

INTERNATIONAL COURT OF JUSTICE

**APPLICATION OF THE CONVENTION ON THE PREVENTION AND
PUNISHMENT OF THE CRIME OF GENOCIDE**

**THE GAMBIA
v.
MYANMAR**

MEMORIAL OF THE GAMBIA

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23 OCTOBER 2020

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AFP, “Myanmar envoy terms Rohingyas ‘ugly as ogres’”, *Dawn* (12 February 2009)

TODAY'S PAPER | OCTOBER 01, 2020

Myanmar envoy terms Rohingyas ‘ugly as ogres’

| 12 Feb 2009

HONG KONG, Feb 11: Myanmar’s senior official in Hong Kong has described the Rohingya people as “ugly as ogres” in a letter sent to media and foreign officials after a high-profile refugee case highlighted their plight.

The country’s Consul General Ye Myint Aung told heads of foreign missions in Hong Kong and local newspapers members of the Muslim ethnic group should not be described as being from Myanmar.

“In reality, Rohingya are neither Myanmar people nor Myanmar’s ethnic group,” he wrote, in a letter on Wednesday.

The envoy contrasted the “dark brown” Rohingya complexion with the “fair and soft” skin of people from Myanmar, which he said was “good looking as well”.

In a letter liberally punctuated with brackets, Ye Myint Aung continued:

“(My complexion is a typical genuine one of a Myanmar gentleman and you will accept that how handsome your colleague Mr Ye is.) It is quite different from what you have seen and read in the papers. (They are as ugly as ogres).” Rights groups say the Rohingya are stateless and face religious and ethnic persecution from Myanmar’s military regime, forcing thousands to take to rickety boats each year in a bid to escape poverty and oppression. But Myanmar’s junta denies the existence of the Rohingya as an ethnic group and says the migrants are Bangladeshis.

Ye Myint Aung included recent clippings from the New Light of Myanmar newspaper, a mouthpiece for the junta, stating that the Rohingya are not among Myanmar’s ethnic groups and detailing 60

years of action against Rohingya “illegal immigrants”. —AFP

Annex 239

Kyaw Zwa Moe, “Skin Color and Prejudice Endangers Rohingya”, *The Irrawaddy*
(13 February 2009)



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Skin Color and Prejudice Endangers Rohingya

By KYAW ZWA MOE

Friday, February 13, 2009

Unbelievably in this day and time, skin color has become an issue in the case of the Rohingya boat people.

While much of the world has moved beyond discrimination due to the color of one's skin (think President Obama), pockets of prejudice still exist, including in Southeast Asia.

"You will see in the photos that their complexion is dark brown," said Burmese Counsel Ye Myint Aung in Hong Kong, in a letter to fellow diplomats, referring to the Rohingya boat people. He went on to describe the complexion of Burmese as "fair and soft, good looking as well."

His own complexion, he said, was typical of a Burmese gentleman and his fellow diplomats could easily contrast their diplomatic colleague with Rohingya.

"Rohingyas are as ugly as ogres," he said.

In essence, what he said was that Rohingya couldn't qualify as Burmese citizens because of their appearance, and they are not recognized as an ethnic group of Burma.

Thousands of Rohingya have fled their homes in Burma and Bangladesh to Thailand and Malaysia in recent years. In 2008 alone, reports estimated 4,880 Rohingya were arrested for illegally entering Thailand.

It's fairly clear now that no country in Southeast Asia is willing to accept the desperate Rohingya who wash up on their shore or enter a country by other means.

One reason is that they don't look like ordinary economic migrants or refugees. They take to the ocean in dilapidated boats, reminiscent of the Vietnamese boat people, who also were desperate to leave an unforgiving land and would do anything—even risk their lives—to escape. In addition, they are Muslims, another strike against them in some people's eyes.

The boat people have become an irritant for many countries in the region, especially Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. Compounding the problem is the unwillingness of Burma and Bangladesh to recognize the Rohingya as citizens.

When various groups of Rohingya boat people were arrested in Thailand recently, they were beaten and tortured by Thai authorities, according to reports, and eventually towed back out to sea and set adrift with inadequate water and food in boats without working engines.

Earlier, Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva was quoted by reporters as saying, "They [the Rohingya] are not refugees. Our policy is to push them out of the country because

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they are illegal migrants.”

More than 1,000 Rohingyas were towed out to sea and set adrift late last year by the Thai navy. Fortunately, they were rescued by Indonesian and Indian authorities. Unknown numbers, however, disappeared at sea.

Recently, the Thai premier changed his tune to acknowledge the claims of human rights groups, telling CNN in an exclusive interview, “It’s not exactly clear whose work it is.” He added, “All the [Thai] authorities say it’s not their policy, but I have reason to believe some instances of this happened, and if I can have the evidence of who exactly did this, I will certainly bring them to account.”

Clearly, the issue is now a regional issue, and the Thai government is feeling the heat of world opinion. Even a simple statement in support of the Rohingya boat people made by Hollywood actress Angelina Jolie, who is also a goodwill ambassador of the United Nations, during a visit to Thailand last week drew a curt response from Thai foreign ministry spokesman Tharit Charungvat, who pounced on her remarks, saying, “It’s not her role to comment on the matter.”

Thailand’s army commander is now scheduled to visit Burma next week to discuss the Rohingya issue with the military government.

Really, the issue would be best addressed in a regional forum with the gravity that it deserves.

The secretary-general of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (Asean), Surin Pitsuwin, said in an interview: “This is not an issue for a particular country. It is a regional issue. It is also an issue for the international community.”

When Asean leaders gather for the regional summit which is scheduled to be held at the end of this month in Thailand, Surin and other Asean leaders must responsibly address the Rohingya issue.

If they fail to do so and paper over the issue with rhetorical flourishes, they will bring further discredit to the region.

