These restrictions severely limit residents' ability to move freely, confining them to their homes once the curfew is in effect. The testimony also revealed that while staying in a village, the forces of the group carried out raids to investigate villagers' links to the Tatmadaw or the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). False accusations are reportedly made during these raids, resulting in often fabricated claims of the victim's links to the military and ARSA. This can lead to ["arrest" or abduction by the AA](#). Due to the severe travel restrictions, most Rohingyas are unable to secure information on their family members – not even knowing whether they are dead or alive. "I do not know where my father is, but I heard my mother is going to stay in Ferulla." One interviewee said. "I have not spoken to them in a month."

Between February to July 2024, the Myanmar military began forced conscription of the Rohingyas. According to a witness from the Hari Fara village, "For nine months, we could not move freely outside the village or even leave our houses. The Myanmar military abducted Rohingya youths, forcing them to join the military group to fight against the AA. If they refused, they were shot. The AA also opposed the Rohingya and began torturing us, looting our properties, and demanding one million Myanmar kyats [approximately US\$ 480] from each household. They then moved from village to village, spreading terror."

5. INTERNET SHUTDOWNS AND RESTRICTED ACCESS TO BASIC NEEDS

Almost all the interviewees observed that the AA restricts the flow of information to the outside world in order to tighten their grip on the territories while ensuring that evidence of their atrocities does not reach international audiences or human rights organizations.

Victims and survivors also recounted that the group restricted access to critical facilities, including basic medical aid. Coerced by the aforementioned circumstances, the Rohingya often flee their villages in search of safety and medical aid. One testimony from Buthidaung attested that there was no doctor or open medical clinic in the area. People began using medicine which had been brought from Bangladesh, increasing chances of consuming wrong or expired medication. There are many reports of people dying due to lack of medical treatment. In Maungdaw village, the conflict led to a shortage of food and an internet shutdown, further endangering local lives. While collecting photo or video evidence for this report, our organizational field team faced significant obstacles since interviewees were not allowed to openly use phones or the internet. As of writing this report, the internet remains down in the Rakhine state. Beginning 13 November 2023, the internet and mobile connection were shut down. Most of the mobile phones and sim cards of the Rohingya community were seized. Only a selected few people were allowed phones, a privilege for which the phone user has to pay around 2 lakh Kyats per month. Phone ‘agents’ are also involved in this exchange where they charge 200 kyats for listening to the call per minute.

On June 22, 2024 after an attack in Buthidaung downtown, the AA looted the World Food Programme office in ward no. 4. Another WFP warehouse in Maungdaw which stored a month’s worth of lifesaving food and supplies for 64,000 people was looted and burned. Since the wave of genocide in 2017, several international non-governmental organisations (INGOs) were working to support the community. These included MSF-Médecins Sans Frontières-Holland, World Food Programme, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, who distributed assistance to the violence affected areas such as Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathidaung. However, following restrictions on movement as well as intensified violence, the INGOs suspended their operations

and left the Rakhine state. In some instances, the INGO offices were directly attacked. They actively obstruct the operations of NGOs and humanitarian organizations that aim to provide aid to the suffering Rohingya community.

Shamshaad (name changed) in his testimony recounted his family and his desperate attempt to flee to Bangladesh, where they received basic medical support from the Bangladesh military.. He stated that the AA attacks killed many people in Maungnifara (Maung Ni) village, including people in his own home. The attacks destroyed civilian property and lives, killing an estimated 300 people on August 5 as they tried to flee across the border to Bangladesh. A young girl of fifteen years old further recounted the horrific violence that broke out in the same Maungnifara (Maung Ni). During the exchange of fire between the AA and Tatmadaw, the witness, her mother, and sister were severely injured. They received emergency medical care from Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) on reaching Bangladesh. Due to the severity of their injuries, they had to undergo amputations in Bangladesh. She confirmed that they received no assistance locally during this time.

To prevent news of their actions from spreading, the AA enforces strict communication restrictions. Internet services were shut down, and mobile or telephone communications were strictly monitored or completely banned from 2021. These measures effectively isolated the region, silencing victims and preventing documentation of human rights violations. One interviewee stated “we cannot even use the phone now, if we are found with a phone they [the AA] will punish us. We have to use, in extreme cases, our phones secretly.”

In a [project update](#) made on 27 June 2024, the Médecins Sans Frontières announced that it had been forced to suspend all medical activities in northern Rakhine State due to the “extreme escalation of conflict, indiscriminate violence, and severe restrictions on humanitarian access,” leaving people “with zero access to healthcare in the face of huge needs” and contributing to the “total decimation of the healthcare system.” Both Buthidaung and Maungdaw hospitals were shut down. Currently, there are no NGOs operating in the region. The last update provided by an INGO outlined concerning trends. A report demonstrated that lack of access to medical care has caused [growing malnutrition](#), waterborne illness, and preventable deaths, including of children due to treatable diarrhea and of pregnant women. MSF reported, “All communities are without proper

primary and secondary healthcare and our teams observed pregnant women and unborn babies losing their lives due to the lack of healthcare.”

6. CONFISCATION AND DESTRUCTION OF PLACES AND PROPERTY

The destruction of Rohingya homes and properties leaves people homeless, forcing them to migrate, live in temporary camps, and lose their belongings, livelihood, and dignity. Reports from Rohingya survivors in different parts of Rakhine state suggest a systematic campaign to displace villagers from their homes in continuation of the abuse that was strategically targeted against them since 1978. The strategy involves a deliberate campaign of dispossession, where villages are destroyed and replaced with Buddhist settlers, supported by militant groups, to seize the land. This systematic removal aims to eradicate the community and alter the region’s demography. For instance, accounts of the survivors indicate a systematic campaign of violence, deprivation, and abuse, targeting families fleeing their villages in Buthidaung. Witness testimonies from a few families reveal that the AA forcibly entered the villages to loot, destroy, and punish the community. Their village operations left the residents bereft of food, shelter, and basic amenities, creating an atmosphere of despair. One of the survivors from the families said that perhaps this deprivation is part of a broader strategy to break the community and remove them from their place of origin.

One notable example of the tactics is the destruction of Hoyaseri village. The village in no time was reduced to ash and rubble. Survivors recall the suddenness of the attack. One testimony, a resident of Hoyaseri who fled to an undisclosed location, recounted how homes were burned and anyone trying to escape was either shot or forced back into the fire. Similarly, Rukiya (name changed) also recounted that the AA forces got into the village, set fire to the village, and forced some people to stay inside the burning houses.