Annex 240

The New Light of Myanmar, “Second regular session of First Amyotha Hluttaw continues for ninth day Queries raised and answered, proposals submitted and approved” (2 September 2011)

Kataññuta; gratitude towards the grateful; this is the way to auspiciousness**Vice-President Thiha Thura
U Tin Aung Myint Oo felicitates
Vietnamese Vice-President**

NAY PYI TAW, 2 Sept— On the occasion of the 66th Anniversary of the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam which falls on 2 September 2011, His Excellency Thiha Thura U Tin Aung Myint Oo, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to Her Excellency Madame Nguyen Thi Doan, Vice-President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.—MNA

**Vice-President Dr Sai Mauk
Kham felicitates Vietnamese
Vice-President**

NAY PYI TAW, 2 Sept— On the occasion of the 66th Anniversary of the National Day of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam which falls on 2 September 2011, His Excellency Dr Sai Mauk Kham, Vice-President of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar, has sent a message of felicitations to Her Excellency Madame Nguyen Thi Doan, Vice-President of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam.—MNA

**Second regular session of First Amyotha Hluttaw continues for ninth day
Queries raised and answered, proposals submitted and approved**

*Amyotha
Hluttaw
Speaker
U Khin
Aung
Myint at
ninth-day
second
regular
session of
First
Amyotha
Hluttaw.
MNA*

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Sept—Second Regular Session of First Amyotha Hluttaw continued for ninth day at Amyotha Hluttaw Hall of Hluttaw Building here at 10 am today.

Today's session was attended by Amyotha Hluttaw Speaker U Khin Aung Myint and 212 Amyotha Hluttaw representatives.

Two Hluttaw representatives raised two questions which were answered by Union Minister for Defence Lt-Gen Hla Min.

Regarding the question raised by U Nai Tun Ohn of Mon State Constituency (5) "whether the Tatmadaw will centralize over 600 acres of rubber plantations in Thaukkawt Village in Theinbyuzayat

Township and if it happens, how the farmers will be compensated", the Union Minister said that in expanding battalions and regiments of Tatmadaw (Army, Navy and Air) it is instructed that croplands, farmlands, gardens, and forest reserves are not to be confiscated; if it needs to do so, the mere area of land needed for construction of the battalion is to be confiscated; since the site for construction is chosen, the directives are issued to confiscate only virgin and vacant lands averting croplands, forest reserves, holdings land, private farmlands, and housing compounds; battalions and departments under the ministry are following the directives; it is not true that the Tatmadaw will confiscate 600 acres of rubber

plantations in Thaukkawt Village in Theinbyuzayat Township.

Regarding the question raised by U Zayad Rawmam (a) U Htay Win of Rakhine State Constituency (7) "there are two sorts of household registration certificate for indigenous Myanmar voters in Buthidaung and Maungtaw Townships in Rakhine State issued by Immigration and Population Department and Border Immigration Headquarters; while the BIH conducts surprise check, those who visits another village are assumed as those who flee to Bangladesh and are charged without committing any offence; some hide away in the fear of those charges, with the possibility that their children born in this situation will not be illegitimate; how the State will help those people tackle that issue", the Union Minister said that Maungtaw District has a significant geographical location sharing border with Bangladesh in land and water; the deprivation could happen as paddy production do not meet the demand of northern Maungtaw District including Maungtaw, Buthidaung and Yathedaung Townships if compared with its coverage, the population becomes denser and the birth rate outnumbers international standard at a breakneck speed; one-square-mile land in Maungtaw Township host 870 persons, that in Taungpyolewte Sub-Township, 701, and that in the entire Rakhine State, 233 persons; the population density of Bangladesh which is adjacent to the region is 1217 persons in one square mile; disproportionate ratio of population density and land area could lead to a population burst in the future; then, unorganized youths may form the environment with bad behaviours and harm the society;

(See page 8)

Value-added products made of timber, bamboo, rattan granted tax exemption

NAY PYI TAW, 1 Sept—The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar today issued Notification No. 33/2011 dated 1 September 2011. The translation of the notification is as follows:-

**Republic of the Union of Myanmar
Union Government
Notification No. 33/2011
Nay Pyi Taw
4th Waxing of Tawthalin 1373 ME
(1 September 2011)**

1. Exercising Section 8, Sub-Section (d) of the Commercial Tax Law, the Union Government hereby grants tax exemption on proceeds of export for value-added products made of timber, bamboo and rattan as a token of its encouragement to boosting export.

2. The exemption of commercial tax mentioned in the paragraph No. 1 shall not be applied to the State-owned sector.
3. This notification shall be in effect from 1 September 2011 to 14 February 2012.

By Order,

**Tin Myo Kyi
Secretary
Union Government**

Annex 241

“Curfew imposed in Rakhine township amidst Rohingya terrorist attacks”, *About Arakan*
(8 June 2012)

Curfew imposed in Rakhine township amidst Rohingya terrorist attacks

 aboutarakaneng.blogspot.com/2012/06/curfew-imposed-in-rakhine-township.html



Reported by Editorial Team Translated and Edited by Eleven Media

[http://eversion.news-eleven.com/index.php?](http://eversion.news-eleven.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=575%3Acurfew-imposed-in-rakhine-township-amidst-rohingya-terrorist-attacks&catid=42%3Aweekly-eleven-news&Itemid=109)

[option=com_content&view=article&id=575%3Acurfew-imposed-in-rakhine-township-amidst-rohingya-terrorist-attacks&catid=42%3Aweekly-eleven-news&Itemid=109](http://eversion.news-eleven.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=575%3Acurfew-imposed-in-rakhine-township-amidst-rohingya-terrorist-attacks&catid=42%3Aweekly-eleven-news&Itemid=109)

8 June 2012

Residents in Maungdaw Township of Rakhine State are now fleeing from the homes as Rohingya terrorists are setting fire to the houses.

Local people are requesting immediate security measures to control the attacks, according to the reports of residents.

Thousands of Rohingya have been carrying out arson attacks to the houses near town hall of Maungdaw starting from the today evening. About 200 policemen took security measures for the violence, and it is difficult to control the situation, a resident said.

3:50 PM

According to the reporting until 3:50 pm, Rohingya terrorists are setting fire to the Bohmu Village in Maungdaw Township. However, security forces have not fire on the terrorists.

When the Eleven Media telephoned the Rakhine State Police Office to ask about the latest arson attacks of Rohingyas, the responsible person replied that they had not get detail information.

Most of the phones in Maungdaw Township cannot be contacted at present.

4:15 PM

According the updated reports, 30 houses of Rakhine people in Bohmu Village of Maungdaw Township were burnt. Unidentified sources said 3 persons were killed in the incident.