The strategy usually begins with intimidation and life-threatening warnings, subsequently followed by violence. Reports and testimonies indicate that they operate with a clear plan that is ‘intimidate, destroy, and replace.’ Such a strategy, even in normal circumstances, aims to eliminate any possibility of return, turning villages into deserted places. The fires are not random acts of destruction. They serve a dual purpose. First, they force the community people to flee, leaving

behind everything they own. Second, the complete incineration of homes and properties ensures there is nothing left to return to. For instance, in his testimony, a survivor from the Houyaseri, describes the pattern as “The AA came, surrounded our village, and started burning everything. They didn’t just want to scare us—they wanted to destroy our connection to the land. When we left, the majority of the houses and the property were reduced to ashes.” Once, the villages are empty and the remnants of Rohingya life have been obliterated, the land often does not remain vacant for long. Testimonies suggest that they frequently take control of the cleared areas. Livestock and food items are immediately seized and then distributed among the members of the militant groups for consumption. Eventually, lands confiscated from the Rohingya community are frequently converted into military enclaves or bases by the group. There are also reports in testimonies indicating that Rakhine Buddhists, particularly those residing along the Bangladeshi border, are being relocated to these formerly Rohingya-owned areas and allowed to settle there. Additionally, internally displaced Rakhine people from various locations and cities are invited to take over and resettle in Rohingya majority towns such as Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships, which are traditionally owned and inhabited by Rohingyas. In some extreme cases, Buddhist settlers are brought in from other regions or neighbouring villages to occupy the confiscated land, further solidifying the displacement and dispossession of the Rohingya population.

This process serves both economic and ideological purposes. Economically, it reallocates valuable land and resources to the AA, their allied groups or to the people associated with their religious and ethnic identity. Ideologically, it supports a broader agenda of changing the ethnic makeup of Rakhine State, reducing the Rohingya's presence, and consolidating one identity to take control over the region. For the Rohingya community, the loss is more than just material. It represents a severing of ties to their ancestral land and an assault on their identity. Displacement means not just losing a home but a community, a history, and a future. The trauma of being forcibly uprooted, combined with the knowledge that their land is being repopulated by those who sought their destruction, deepens the loss of belonging.

Burning of property has been a widespread tool used against the Rohingya community in Rakhine State. Accounts demonstrate that Rohingya homes have

been looted and burned indiscriminately by the AA. A survivor from Tetup Fara [Tetup village] reported seeing the Ruainga Daung village in flames even though the two villages are at a distance from one another: “How did I see it? The flames were visible. People who came from there to our village had witnessed it with their eyes. They [the AA] had set fire to all the houses. Before they set fire with the help of petrol and bamboo sticks, they forced all the residents to leave their homes. Nobody was allowed to get near the fire, let alone extinguish it. The fire burnt from the afternoon till night.”

Similarly, interviewees from the affected places reported witnessing several homes and mosques being burnt down. Before the fighting began, the group forced Rohingyas to leave their homes. Then, they attacked the area with heavy weapons. It is estimated that 10 to 20 people were killed each day, including those who sought refuge in nearby villages. In the ongoing fight between the Tatmadaw and the AA, the latter is said to have raided predominantly Rohingya villages to loot cows, goats, hens, rice, paddy, among other things in the house before setting it ablaze. The nature of burning is indiscriminate wherein all homes are burnt once the AA leaves a village. A testimony from the Kezingya Fara (Ah Twin Hnget Thay) village confirmed this as the village was razed to the ground after the soldiers vacated it.

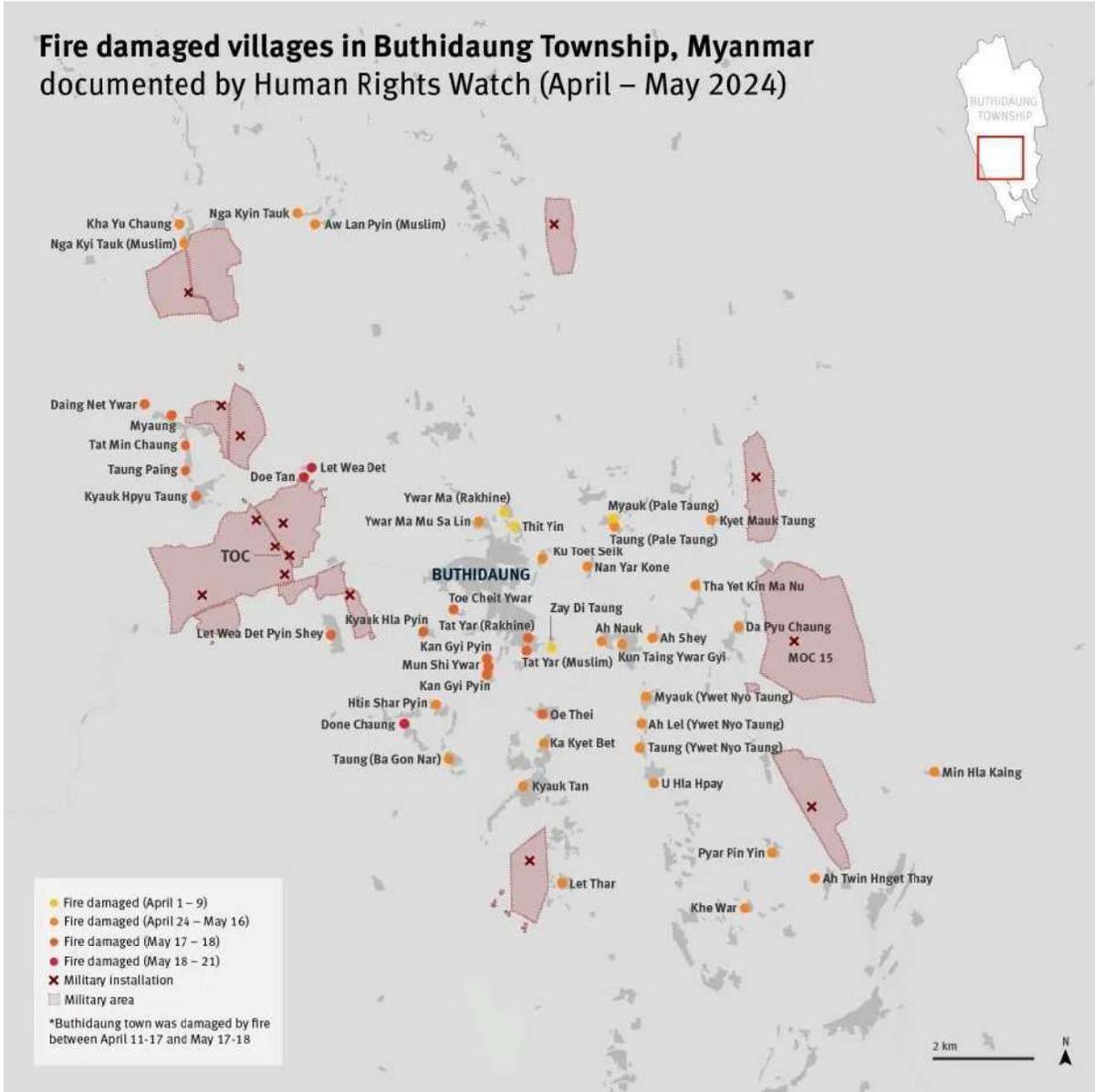


Image 2: Fire damaged villages and hamlets in Buthidaung township documented by Human Rights Watch during the arson attacks in April and May 2024. Analysis based on satellite imagery and thermal anomalies. (Source: Analysis and graphics © 2024 Human Rights Watch. Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU). Military data © Open StreetMap contributors and ASPI.)

An interviewee from Tetup Fara reported, “the situation is very bad in the Monna Fara village. The entire village was set on fire except for two or three houses. In Saira Kuni, no house remained safe. In Ajulla Fara only one house and a mosque remained unburnt. The entirety of Kuain Daung[village] was burnt down.” He went on to report, “All the houses that were burning are now just ashes. A lot of people were killed in those villages. We cannot go there because of the smell. I

watched Dabburiyang burning before my eyes. There was a building that smelled so foul with the smell of dead bodies that no one could go there.”

According to on-ground estimates, the villages that have been burnt are Pone Hyen leik, U Hla Hpay, Khin Daung, Kezinga Fara (Ah Twin Hngat Thay), Thapyay Taw, Chil gara, Houya Seri- (Htan Shauk Khan), Rainga Daung, Ah Lel Chaung, Lamba guna, Ba gone Nar, Monna fara, Saira Kuni, Ajulla Fara, Kuain Daung, Jabbar Fara, Immaddin Fara, Titup Fara, fetir Fara, Dabburi Chung, Hainda Fara, Washilla Fara, Rajar Bida, Manda Fara and Buthidaung downtown(Ward no 1, Ward No 2, Ward No 3, Ward No 4, Ward No 5, Ward No 6, Ward No 7, Mraungnna Fara these all villages and wards used to be situated in the Buthidaung. According to hearsay between the witnesses, the human casualties in Buthidaung downtown, Rainga Daung, and Houya Seri amount to between 20,000 to 50,000 people.

7. BUTHIDAUNG TOWN ABLAZED

On 17 May 2024, the AA made a penultimate gruesome attack on the Buthidaung town. It involved the incineration of homes, places of worship, schools, markets, and a hospital, along with mass killings and forced displacement. One survivor testified that despite assurances from the Arakan Army to spare the city, the atrocities that followed highlighted the intent to eradicate and terrorize the Rohingya population. As tensions escalated right from April onwards, the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) retreated from Buthidaung main city to their main headquarters located at Lawadaung (Thamin Chaung) effectively leaving the city defenceless. Concerned about the city’s safety, local Rohingya leaders met with representatives of the Arakan Army and secured verbal assurances that no harm would come to the town or its residents. Despite these assurances, the AA issued an evacuation decree to the Rohingya residents, demanding they vacate the city by 10:00 a.m. on 18 May 2024.

On the night of 17 May 2024, the forces of the AA infiltrated Buthidaung from multiple directions. Eyewitnesses recounted that a large group of armed fighters entered the city in many groups. The infiltration points included Sangri Bill, Imiddin Fara, Ward No. 5, and Zabbar Fara. The attack quickly escalated into chaos throughout the entire town. The forces of the AA began firing indiscriminately, setting fire to Rohingya homes, mosques, *madradas* (religious

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institutions) and schools while Rohingya people were inside the houses. Witnesses reported that no time was given for residents to evacuate, resulting in widespread panic and loss of life. An account testimony of the victim recounted that many Rohingya Muslims were killed during the attack, with much of the town already on the fire. Rohingya people who have migrated to Buthidaung township were given shelter at the main hospital and school and when the AA attacked the city those people who were taking refuge in these places were not given time to leave.



Image 3: A satellite image from 15 July 2024 showing the areas burned in wards 1 and 2 of Buthidaung town between May 17–18. (Source: Planet Labs PBC, Analysis and graphics Human Rights Watch)

One of the most heinous fire incidents occurred at the Buthidaung General Hospital, which had become a refuge for displaced Rohingya from neighbouring villages. According to eyewitness accounts, the Arakan Army specifically targeted the hospital after infiltrating the town where thousands of Rohingya were taking shelter. They locked the main gates of the hospital, trapping those inside, and then poured petrol around the building. The hospital was set ablaze with the displaced individuals still inside. Witnesses recounted hearing the screams of

those trapped in the burning building, unable to escape. This deliberate act of targeting a medical facility added to the magnitude of the atrocities.



Image 4: The aftermath of the fire in Buthidaung town highlighting its complete devastation. (Source: R4R)

Another target of the attack was the downtown market in Buthidaung, a significant economic space predominantly owned and operated by Rohingyas. Before the market was consumed into fire, the AA forcibly brought in Rohingya men from the nearby village of Ulafey (U Hla Hpay) so that they could take valuable things, food for the group's consumption. Once it was completed, the eyewitnesses recounted that the market buildings and shops were flooded with petrol and then set on fire, resulting in its entire destruction. This calculated act of violence not only devastated the livelihoods of the local Rohingya but also highlighted the broader pattern of targeting economic aspects of the community.

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Image 5: The devastated shops of the Buthidaung Downtown Bazaar in May 2024. (Source: R4R)



Image 6: Picture, taken in May 2024, captures a distant view of the fire engulfing Buthidaung Downtown. (Source: R4R)



Image 7: A close-up view of the fire consuming Buthidaung while bystandars begin to flee (Source: R4R)

Eyewitness Testimony of the Burning of the Buthidaung

A 48-year-old eyewitness, who worked as a Mauli (religious preacher) in Buthidaung and requested anonymity for his safety, recounted the terrible events of May 17, 2024, when the group (AA) set fire to Buthidaung town. On Friday, I was at Duashi Mosque behind the state hospital. After completing our evening prayers, my friend and I stayed at another friend's house. Earlier that day, we heard that the AA had already burned Imaddin Fara village to the ground. We had dinner and went to sleep, but around ten at night, we were immediately awakened by the shouts of the people. Stepping outside, we saw chaos—people running in all directions. That's when we realized the town was under attack, and fires were raging everywhere. The mosque where I worked was engulfed in flames, and the air was filled with the relentless smoke and sounds of gunfire. Many people were killed, but I cannot tell you the exact number. In the panic and terror, I fled for my life, unable to look back. Gunfire echoed all around the area, and the devastation felt like the end of the world.

8. ROHINGYA WOMEN AND STORIES OF SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Following an escalation of violence from 2017, [reports](#) of [mass rape](#) and other incidents of sexual violence against Rohingya women increased dramatically. Perpetrators include both [Tatmadaw](#) and non-state actors such as the AA, who target women and girls of the Rohingya community to further terrorise. Women's assault is often employed as a tool to collectively oppress and humiliate a community. Survivors highlight the systematic use of sexual oppression in which they are targeted on the basis of gender, ethnicity, and religion. One interviewee reported that in Rainga Daung and Nyaung Chaung, women were raped and later thrown in the river.

Another interviewee disclosed an incident that took place in Pone Nyo Leik. "An AA member intruded on a Rohingya house asking the man to bring him a woman. The Rohingya man refused, stating that it is sin to offer women like this. After that, the AA member demanded to sleep in the Rohingya man's house. The AA member then sent the man out of his home and tried to assault the man's wife. When the man found out, he attacked the AA member and killed him. The husband has now escaped and the AA are looking for the husband."