“This is a terrorist attack. It cannot be neglected. Despite all the citizens have the rights of religious freedom, Rohingya people are not involved in 135 Myanmar national ethnics. According the 1982 Burma Citizenship Act, the nationalities who have settled in the country before 1824 are only regarded as the national ethnics. Migrants who infiltrated into the country after 1824 are not the local residents. Therefore, Rohingyas are not the national ethnics. As successive government officials favoured and issued them national registration cards by taking briberies, they are acting as the over-indulgent persons. Due to the control of Rakhine ethnics, they could not widely spread until now. The prevailing attacks mean insulting the hosts by the guests. This is a terrorist attack,” said a responsible person of Rakhine Ethnics Development Party.

Although the Eleven Media Group telephoned Pyithu Hluttaw representative U Zaw Kir Armat (a) U Aung Zaw Win to ask about these attacks, he cannot be contacted until now.

4:30 PM

Security forces are protecting 14-burnt Rakhine villages, according to Facebook of an officer in the Presidential Office.

4:40 PM

“I entirely condemn this terrorist attack. The concerned persons must rebuild the houses of victims in these arson attacks. The government should take legal action against these terrorists. We cannot accept anarchy. Religious and ethnical affairs were misused in these crimes. I want to suggest that the incident shows that the government needs to promulgate a firm and solid immigration law. Illegal migrants have negative impacts on the local citizens, and these infiltrations may fuel problems among the citizens. Moreover, a law should be enacted to protect all Arakanese people, not the Bengali there. There are multi-colored religions in Rakhine State. Therefore, I suggest the government to enact a law to protect the culture of Rakhine State” said Ko Mya Aye of the 88 Generation Students Group.

4:50 PM

According to the reporting of Maungdaw resident, a male died and a doctor was seriously injured in township hospital due to the attack. Security forces are taking place in the towns and the burnt Bohmu Village.

5:20 PM

The 88 Generation Students Group made a press release on 8 June evening on the arson attacks in Maungdaw Township.

During the press release, Ko Ko Gyi, one of the group leaders, said that Rohingyas are not Myanmar nationalities, that there may be some foreign incitements, that this incident may threaten the sovereignty of the State, that this is not the problem between the Islamists and

the Buddhists.

5:30 PM

Security forces are ordered to shoot terrorists to control the situation.

5:45 PM

A police officer said the Eleven Media that crimes of violence continue in wards of Maungdaw until now, that 200 police forces are trying to control the situations and that they have informed the incident to the army.

6:30 PM

Rakhine people are now taking shelters in Buddhist monasteries from the attacks. There are about 10 Buddhist monasteries in Maungdaw and the local residents are protecting the monks.

At the moment, Bengalis are setting fire on Aung Bala Village in Maungdaw Township. There is not enough force to control the situation there. Despite the army has approached to the town, they have not entered yet.

6:35 PM

Police and army are taking security measures to save lives and to safeguard rule of law in Rakhine State, especially in Maungdaw, Buthidaung townships, etc., according to the Facebook of an officer from the Presidential Office.

7:40 PM

Clashes broke out between Rakhine people and Bengalis in Dat Village of Maungdaw Township at 6 pm, and the number of injured persons is yet to be known.

7:52 PM

A Buddhist monk in Maungdaw Township said that the sounds of gunshot are heard in the town and that Bengalis set fire on 17 Rakhine villages. They worried about Rakhine people who are living along the border area of Myanmar and Bangladesh.

7:58 PM

Three villages include Thayay Konebaung of southern Maungdaw Township were blazed, and the numbers of the dead and the injured persons are yet to be known, according to the resident.

8:16 PM

Authorities are discussing to issue the Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (Curfew), according to a lawyer in Rakhine State.

8:40 PM

According to the report of Rakhine State Administration Office (Information), the security forces have successfully controlled the terrorist attacks in Maungdaw Townships. They announced that it is expected to prevent more serious situations. The Rakhine State Administration Office is based in Sittway Township and the situations are reported to them about in Maungdaw Township until 7 PM.

8: 54 PM

The township General Administration Department imposes a dusk-to-dawn curfew (Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code), the Facebook of an officer from the Presidential Office mentioned at 8:40 pm.

8:59 PM

According to the Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code, it is not allowed to gather five or more than five persons along the streets of municipal area, public roads and streets, parks and mosques in Maungdaw Township, and no one is allowed to go outside between 18:00 pm and 06:00 am in the town, the officer's Facebook stated at 8:46 pm.

The Facebook of the officer from the Presidential Office at 8: 35 said:

“According to the reports on arson attacks in Bohmu village in Maungdaw incident, the list of the dead and the injured are:

- (1) Dr. Khin Maung Latt (Aged 63- stabbed at the belly)
- (2) Daw Than Yi (Aged 57-hacked at the head)
- (3) U Kyaw Hla (Aged 78-hacked at the head)
- (4) U Thein Zaw (Aged 36-hacked at hands and legs)
- (5) U Hla Maung (Aged 65-10 cuts at the head and little finger and died)

The injured persons were sent to Maungdaw Hospital, and another three persons died there.

9:00 PM

During the news programme of state-owned media broadcast at 8 pm, nothing was announced on Maungdaw incident. But it was informed that three criminals who committed rape, murder and robbery cases to a girl in Kyaukmawni Village of Rakhine State were taken to the court.

9:12 PM

State-owned media 9:05 pm aired the announcement of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code (curfew) in Maungdaw Township.

9:30 PM

“The situations in Maungdaw Township are very serious. The problem should be solved by legal procedures. We do not accept anarchic actions. Security forces concerned should settle the problem systematically. We must control the situation not to spread. If the problem becomes bigger, it is possible to result in series of cases. I warned the possibility of problems in Maungdaw after the case of Sittway. These attacks would seriously threaten to Arakanese people not only in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships, but also in some areas with minority of them. The government has responsibilities to calm down the worries of these people. In the future, the security of border area in Rakhine State should be taken by Rakhine people, and that of Shan State by Shan people. Paramilitary forces should be organized to safeguard the security of respective areas. The government should allow more security plans. We will also submit these plans to the parliament. If this incident is similar to massacre of 1942 which was intentionally plotted, the persons behind the curtain are responsible for the consequences. Security persons, international figures and religious leaders should not neglect the case. They should cooperate in solving this problem,” said Chairman Dr. Aye Maung of the Rakhine Ethnic Development Party said at 7 pm the Eleven Media Group in Sittway Township.

9:53 PM

A resident reported that arson attack is occurring at 9:45 pm in Sanpya Ward in Maungdaw Township, two sounds of gunshots were heard and flames are seen until now.

10:07 PM

A resident said at 10 pm that security forces are warning the Bengalis who are attempting to enter Maungdaw Township after setting fire on nearby villages.

10:17 PM

About 200 Bengali Rohingyas at 9:30 pm surrounded a police outpost in Khayay Mying Village of Maungdaw Village. They retreated back after the sounds of gunshots.

10:17 PM

The military forces are taking place in Maungdaw Township, a resident said at 10:15 PM. The locals are hiding themselves at the safety places.

10:29 PM

Bengalis in Bumal Village attacked the Mingan Village near Sittway University at 9:45 pm.

Four Mingan villagers were injured and one was sent to Sittway hospital. The situation has calmed down as the security forces have arrived in.

Tags: epigram , NEWS

Annex 242

Anthony Kuhn, “Are Buddhist Monks Involved In Myanmar’s Violence?”, *NPR* (17 May 2013)

[DONATE](#)

Parallels

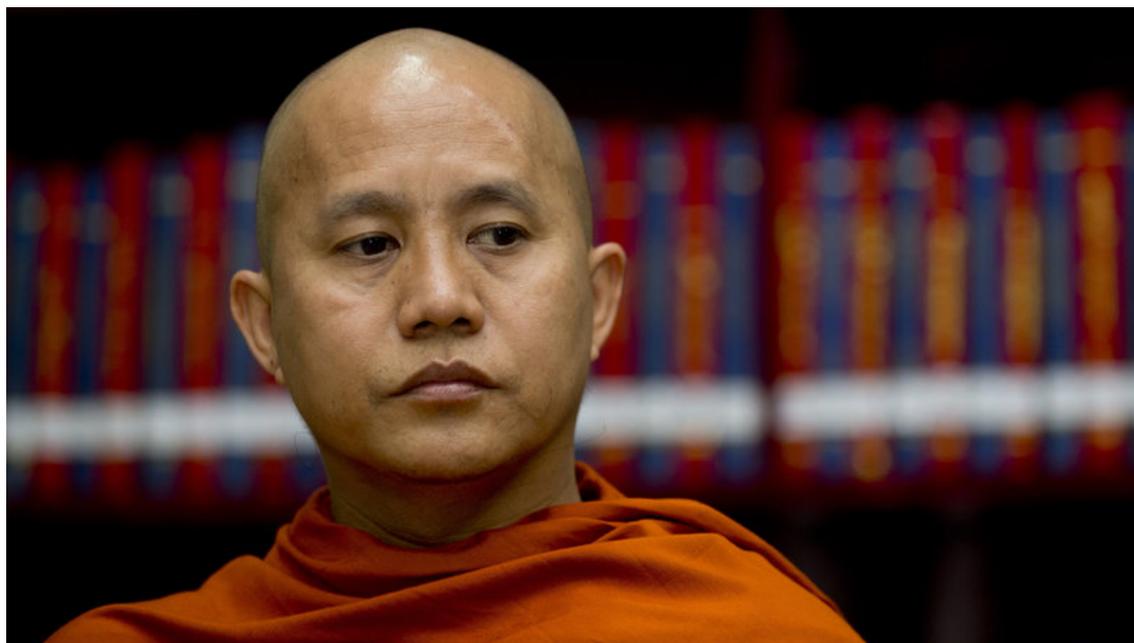
Are Buddhist Monks Involved In Myanmar's Violence?

May 17, 2013 · 3:00 AM ET

Heard on Morning Edition



ANTHONY KUHN



Some Muslims say Buddhist monks have been inciting followers during recent violence in Myanmar. Monk U Wirathu acknowledges that he is a Buddhist nationalist but says he has tried to prevent fighting. He's shown here at the Masoeyein monastery in Mandalay, Myanmar, on March 27.

Gemunu Amarasinghe/AP

In the Western stereotype, Buddhists are meditating pacifists who strive to keep their distance from worldly passions. But last month, more than 40 people were killed in fighting between Buddhists and Muslims in the central Burmese town of Meiktila. Witnesses say some Buddhist monks joined in the violence, while others tried to stop it.

One prominent monk in particular has been blamed for being behind it.

U Wirathu, 45, is head of the Masoeyein monastery in Myanmar's second-largest city, Mandalay, just up the highway from Meiktila. Wirathu is considered a talented scholar of Buddhist scriptures in the ancient Pali language, which gives him authority among Buddhists.

On a recent day, he sat in the middle of a large hall, full of Buddhist imagery and pictures of other monks. Wirathu is a slight figure, clad in saffron-colored robes. He says he was in Meiktila during the violence, and was trying to stop it.

"We spoke to the crowds to try to control the situation," he says in a steady voice. "We assured them of their safety. We told them we intended to protect their lives and homes and asked them to join us."

Wirathu acknowledges he's a Buddhist nationalist. But he says he's just defending his nation and his religion against attacks by outsiders.

"The Burmese race has been insulted," he argues. "The Buddhist religion has been attacked, and our country has been trespassed. These are the origins of our nationalism."

Previously Jailed

A decade ago, authorities charged Wirathu with inciting anti-Muslim riots outside Mandalay, and jailed him for eight years. He's aware it could happen this time too.

"One of my followers was arrested. Another one is missing, and his house was searched. Some books of mine were confiscated. They are watching me too, and will probably arrest me soon.

He laughs nervously, and points out two men who have quietly come in and sat down during our interview. One, he says, is police, the other, military intelligence.

Wirathu says the recent violence in Meiktila is an extension of fighting between Muslims and Buddhists last year in western Rakhine state that killed more than 110 people.

The group Human Rights Watch has called this ethnic cleansing against Muslims. But Wirathu says it was an organized attack on Buddhism.

Wirathu says he's not anti-Muslim. But he is against Buddhists marrying Muslims, and he advocates a boycott of Muslim-owned businesses.

"Muslims who live in Burma have raped Burmese girls, even mute girls, mad girls, Buddhist nuns too," he claims. "They married Burmese Buddhist girls and forced them to convert to Islam by stepping on the pictures of the Buddha and pagodas. All this inflicted a lot of mental pain."

Historical Friction

Under Britain's colonial rule of Burma until 1947, many Muslim Indians who spoke English and understood colonial ways immigrated to Burma. They staffed the local bureaucracy and dominated professions such as medicine and money lending. During

the Great Depression in the 1930s, resentment against this dominance erupted into anti-Muslim riots. Some of that suspicion remains to this day.