According to another woman survivor from Hari Fara village, "One night, the AA broke into my house, took me to their camp, and 10 soldiers raped me. I recognized the soldiers by their AA uniforms. They carried military-grade weapons and guns. Many women and girls in my village were victims. My husband's sister was raped by them too and died as a result of it"

Sexual assault also serves as a means of intimidation, aligning with the broader goals of persecution, genocide, and displacement. In addition to the Myanmar military using widespread sexual violence as a tool to "[terrorize, humiliate and punish the Rohingya population](#)", the AA also openly commits sexual atrocities to humiliate and punished the Rohingya. Due to the stigma related to sexual assault survivors and the fear of the assault occurring again, the entire community usually vacates their ancestral land to protect its women and families. This pattern of violence on women and young girls creates profound distress within the community and contributes to mass displacement.

In an instance of rape being used a tool to displace Rohingyas, a survivor from the Kyawk Pyu Daung village of the Maungdaw township reported receiving constant threats of sexual abuse if she and her family did not leave the village. The AA soldiers later raped her. She remembers that many families, including hers, received explicit threats, creating an environment of fear and helplessness. This tactic is deliberately employed to force displacement. The widespread nature of these threats reveals a calculated strategy to punish a community and uproot the entire population from their villages. This pattern of violence was not only particular to her village but used across Rohingya villages.

In a similar instance, one testimony from Minnu, a 35 year-old survivor, details how the AA stormed into her house at night. In addition to their usual financial loot and forcible conscription of men, the home invasions are also about targeting women. Women were raped within their own homes or forcibly taken to the AA's camps where they faced repeated sexual abuse by multiple men. The survivor interviewed was forcibly taken to a nearby rebel camp where she was raped by ten uniformed men who also carried military-grade weapons and guns. Such a violent sexual incident clearly reveals the intent of the perpetrators to set a precedent for other villagers and for the women to feel intimidated based on their religious and ethnic identity.

Binnu (name changed), another survivor from Monni Fara, testified “They would come and terrorize us in the village, restricting our movement. The fear was constant, and life became an unending nightmare of threats and violence. Days and nights, the AA would come to our village and terrorize the community.” While recounting her own experience, she said, “The AA raped me. It was a terrifying and unimaginably humiliating experience. I believe I was targeted because I am a Rohingya woman. They raped me because they knew I had no rights”. The AA repeatedly visited her house, issuing threats to her and her family. “They said they would kill me if I did not comply with their demands for sex,” she recounted. As a result, her life became a prison of constant fear, where every knock on the door could lead to further assault. “I lived in constant fear. My life has been ruined,” she said.

In another instance, a group of families fleeing their village in Buthidaung to reach the Bangladesh border reported that upon being refused entry by the Bangladesh border guards, the AA captured the families and tortured them. They

made women the primary targets of violence and carried out rape in front of family members. One of the rape survivors in her testimony recounted that her husband and children were forced to witness the acts. For her, such forced sexual acts can not be characterized as individual incidents but instead a proper strategy to terrorise or punish the entire community.

An added layer to the dehumanisation and disregard for the Rohingya women is that given the restrictions on movement, lack of resources, and absence of aid, women are forced to tend to their wounds by themselves after the rape. For instance, Minnu explains that the AA prevents rape survivors from seeking medical aid or treatment in clinics and hospitals. This deliberate denial of medical care to Rohingya women aims to not only isolate the women but also to discourage any evidence of the atrocities. Most of the rape cases go unreported due to honour and social stigma attached with the rape in the community making it almost impossible to identify and track rape victims. As a result, the AA and their allied perpetrators ensure that the systemic use of sexual violence remains hidden so that they can perpetuate a culture of impunity.

The interviewee further disclosed that rape survivors face many social and psychological challenges. She recollected the story of her sister-in-law who was raped by the AA and sustained severe injuries. As a result of not being able to receive medical aid, she passed away. The interviewee also reflected on the aftermath of her own assault, describing how the incident emotionally and psychologically disturbed her. She disclosed carrying a sense of guilt and not wanting to continue living with her family. As a rape survivor, she routinely faced stigma, isolation, and neglect, even at a Bangladesh refugee camp, as the “members of the family treat her differently after the humiliating incident”.

During the recording of the testimonies, it has been found that the victims are ostracized by their families due to cultural taboos surrounding rape and the perception of dishonor. Binnu, a survivor from Monni Fara said that after her assault, her community isolated her. The stigma around sexual violence rendered her an outcast in her own family and community. The lack of access to medical care exacerbated her suffering. “I could not get any medical attention in Myanmar,” she revealed. The military and the AA’s strict control over the movement of the Rohingya population meant that even seeking help was a near-impossible task. “We could not go anywhere without their permission,” she said.

Kowsar (name changed), a survivor from Tat Min Chaung village of the Buthidaung Township, recalled that her life changed drastically when the AA began targeting women and girls in the community. Fear of their brutality became so intense that she kept herself confined indoors most of the time. However, on the night of August 6, the AA launched an attack on her village, killing people and terrorizing most into submission. That night, she says, two Arakan soldiers broke into her house, dragged her outside, and raped her. As already revealed by other testimonies, the AA gave women life-threatening warnings if women did not comply with their demands. After the assault, Kowsar received no medical attention or support. The AA also made it clear that any attempt to speak out or seek medical assistance would result in further atrocities or even death. This fear silenced her and many other women who had faced similar acts of sexual harassment. She also recounts that the fear and trauma did not end with the assault. Psychological and social-cultural anxieties around rape made it worse for a victim even after the incident. Her assault shattered her sense of safety and dignity, leaving her isolated even within her own family. For instance, her own community perceived her as a “bad girl”. This continued to cause emotional distress and loneliness in her life.

9. ABDUCTIONS AND FORCED CONSCRIPTION

Abduction has been a constant feature of Rohingya persecution in Rakhine, and has been perpetrated by the military as well. Specifically after the communal violence in 2012, the military junta implemented a brutal policy of detaining them without legal process which led to many innocent individuals from the marginalized group being incarcerated. Thousands of youths were unlawfully seized by the Myanmar military in a wave of arbitrary mass arrests. Brutal persecution including manhunts and mass detentions, intensified after a wave of genocide in 2017. This not only caused mass exodus of hundreds of thousands but also led to the harassment and arbitrary arrests of thousands of innocent youth by the Tamadaw. The AA, observing this pattern of violence, employed similar tactics, resulting in thousands of deaths, the displacement of thousands, and the forced captivity particularly in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships.

According to field reports and collected testimonies, the AA accuses the Rohingya of supporting and fighting alongside state forces. However, the

Rohingya see the AA's widespread abductions as a way to terrorize, punish, and exterminate the entire community from Rakhine State. Despite efforts, this report could not accurately determine the precise number of kidnappings, however according to community sources, the estimate lies in thousands. Reports from villages such as Tat Min Chaung village, Sein Nyein Pyar village, and ward 5 of the Bauthidaung indicate significant abductions of young men on a routine basis. Such information from the occupied villages and towns is also crucial given that AA has placed the entire Rakhine town on blackout and no news travels out.