Perhaps the most contradictory thing about U Wirathu is that he and his followers describe him as pro-democracy. Pictures of democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi meeting with President Obama are prominently displayed in his monastery. Many members of democratic political parties, such as the National League for Democracy, revere Wirathu and claim he is not anti-Muslim.

Matt Walton, a Burma expert at George Washington University, says that a century ago, Buddhist nationalists like Wirathu led the effort to make Burma into a modern democracy, free of British colonial rule.

"You had this really complex combination of this sort of democratic intention," he says, "or, at that time, a desire for independence that was coupled often with this virulent exclusionary nationalism, this idea that, in order to get independence, we have to get rid of all of these groups that weren't really part of the nation."

Walton says that in Myanmar, the concept of democracy often emphasizes the rule of the majority, which in this case means ethnic Burman and Buddhist, over the rights of the minority.

Buddhist nationalism has also cropped up in Sri Lanka, where majority Buddhists are in conflict with Hindu and Christian Tamils, and in southern Thailand, where there are tensions with Malay Muslims.

Those Buddhists share the perception that their religion is under attack, and they fret that their countries could go the way of Afghanistan and Indonesia, where Islam supplanted Buddhism as the dominant religion.

Annex 243

Paul Vrieze & Zarni Mann, “Gov’t Sets Two-Child Limit for Rohingyas in Northern Arakan”,
The Irrawaddy (20 May 2013)

Burma

Govt Sets Two-Child Limit for Rohingyas in Northern Arakan



Maungdaw District authorities have imposed further restrictions on Rohingya Muslims last week, by introducing a formal order to limit child birth and marriage.

By **PAUL VRIEZE & ZARNI MANN** 20 May 2013

RANGOON—Authorities in the north of Arakan State added another measure to the restrictions imposed on Rohingya Muslims last week, by introducing a regional order that sets a two-child limit for local families. The directive, which is effective in Maungdaw District, also bans polygamy.

“Regarding family planning, they can only get two children,” Arakan State government spokesperson Win Myaing said on Monday, adding that only monogamous marriages would be recognized.

“The rule is only for certain groups... For Buddhist people, we don’t need that rule, because Buddhist people only have one wife,” Win Myaing said. “It’s being implemented to control the population growth, because it’s becoming too crowded there.”

Maungdaw District authorities, he said, “will not use force, but if people want to marry [or register newborn children] they have to submit forms to relevant local authorities and gain permission.”

In Maungdaw District, located in northern Arakan State along Burma's border with Bangladesh, the majority of the population is Rohingya and there is a small Arakanese Buddhist minority.

Burma's central government, Arakan State authorities and Arakanese politicians have long claimed that the Muslim population in the region is rapidly growing and pushing out local Buddhist communities.

Arakan nationalist leaders said the new regional order had been adopted on May 12 on instructions from the central government in Naypyidaw.

"The two-child policy is only for Bengali fathers and mothers who have no citizenship. They have no ID, they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh," Than Tun, of the Arakan Social Network, said during an interview in Sittwe last week. "The order came from the president and it was implemented as a regional notice."

Shwe Maung, a northern Arakan State MP with the ruling Union, Solidarity and Development Party, said he could not confirm that Naypyidaw had ordered the implementation of a two-child policy in Maungdaw. "If this is from the Union Parliament it should be publicly released. But I didn't find any information about it," he said.

Last month, a government report claimed that "high population growth" among the Muslim population had contributed to last year's clashes between Arakanese Buddhists and Rohingyas. It recommended voluntary family-planning measures among the Muslim population.

Inter-communal violence in June and October 2012 killed almost 200 people and displaced about 140,000 people, mostly Rohingyas.

The new order will add to a range of government restrictions imposed on the Rohingya population, such as limits on freedom of movement and access to government services, and existing conditions on recognition of marriages and children.

Burma's government does not accept the Rohingyas as citizens and terms them "Bengalis," suggesting that they have come from Bangladesh in recent decades. The Rohingyas claim they are native to Arakan State.

Human Rights Watch has alleged that the government has been complicit in the killings and ethnic cleansing of Rohingyas last year. The US-based group said that since then, "the Burmese government has tightened its discriminatory restrictions on the Rohingya, although many of the policies have been in place for decades."

Myo Thant, a Rohingya politician from the Democracy and Human Rights party, which is based in Maungdaw District, said that the new two-child policy was based on false allegations by government officials.

“They accuse us of being responsible for an explosion of the Muslim population in Maungdaw District, but this has always been a Muslim majority area with a dense population,” he said.

Myo Thant said Arakanese leaders and the central government had long contrived to control the Rohingya population and limit their rights.

“Since 1988, they have tried to control the birth rates,” he said, adding that families in Maungdaw District had been subject to the authority of local battalions of the Burmese border security force, the Nasaka, which has the power to approve registration of Rohingya newborns and marriages.

(Additional reporting in Sittwe by Htet Naing Zaw)