The challenge of establishing the exact number of hostages is compounded by forced displacement and broken families. With families torn apart, villagers isolated, and locations unknown, tracing people becomes a difficult task. In spite of these difficulties, tales of abduction are revealed by the family and survivors. For instance, during a conversation with an interviewee, they revealed that their relative had been kidnapped from Thamin Chuang over four months before the time of the conversation. The relative had been kidnapped on the accusation that he had supported the Tatmadaw. Similarly, another interviewee testified that his friend was kidnapped when he went to visit his relative from Seing Hye Pyar to Ward No. 5: "My friend, despite having the required permission and *tokenza*, was dragged from the village and is still missing."

Young Rohingya men are particularly targeted, often forcibly abducted under false accusations of being informers or sympathizers of the Tatmadaw or ARSA. Families live in constant fear that their sons, brothers, or husbands could be taken away at any moment, without explanation. One of the testimonies collected for the report comes from a victim who was abducted by the AA. Basit (name changed), a 20-year-old from Buthidaung town of the Rakhine state, had sought refuge in Sindi Faraung village after his own village had been burnt down. One day, while buying vegetables in the market, he was taken by the AA along with 20 other Rohingya men. "They transported us to a mosque in Tha Beik Taung village, where they detained and interrogated us. During the interrogation, the soldiers asked if any of us had joined, worked for, or supported the Tatmadaw." He reported. The interviewee was also questioned, along with others, whether he had provided food, financial support, or any assistance to the state forces. All of the detained men denied any association or support for any group associated

with Myanmar state, yet the atmosphere remained tense. Although the AA did not physically torture or beat them, their verbal harassment was deeply humiliating, laced with slurs like *Kollar*, Bengali and outsider.

Midway through the interrogation, the Arakan soldiers received a communication from the main headquarters to release the abducted after collecting their bio-data. Though freed, the men were told to come back to the Arakan camp the following day. Having heard stories of many abducted people getting killed after such summons, Basit fled the town and sought refuge in Rangoon, far away from the AA. Such experiences leave the men terrified and uncertain about their own safety, and also exposed to the constant fear and oppression that the community faces at the hands of the AA.

Basit further revealed extreme difficulties of traveling or navigating between villages without proper travel documents, as the AA maintained strict control over Rohingya movement. He explained that once the Arakan soldiers got inside the village, residents or even bystanders on the road are expected to remain in place until the soldiers completed interrogation. The AA operates with complete impunity, knowing they are not accountable to any authority.

Several killings were simply carried out based on the mere rumour that Rohingyas joined State army and militant groups. An interviewee recounted the slaughter in Behaa Teyram, a military camp. Innocent individuals were brutally taken and slaughtered after being accused of joining the military or giving their name for military service. According to another witness, the fight between the ‘rebels’ and the military resulted in the burning down of houses. The witness was forced to flee with his parents and siblings. On the way one of his brothers got shot however they could not go back to see the body.

A common tactic, initially employed by the Tatmadaw, included clicking pictures of Rohingya for their personal records. According to a ground report, the AA is also employing the same tactic to appear less brutal in the public eye. The AA often cites the pictures as proof that they are helping the Rohingyas by uploading photos and connecting them with loved ones. In one instance, following violence in Buthidaung, many people who were fleeing were stopped and gathered in a madrasa to click a photo. However, following the picture, some of them were sent to their relatives, some were sent to Shamila Island, and some were kept

behind. Even while handing over the people to their relatives, relatives were told that if the people went missing then the relatives would have to bear the responsibility. The people collected for pictures were also interrogated regarding their support for the ARSA. If the AA found anyone suspicious, they picked them up. According to a witness, "We fled the village towards Behaa Amin Road, where we encountered armed militants. They questioned our intentions and, upon hearing our plan to seek refuge in Bangladesh, we witnessed acts of violence and brutality. The fear and chaos were palpable as people were forcibly abducted and killed, their screams echoing through the air."

Another interviewee from Seing Hyen Pyar confirmed that the AA ruthlessly interrogated men to search for supporters of the Myanmar military. The same happens with families questioned and investigated at gunpoints. If the AA suspected any sympathy for the Tatmadaw during the process, they immediately resort to physical beating and even to forcible kidnapping of the Rohingya. The lack of accountability enables them to torture, assault, or kill anyone in the village without consequence. The unrestrained power also extended to forcibly kidnapping individuals during raids, leaving families of the victims helpless. With redressal mechanisms in place, families could not attempt to secure the release of their loved ones, further deepening the fear and oppression.

The destruction of communication networks by the AA has made it nearly impossible for journalists and human rights organizations to monitor and document events accurately. This has created significant obstacles in arriving at precise figures regarding abductions. However, according to a victim's testimony, village accounts, and field reports, it is estimated that approximately 2,000 to 2,300 individuals have been forcibly detained in an occupied camp near Maungdaw.

10. FORCED LABOUR

Rumours of [Rohingyas joining the militant groups](#) have begun to circulate and one of them has been of Rohingyas joining military service to burn down Mog houses. When asked, a local resident said that in reality, we are being forcefully conscripted by the different military groups. Mog homes were being regularly burnt by the Myanmar military, often employing Rohingya names as a scapegoat and also to promote further communal tensions.

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Besides forced conscription, forced labour extorted from the Rohingya has become the norm across Rakhine. The AA coerces Rohingyas, especially young men, to work as a porter service as well as serve as night guards. As [previously reported](#) by the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, being a porter is a service exclusively forced on the Rohingya community and does not involve any payment. Both the rebel groups and the army coerce Rohingya men to serve in army cantonments, police camps, security booths, and other places belonging to the government authorities. There are no fixed working hours, and the porters must work for as long as the authorities demand without any compensation. In fact, Rohingyas often have to pay money in order to avoid any trouble with the forces. They also often end up on the frontlines of the conflict on both sides.

When Rohingyas attempted to flee the annexed villages, the AA coerced them to stay back and perform forced labour to sustain the AA troops. According to one of the survivors who fled to Malaysia to get away from the wrath of the group, the troops range between 200 to 300 ethnic soldiers and expect the villagers to prepare food for them alongside other daily necessities. The testimony further informs if villagers protest or do not comply with the demands to serve the AA, the soldiers slaughter those who speak up and continue to take shelter in the village regardless.

Parallely, being a nightguard requires Rohingyas to serve as night guards from their own houses. The people in the village are forced to keep a watch from their houses, especially taking note of the turning points, entry, and exit points of the village. “If you do not keep it [the night guard], the authorities will charge a fine of money, steal a chicken, and sometimes even beat us. Only Rohingyas are kept for this role,” one interviewee said. In case a house with no men is chosen to serve the nightguard, the women are forced to pay money to the authorities to compensate for a man to do this forced labour. Alternatively, they have to rely on their male relatives or friends to serve on the house’s behalf. Those who do not or cannot serve are often tortured.