Paul Vrieze & Zarni Mann
The Irrawaddy

Burma

Burma's Frontier Appeal Lures Shadowy Oil Firms

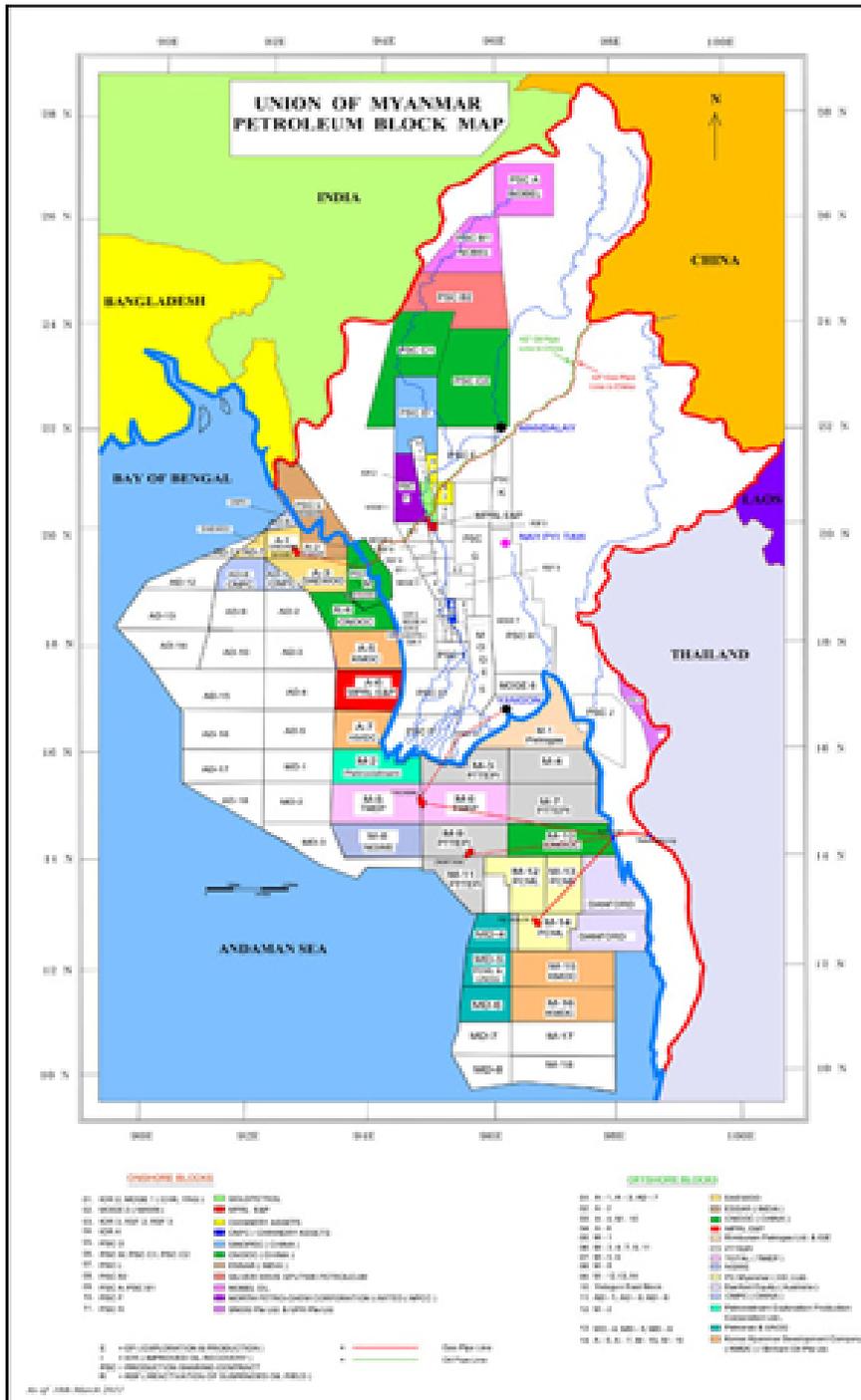
By **WILLIAM BOOT** 9 May 2015

While the major non-American Western oil companies adopt and wait-and-see policy and US firms remain barred by Washington's sanctions, shadowy oil enterprises are gaining footholds in Burma.

Among firms which have recently won licenses to explore for oil and gas are little-known businesses based in Panama, Nigeria and Azerbaijan—countries where corporate accountability can be murky.

Not only does the bidding process remain opaque, the pedigree of some of the participants is too.

CIS Nobel Oil Company claims to be London based, but on investigation its only contact address is in Baku, capital of Azerbaijan, a former republic of the Soviet Union on the Caspian Sea.



 A map showing oil and gas blocks in Burma. (Source: Burma's Ministry of Energy)

Nobel is to prospect for oil and gas on an unnamed onshore block awarded by the Burmese Ministry of Energy. Virtually nothing is known about Nobel other than that it does some prospecting in the Caspian Sea and has links with Azerbaijan's state oil company.

Nobel and a clutch of other little known firms bid for licenses when the ministry put forward 18 onshore blocks for development last year.

A firm registered in the Central American country of Panama called Geopetrol International Holdings secured a license for another block which it will operate with Burmese partner A-1 Mining Company.

Panama is notorious for providing so-called flags of convenience for murky shipping companies which do not comply with international safety standards and regulations.

Burma's Energy Ministry has also awarded a license to a firm called Tianjin New Highland, which appears to be Chinese but has links in the unstable African state of Nigeria, noted for its "black gold curse"—the political and business corruption around its oil wealth which has left millions of Nigerians in poverty.

Tianjin New Highland appears to have begun life in Hong Kong but is registered in the money laundering tax haven of the British Virgin Islands in the Caribbean. It also operates under the name Tianjin Energy Resources.

"These are by no means mainstream oil businesses and the ownership of some of them is rather lost in the web of addresses and registrations," said an industry analyst in Hong Kong who did not wish to be identified.

"Take Geopetrol International as an example. It gives the impression sometimes of being based in Switzerland or France and with business links in India, but it is formally registered in Panama."

Geopetrol already operates some form of joint venture with Goldpetrol, a subsidiary of Interra Resources of Singapore, which actually has links with Indonesia.

Confused? These webs can be extensive, leaving anyone seeking information on ownership confused and bemused.

Another little known Indonesian firm, Istech Resources Asia, has been named by the Burmese Energy Ministry as being successful in obtaining an onshore license, although it appears a local partner is still being arranged.

Under new rules, all foreign oil and gas firms starting up in Burma from now on must take on a Burmese partner.

Istech has an address in Jakarta and according to the *Bloomberg Business Week* companies guide specializes in oilfield support services. However, *Bloomberg* says on its website that the firm "does not have any key executives recorded."

For reasons that have not been explained, only nine of the 18 onshore blocks offered last year have been awarded, and only four of those had, up to last week, completed development agreements.

Local firms named in these partnerships so far are Aye Myint Khine Company, A-1 Mining Company, and UNOG.

UNOG Pte Ltd is registered in Singapore but is run from Burma. Oil industry data names Win Kyaing as managing director. He is also linked to another firm called IGE.

Some equally obscure foreign firms are already in operation in onshore blocks in Burma, with names such as Silver Wave Sputnik Petroleum and Zarubezhnet Itera, with vaguely Russian connections.

Sputnik Petroleum says it is registered in Singapore, while its sister company Silver Wave Energy leads back to the small Russian republic of Kalmykia on the Caspian Sea. Zarubezhnet Itera has links with the Russian state in Moscow.

Only two major international oil firms took up offers in the last license bidding round. These are Petronas of Malaysia and PTTEP of Thailand, both state owned and both already engaged in Burma's oil and gas industry.

"The apparent lack of interest from major players was surprising, although last year's bidding round took place before big changes like Aung San Suu Kyi being elected to Parliament and the EU suspending its sanctions," analyst Collin Reynolds in Bangkok told *The Irrawaddy* on May 8.

"It will be interesting to see if the next round attracts any big Western companies. However, I think many of them are waiting to see how the reforms pan out and whether they are going to be permanent. US oil firms are of course still excluded from any active participation."

Another batch of onshore development blocks will be put up for sale in August, the Energy Ministry's director general of planning Htin Aung said last week. A batch of offshore licenses will be offered by the end of this year, he said.

Industry giants such as Chevron, Total, Shell, Nippon, CNOOC and Mitsubishi sent representatives to the March trade show in Rangoon organized by the Ministry of Energy to promote development.

The ministry's Htin Aung told the show's participants that Burma has "proven" oil reserves of almost 140 million barrels and 322 billion cubic meters of gas.

Raising that volume of hydrocarbons from beneath land and sea is going to require large and long-term investment—much more than the likes of Silver Wave Sputnik Petroleum, Nobel Oil and GeoPetrol can muster.

William Boot

The Irrawaddy



Annex 244

“Burmese Muslims Given Two-Child Limit”, *The Guardian* (25 May 2013)

The Guardian



This article is more than **7 years old**

Burmese Muslims given two-child limit

Rakhine state officials say limit on children will help ease tensions with Buddhists, whose population is growing at slower rate

Associated Press

Sat 25 May 2013 06.32 EDT

Muslims in a province of Burma have been ordered not to have more than two children in an attempt by the government to stop Buddhist attacks on Muslims.

State officials said the two-child limit in the state of Rakhine would ease tensions between Buddhists and their Muslim Rohingya neighbours.

Local officials said the new measure was part of a policy that will also ban polygamy in two Rakhine townships that border Bangladesh and have the highest Muslim populations. The townships, Buthidaung and Maundaw, are about 95% Muslim.

The measure was enacted a week ago after a government-appointed commission investigating the violence issued proposals to ease tensions, which included family planning programs to stem

population growth among minority Muslims, said Rakhine state spokesman Win Myaing. The commission also recommended doubling the number of security forces in the volatile region.

"The population growth of Rohingya Muslims is 10 times higher than that of the Rakhine (Buddhists)," Win Myaing said. "Overpopulation is one of the causes of tension."

Sectarian violence in Burma first flared nearly a year ago in Rakhine state between the region's Rakhine Buddhists and Muslim Rohingya. Mobs of Buddhists armed with machetes razed thousands of Muslim homes, leaving hundreds of people dead and forcing 125,000 to flee, mostly Muslims.

Since the violence, religious unrest has developed into a campaign against the country's Muslim communities in other regions.

Containing the strife has posed a serious challenge to President Thein Sein's reformist government as it attempts to institute political and economic liberalisation after nearly half a century of harsh military rule. It has also tarnished the image of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who has been criticised for failing to speak out strongly in defence of the country's embattled Muslim community.

Win Myaing said authorities had not yet determined how the measures will be enforced, but the two-child policy will be mandatory in Buthidaung and Maundaw. The policy will not apply yet to other parts of Rakhine state, which have smaller Muslim populations.

"One factor that has fuelled tensions between the Rakhine public and [Rohingya] populations relates to the sense of insecurity among many Rakhines stemming from the rapid population growth of the [Rohingya], which they view as a serious threat," the government-appointed commission said in a report issued last month.

Predominantly Buddhist Burma does not include the Rohingya as one of its 135 recognised ethnicities. It considers them to be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and denies them citizenship. Bangladesh says the Rohingya have been living in Myanmar for centuries and should be recognised as citizens. Muslims account for about 4% of Myanmar's roughly 60 million people.

Annex 245

“Two-child policy violates human rights of Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslims – UN expert”,
UN News (31 May 2013)



UN News (/en/)

Two-child policy violates human rights of Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims – UN expert



OCHA/Kirsten Mildren An assessment team talks to displaced people in Pauktaw camp in rural Rakhine, Myanmar, where more than 20,000 Rohingya live.

31 May 2013

An independent United Nations human rights expert today urged the Government of Myanmar to respond unequivocally to the revival of a local order limiting the number of children Rohingya Muslims can have to two, stressing that this is a clear violation of their human rights.

Tomás Ojea Quintana, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar emphasized that the Government had an obligation to review and revoke all orders which violate international human rights standards.

“This local order is one of many that have been introduced by local Rakhine state authorities that violate the basic human rights of Rohingya Muslims, including with regard to freedom of movement, marriage, and registration of newborn children.”

“These orders provide further ammunition to local authorities, including the border security force Nasaka, to discriminate against and persecute the most vulnerable and marginalized group in Myanmar,” he added in a news release

(<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=13391&LangID=E>).

Mr. Ojea Quintana noted that the vast majority of the 800,000 Rohingya Muslims are without citizenship and are stateless, making them extremely vulnerable to human rights violations.

“This local order in the northern Rakhine state townships of Buthidaung and Maungdaw is a clear-cut human rights violation targeting a particular ethnic and religious group,” he stated. “The Central Government must provide an unequivocal response.”

Myanmar has ratified the UN Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, which obliges State parties to respect and protect the right of women and men “to decide freely and responsibly on the number and spacing of their children and to have access to the information, education and means to enable them to exercise these rights.”

Also, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has called on the Government not to restrict the number of children of Rohingya people.

“It is the role of the State to provide information to the public on family planning and to provide contraception and other reproductive health services to women and men throughout Myanmar,” Mr. Ojea Quintana said. “It is not the role of the State to introduce discriminatory and coercive measures such as these.”

The Special Rapporteur has maintained that discrimination against the Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state is one of the underlying causes of the communal violence that erupted there last year, and is fuelling the spread of anti-Muslim violence across the country.

“Only by addressing this discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities can the Government of Myanmar hope to forge integrated communities that live together in equality, peace and harmony,” he underscored.