11. HOUYASERI (HTAN SHAUK KAN) VILLAGE MASSACRE

Between the last week of April and the first week of May 2024, AA operations intensified, killing hundreds of Rohingyas and injuring several others in the

Buthidaung town situated in the coastal Rakhine state. One of the most inhumane massacres, in which brutal killings were carried out, occurred in the village of Hoyaseri (Htan Shauk Kan), approximately three km away from the town, on May 2, 2024. Taking advantage of the current instability of the region, the armed ethnic group freely attacked Rohingya Muslims. Such inhumane violent attacks aggravate the existing suffering of a community plagued by schemed violence, statelessness, forced migration, and the denial of rights. This village massacre is a horrifying reminder of the continuous persecution and vulnerability of the marginalized community. A male eyewitness survivor of the village, currently based in a neighbouring country, shared his traumatic description of the massacre of the AA's (AA) and its brutal tactics over a telephone conversation. He remembers how the AA had initially issued a warning in the village, giving the villagers a period of two weeks to evacuate.

The reason given for this forced evacuation was that the Myanmar state forces were based in a cantonment in a field near the village, and the AA claimed they needed to clear the area to engage in combat. However, before the actual deadline, the AA returned to the village within a week. They forcibly gathered all the villagers into one place, creating an atmosphere of fear. The survivor, sensing the danger, managed to slip away along with a few others. From a distance, he witnessed the unimaginable horror that unfolded. The AA forces began ruthlessly killing the gathered villagers, showing no mercy. The massacre was followed by the systematic burning of homes, reducing the entire village to ashes. What was even more disturbing was the lack of any role played by the Myanmar state forces. Stationed nearby, they witnessed the slaughter as passive bystanders, making no attempt to confront the AA or protect the villagers. This chilling inaction led the survivor to a grim realization that both the state forces and the AA share a common interest in eliminating the Rohingya population. The next day, the state forces withdrew, leaving the devastated village to the AA. The entire area, including its valuable land and livestock, was seized and occupied by the AA, leaving behind nothing but the destruction of the village.

Eyewitnesses in their testimonies describe the AA's systematic attack as a premeditated and coordinated assault. Local testimonies received through daily phone conversations, indicate that the militant forces not only executed villagers but subjected them to inhumane treatment. Some victims survived the turmoil

by fleeing to other locations or areas after risking their lives. A few of them later had telephone conversations with one of the members of our organization. In their testimonies, they reported that they witnessed the burning of houses with their own eyes. What they saw was beyond comprehension—an entire village destroyed by fire, leaving behind ruins and the haunting silence of devastation. They recounted that, despite insurmountable hardships, very few managed to capture terrifying videos and photos as evidence to document the harrowing aftermath of the attack.

Out of the people killed by the AA, the testimonies reveal that among the victims were men, women, young children, and little babies. Access to the village, even at the time of writing this report, is strictly restricted by the AA, further invisibilizing the atrocities. Despite these restrictions, some Rohingya individuals (as narrated by one survivor) who are forced to transport cattle for the AA, have managed to witness the aftermath. They described scenes as horrific in which dead bodies were drenched in blood, villages destroyed by the fire, and livestock taken away by the AA. Such accounts of devastation, descriptions of mass violence, and evidence of indiscriminate killings show a deliberate attempt to erase the Rohingya presence in the region.

A Survivor's Testimony

*The horrors of the **Htan Shauk Kan** (Houyaseri Village) massacre remain enshrined in the heart of one survivor (no bio details in the recording), who recounted the brutal attack by the AA that claimed the lives of his/her family, neighbours and various known faces of the village. Like many other stories, the testimony testifies to the ruthless tactics employed by the AA in their campaign against the Rohingya. It all started with a disturbing announcement; the survivor recalls, “the AA used loudspeakers, demanding that we leave our homes within a stipulated period. We were afraid, but many of us had nowhere to go, no safe place to escape to. Some families, like my sister's, decided to stay, hoping the worst would pass.” But the worst was only beginning. Not long after the warning, the armed forces arrived from one side of the village. The AA forces advanced methodically, setting fire to homes and attacking those who were gathered and could not flee. In this tragic and unfortunate massacre, the victim lost his own sister Ajida (25), her husband, Jubair (28) and their young children. When the AA reached their house, there was no mercy. They were locked inside and burned alive. The survivor's voice breaks as*

he/she recounts the fate of their sister's family. "We couldn't even hold a funeral. There was nothing left to bury. The fire consumed everything, our homes, dead bodies, our memories, and everything that belongs to us." In carrying out such an act of violence, the AA's strategy was clear that is total annihilation of the community. The narrator of the testimony further asserted that, "they (AA) attacked us because they assumed we didn't leave even after their warning. They came with their full preparation, sparing almost no one who remained." The survivor's account paints a picture of deliberate cruelty. Houses were torched with people inside, and any who resisted were killed. The village, once a place of community and hope, was reduced to ashes within a day.

The Myanmar state forces didn't intervene to save us, the survivor recounts bitterly. Though their numbers were small, however, they were usually unwilling to confront the AA for the Rohingyas. Therefore, the people of the village were left defenceless, abandoned to face their fate alone. The massacre of the village stands as a harrowing testament of an ongoing systematic persecution. It reveals the brutal tactics of the AA and the state forces in which a particular community is consciously targeted.

In the aftermath of the massacre, the organizations' role in documenting and verifying the identities of victims has been crucial. Cross-referenced testimonies and survivor accounts allowed us to gather a record of the estimated number of dead people. Lack of any reportage in the media platforms and absence of ground monitoring does not allow us to identify or track all the dead people. As a matter of fact, our organization reached out to some of the survivors who assisted us to list some of the deceased people that mainly consist either their family members, relatives, acquaintances, or friends. Provided below is a compiled list of 346 victims who lost their lives in the Houyaseri village massacre, meticulously identified through eyewitness and survivor testimonies. This list was assembled by a dedicated ground staff member of our organization who was stationed in Buthidaung town during the time of the atrocity. Despite the AA cordoning off the entire village and prohibiting entry, our team members spent months tirelessly tracking and reaching out to survivors of the massacre to document the identities of the deceased. The list reveals that nearly all the victims were residents of the village, with the exception of 11 individuals who were internally displaced persons from neighboring villages seeking refuge. Among the total number of deceased, 54 are children under the age of five, 147 are men,

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9 are pregnant women, and 136 are women above the age of six years. The massacre affected 63 households in total, underscoring the widespread and devastating impact on the village community. This painstakingly gathered data reflects the immense loss of life and highlights the targeted and indiscriminate nature of the violence inflicted on the village by the AA.

S.no	Family/Household Head	Father's Name	Under-5 Years	M	F	Pregnant Woman	Deaths in the Family	Resident or Displaced
1	LarLu	Mogul Amed		3	3		6	Resident
2	Md Mea	Anu Mea	2	7	3		12	Resident
3	Adul Hamid	Md Hashim	1	2	4		7	Resident
4	Aisha	Kalu		1	4		5	Resident
5	Adu Goffer	Ashu Ali		3	3		6	Resident
6	Adullah	Adu Goffer	2	2	1		5	Resident
7	Halima Katu	Ozi Ullah			2		2	Resident
8	Monura Katu	Abu Shama	1	1	2	1	5	Resident
9	Zeyaraman	Md Hashim	2	2	2		6	Resident
10	Adu Zobar	Salay Amed		4	4		8	Resident
11	Boni Amin	Salay Amed	1	5	3		9	Resident
12	Saifullah	Hamid Husson	2	1	1		4	Resident
13	Nobi Husson	Soyed Husson	2	1	3		6	Resident
14	Solim	Soyed Husson	1	3	2		6	Resident
15	Zubair	Dil Mamed	1	3	0	1	5	Resident
16	Soyed Akbor	Soyed Zarma		3	1		4	Resident
17	Zubair	Abul Kalam	1	1	4		6	Resident
18	Zawkodin	Md Zarma	1	1	2		4	Resident
19	Arof Ullah	Sultan Amed	1	1	1		3	Resident
20	Foyas	Tomir Zullah	1	3	5		9	Resident
21	Shalom	Abul Boshor		1			1	Resident
22	Md Amin	Kamal Din		1	4		5	Resident
23	Rul Amin	Kamal Din		1	1		2	Resident
24	Md Shobi	Adu Zawlil		1	1		2	Resident
25	Saifullah	Md Shobi	2	1	4		7	Resident
26	Adullah	Ali Juhar	1	2	2		5	Resident
27	Eliyas	Esop Zawlal		5	2		7	Resident
28	Md Noor	Esop Zawlal	1	3	1		5	Resident
29	Sultan	Adul Aziz		3	3		6	Resident
30	Md Solim	Ator Kamal		1	1		2	Resident
31	Md Ali	Shuna Mea		1	1		2	Resident
32	Adul Hamid	Abul Basir	1	3	1		5	Resident
33	Md Soyed	Motu Mea		2	2		4	Resident
34	Abu Soyed	Motu Mea		4	2		6	Resident
35	Noor Nawbi	Esup	1	4	2		7	Resident
36	Abu Toyub	Motu Mea		5	2	1	8	Resident
37	Aman Ullah	Motu Mea	1	1	3		5	Resident
38	Roshida	Motu Mea	1	3	1		5	Resident
39	Zahid Tullah	Du Du Mea	1	3	1		5	Displaced from Kin Taung
40	Asaw Din	Esop Ali		1			1	Displaced from

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								Atwin Nget Thay
41	Soyyed Husson		1	2	3		6	Displaced from Ywet Nyo Taung
42	Ali Juhar		2	2	1		5	Resident
43	Kutu Din	Abu Tahair	1	2	1	1	5	Resident
44	Nasir Amed	Moni Zarma	1	2	2		5	Resident
45	Shobir Amed	Nozir Amed	1	2	4		7	Resident
46	Oli Ullah	Adu Zawilil		1	2		3	Resident
47	Ana Tullah	Md Shofi	2	4	4		10	Resident
48	Soyed Amin	Enose	2	1	1		4	Resident
49	Enose	Soyed Amed		3	2		5	Resident
50	Soyedul Amin	Nobi Husson	2	1	1		4	Resident
51	Fokir Amed	Nozir Amed		4	2		6	Resident
52	Dilmamed	Soyed Amed	1	2	4		7	Resident
53	Shom Shu Alom	Hasu Mea	2	5	1		8	Resident
54	Shazu	Habes Amed		1	2		3	Resident
55	Mason	Md Soyed	1	3	3		7	Resident
56	Husson Amed	Amir Ali		3	2	1	6	Resident
57	Hamid Husson	Adul Aziz	2	5	4	1	12	Resident
58	Ali Abor	Yakub	2	1	2		5	Resident
59	Habir Zarma	Soyed Amed	3	5	3	1	12	Resident
60	Noor Jhan	Anu Mea		2	2		4	Resident
61	Kotizer	Md Shawbi	1	1	2		4	Resident
62	U Baru	Nozir Amed	1	2	2		5	Resident
63	Anu Mea	Soyed Alom	1	2	2	1	6	Resident
Total			54	147	136	9	346	

Table 1: List of the Victims who died in the Houyaseri Massacre (Htan Shauk Khan) in Buthidaung town on 30 April 2024. (Source: R4R)

Due to the survivors' inability to recall or identify the names of all the victims, we were unable to document the individual identities of each deceased person. For instance, while gathering information about many families from village survivors, it became evident that not all victims' names were known to the informant. Factors such as unfamiliarity with the victims or the traumatic nature of the events contributed to these gaps in recollection. To address this challenge, our methodology focused on recording the name of the household head, who was widely recognized within the village community. Survivors consistently provided information about the total number of family members who perished, including children, spouses, and parents. By consolidating this data, we categorized the victims within each household according to age and gender, such as children under five, adult males, and females. This approach allowed us to present a comprehensive and structured account of the massacre while

respecting the limitations of survivor testimonies and ensuring the integrity of the data collected.

This massacre is not an isolated tragedy, but part of a broader, targeted attempt to further the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya minority. For years, the AA has been implicated in acts of violence against the Rohingya. Their campaign is marked by repeated cycles of violence, intimidation, forced displacement, brutal killings, and mass rapes. The Houyaseri incident mirrors patterns seen in numerous other attacks of the Maungdaw district, where villages were fired upon with shells and heavy ammunition, residents forced to flee, and executions carried out. The AA's justification often revolves around claims of fighting against Myanmar's state forces. However, testimonies of the survivors consistently reveal that their targets also include Rohingyas living in the Rakhine state.

A Survivor's Testimony: A Family Torn Apart

*Rukiya (name changed), another survivor of the brutal Houyaseri massacre, bears witness to the horrors inflicted by the AA (AA). Identifiable by their distinct uniform, she narrates that the forces unleashed a wave of brutality that decimated her village. In a telephonic interview (from an anonymous location in Myanmar) with our prominent member of the organization, she revealed that risking their lives, very few managed to escape. Rukiya remembers with sorrow that the AA rebels descended upon Houyaseri, systematically destroying homes and harming families. Rukiya's extended family suffered a devastating loss, with 35 members including brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, their children, and her own children and grandchildren perishing. Only eight out of forty-three family members survived from her extended family. The assault was systematic and ruthless. They dragged people from their homes, executed them without hesitation. Some were burned alive inside their houses, and others were killed through bullets. **Htan Shauk Kan** (Houyaseri) was home to approximately 250 households. According to Rukiya, most families were annihilated, and the entire village turned into a graveyard. Only around 30 families managed to escape, running through the rice fields and trying to hide wherever they could. In addition to security threats from the AA, those who survived are haunted by the memories of the family members killed. Rukiya's testimony places a greater emphasis on the deliberate targeting of civilians and the crimes perpetrated by the AA. For her, this is an*

organized and a calculated genocide that seeks to wipe out entire race of the Rohingya community from the Rakhine.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

We demand that the ICC must recognize the 2023-2024 Rohingya atrocities at the hands of AA as another genocide. The Rohingya population has been subjected to systematic killings, mass displacement, the destruction of villages, sexual violence, and other atrocities, demonstrating a clear intent to destroy the community in whole. We urge the ICC to prioritize investigations into these crimes, hold perpetrators accountable, and ensure justice for the Rohingya people in line with international law.

Establishment of an International Criminal Tribunal to prosecute the AA for committing crimes Against Humanity, Genocide, and War Crimes. The prosecution should focus on holding those responsible for systematic violence, including the attacks initiated from November 2023 to August 2024.

We urge and also demand the government of Bangladesh to refrain from establishing any form of relationship with the AA. Engaging with this group would convey a troubling message about Bangladesh's priorities and commitment to resolving the Rohingya crisis, potentially undermining efforts to address the humanitarian and other challenges faced by the Rohingya community.

The government of Bangladesh should hold the AA accountable for its crimes against the Rohingya community, including the forced displacement of Rohingyas into Bangladesh. To ensure justice, Bangladesh should collaborate with international investigative agencies to document the testimonies of Rohingya victims who have sought refuge within its borders and facilitate efforts to address the atrocities committed by the AA.

There are credible reports that indicate the AA smuggles raw materials (military used and otherwise) from Bangladesh, including cement, iron, and fuel, which

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are utilized for constructing bunkers and facilitating transportation for their operations. We strongly urge the government of Bangladesh to take immediate action to halt this smuggling by strengthening border security and implementing stricter monitoring measures.

There are also Reports suggesting that some Bangladeshi citizens of Rakhine ethnicity are joining or affiliating with the AA (AA). We urge the government of Bangladesh to conduct a thorough investigation into these claims and take appropriate measures to address and prevent such involvement of its citizens.

Any agreement for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees must guarantee safety, dignity, and adherence to human rights standards. The international community should play a monitoring role in ensuring that Rohingya returnees are not subject to further persecution. A comprehensive system should oversee this process, involving organizations like the UNHCR.

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) must be compelled to take a more active stance in addressing the crisis, ensuring that Myanmar upholds its obligations under international law. Neighbouring countries, especially Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia, should be encouraged to join regional initiatives for the protection and relocation of Rohingya refugees.

The international community should provide resources for independent bodies to document crimes and collect evidence. Efforts must be coordinated with the UN Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) to preserve testimonies and material evidence for future prosecution.

Governments and international NGOs must urgently provide humanitarian assistance to Rohingya in both Myanmar and neighbouring countries like Bangladesh. Food, medical care, shelter, and trauma support should be delivered to those displaced by violence, ensuring their basic rights under international humanitarian law.

PHOTO ANNEX – EVIDENCE OF MASSACRE IN HOUYA SERI VILLAGE, RAKHINE STATE

This photographic annex contains visual documentation obtained three months after the 2 May 2024 massacre in Houya Seri village (also known as Hoyasuri or Htan Shauk Kan village), located in Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State, Myanmar. The images were captured by the sole surviving member of his family, their identity is withheld to protect privacy. On the date of the incident, forces of the Arakan Army killed at least 600 Rohingya civilians, including children, elderly persons, women—among them pregnant women—and persons with disabilities. Additional documentation from other external sources, such as Progressive Voice Weekly Highlights² supports the occurrence of the massacre.

The photographs serve as unique direct visual evidence of the scale, nature, and aftermath of the violations committed, and form part of the broader body of documentation substantiating the systematic targeting of Rohingya civilians in Rakhine State.

The following description applies to all photographs listed below: The photographs were taken by the sole surviving member of his family, their identity is withheld to protect privacy, three months after the massacre and were released after he migrated to Bangladesh.

² The Progressive Voice Weekly Highlights, drawing on field reports, records that on 2 May 2024 the Arakan Army carried out mass killings in Houyaseri village, resulting in the deaths of hundreds of civilians, predominantly women and children. Source: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/382385843_PROGRESSIVE_VOICE_WEEKLY_HIGHLIGHTS_REPORTS_UPDATE_8th_JULY-14th_JULY_2024











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GLOSSARY

Arakan (or Rakhine): Rakhine State, formerly known as Arakan, is a coastal state in Myanmar, bordering the Bay of Bengal to the west and Bangladesh to the northwest. It is home to a diverse population, including the Rakhine ethnic majority, the Rohingya Muslims minority, alongside other small ethnic groups. AA fights with the Myanmar military for the liberation of the Rakhine. The state has been a focal point for the persecution of the Rohingya community.

Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA): The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), previously called Harakah al-Yaqin, is an insurgent group mainly made up of ethnic Rohingyas. Established in 2016 under the command of Ataulah Abu Ammar Jununi, who claims to fight for the rights of Rohingyas in Myanmar. Following their alleged attacks on Myanmar police posts in October 2016 and August 2017, the Tatmadaw (Myanmar state armed forces) in retaliation led violent military crackdowns, which resulted in widespread atrocities against the Rohingya, including rape, killings, village destruction and mass displacement. As per the news reports, ARSA has allegedly found themselves in crimes against Rohingya, a community they claim to fight for.

Arakan Army (AA): The AA is a non-state ethnic armed group in Myanmar's Rakhine (Arakan) State. Originally established as the armed wing of the United League of Arakan in 2009. The AA claims to promote self-determination and autonomy of the Rakhine Buddhists and other residents of Rakhine irrespective of their religion and ethnicity. However, the AA contribute to a majority of the atrocities against Rohingya including coercion, occupation, mass killings, sexual violence, and property destruction. The AA have evolved into a significant armed group, rivaling Myanmar's national military. In 2020, the AA was declared an armed terrorist organisation by the Aung San Suu Kyi-led government and again in 2024 by Myanmar's military council.

Junta: An authoritarian form of government in Myanmar formed by the oligarchic military dictatorship during the February 2021 coup.

Mog Bagi (Mog): - Mogs are the majority ethnicity in Rakhine who practise Buddhism. Mogs are often referred to as AA since AA is predominantly from

the Mog community. However, there are also other extremist Mog groups which are hostile to Rohingya but not part of the AA.

Tatmadaw: The Myanmar Armed Forces which constitute the Myanmar Army, the Myanmar Navy, and the Myanmar Air Force. Its auxiliaries include the Myanmar Police Force, the Border Guard Forces, the Myanmar Coast Guard, and the People's Militia Units.

Tokenza: An official permit, made mandatory by the Tatmadaw and AA, which Rohingyas are required to acquire in order to travel from one place to another within Myanmar. The Tokenza surveillance contributes to the larger 'Suu thin check'. The check includes the military coercing the Rohingya to be photographed annually to track the Rohingya population. The data is used by the military and AA as a tool to oppress the Rohingya.