Independent experts, or special rapporteurs, are appointed by the Geneva-based UN Human Rights Council (<https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/Home.aspx>) to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

Annex 246

Tin Aung Kyaw, “Buddhist monk Wirathu leads violent national campaign against Myanmar’s Muslims”, *Global Post* (21 June 2013)

Buddhist monk Wirathu leads violent national campaign against Myanmar's Muslims

pri.org/stories/2013-06-21/buddhist-monk-wirathu-leads-violent-national-campaign-against-myanmars-muslims



Editor's note: In a partnership between GlobalPost and the Open Hands Initiative, a team of top young reporters from Myanmar and the United States have set out on a reporting journey through a country inching toward a new democracy and undergoing dramatic change. One of the stories these reporters are following here is about rising extremism among a fringe group of Buddhist monks. In a rare interview, GlobalPost reporting fellow Tin Aung Kyaw sat down with the Buddhist monk whose anti-Muslim rhetoric has placed him at the center of rising ethnic and sectarian violence.

MANDALAY, Myanmar — The Buddhist monk arrived wrapped in saffron-colored robes with an entourage of muscular, younger monks who guarded him and hung on his every word at the sprawling monastery he runs and where his divisive, anti-Muslim teaching is gaining a strong following.

ADVERTISING

The monk, Ashin Wirathu, was unapologetic when asked about his role at the center of a rising tide of Buddhist extremism that has crested in a wave of anti-Muslim violence resulting in the deaths of more than 200 people and displacement of some 150,000 from their homes in recent months.

“Muslims are like the African carp. They breed quickly and they are very violent and they eat their own kind. Even though they are minorities here, we are suffering under the burden they bring us,” Wirathu, 48, said in a rare and wide-ranging interview with GlobalPost on Thursday.

“Because the Burmese people and the Buddhists are devoured every day, the national religion needs to be protected,” he said, announcing that he would push for a ban on interfaith marriage before the next parliamentary session and vowing to continue the so-called “969” campaign that calls for Buddhists to only do business with other Buddhists and exclude Muslims who have a strong tradition as merchants in Myanmar.

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is made of eight major ethnic groups, but 90 percent of the population is Buddhist. About 5 percent of the population is Muslim and the rest are a mix of Christian and Hindu.

Muslims live throughout the country, as they were merchants along the trade routes between India and China. They have settled in waves of immigration from throughout the Muslim world and neighboring India since at least the 19th century. More recently, Muslims are coming across the border from Bangladesh in search of work and opportunity in Burma’s Rakhine State, where much of the recent violence has been centered.

Wirathu’s sermons play on the fear among some Buddhists in certain parts of Myanmar of a rising Muslim population that some feel is threatening the majority Buddhist religion and its traditions. Wirathu and others have spurred a movement known as “969,” which calls for Buddhists to band together to defend their faith and for Buddhists to do business only with other Buddhists. The numerology of the “969” movement refers to the virtues of the Buddha, the practices of the faith and the community. The distinctive “969” stickers are ubiquitous on shops, motorcycles and car windows.

Wirathu has also pushed a ban against interfaith marriage, claiming that the Buddhist majority is diluted by such marriages and reeling off one anecdote after another of forced conversions of Buddhist women to Islam. Many critics here and abroad say Wirathu’s sermons are racist rants against Muslims who he has likened to “mad dogs” and “cannibals” and, in perhaps a more charitable and consistent reference, as simply “troublemakers.”

But Wirathu’s movement is gaining a wider and wider following.

He heads the Ma Soeyein monastery attended by some 2,500 monks, has an active Facebook page and leads speaking tours that attract thousands of followers. Wirathu is also gathering signatures for a petition to introduce the interfaith marriage legislation which he has titled, “Safeguarding the National Identity.”

“The people are requesting that we put forward the ‘Safeguarding the National Identity’

law,” he said, adding, “I am committed to working on this law until it is passed.”

This proposed law, if it does come to a vote, would likely put pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi, who was elected to parliament two years ago, and those who support her efforts in a difficult position.

Political observers say it will put them between their hopes to unify the many different ethnic groups that have been fighting a series of open conflicts with the previous military regime and a broad populist streak among the majority ethnic Burmans who are coalescing around this new brand of Buddhist nationalism.

The proposed ban on interfaith marriage is not new in Burma, and it has been implemented in other countries in the region, including Singapore. It is similar to a popular idea that first emerged in the 1930s and called for a strong nationalist movement. And this is not the first time that Buddhist monks have used their authority to influence the history of Myanmar. They have always been part of major political movements.

Wirathu himself is no stranger to activism; he was arrested in 2003 for political incitement and served seven years in prison before he was reportedly released as part of a government amnesty program. Buddhist monks were also at the head of the 2007 “Saffron Revolution,” in which monks took to the streets in large numbers to protest the rising prices of food and fuel. Images of the military cracking down on the monks with tear gas and batons were carried around the world and served to propel the pro-democracy movement.

The current Burmese parliament was elected two years ago in what was widely seen as Burma’s first free and fair elections in more than a half century. And if this proposed law banning interfaith marriage is indeed introduced, it will mark the first time in history that parliament will consider a law concerning a national religion.

Wirathu said that theological authorities were “shaping the movement.”

A few days ago in Mhawbi, just outside of Yangon, more than 200 monks gathered at what they called a “peace conference,” where this law was given shape, he said.

“Legal experts are now writing up a rough draft of the law,” he said. “And there will be a public announcement of this law on the 27th of June.”

Wirathu continued, “We will finish collecting the signatures by the 30th of June. We have found parliamentary members who will introduce this legislation. We also have parliamentary members who will support this legislation. However, the final decision will have to be made through a vote.”

However, the “Safeguarding the National Identity” law is rejected by the intellectual community, human rights groups and many civil society organizations. Mandalay, a city where the “969” movement has taken root, is famous for a strong intellectual community that has supported the pro-democracy movement. One member of that community is Nyi Pu Ley, a writer and artist, who has soundly criticized Wirathu’s proposed legislation.

“Doing this is like raising the political flag unnecessarily because there are many laymen. This is popular among the laymen. The “969” group and the Mandalay people are not on the same page,” he said.

But many learned monks from the Buddhist university are lending support to Wirathu and his proposed law. In a country where monks have a great deal of moral authority, political observers including Nyi Pu Ley fear this could lead to a large nationalist movement.

Thant Myint-U, a historian, author and most recently an adviser to the president, said, “Monks in Myanmar should concentrate more on religious matters rather than political matters. Many people in Myanmar, including those in Mandalay, are worried that there will be more outbursts of religious violence in their communities. People do not want this killing and this violence.”

(Reporting for this story was also provided by GlobalPost reporting fellows Van Patrick King and Pailin Wedel.)

Annex 247

Thomas Fuller, "Extremism Rises Among Myanmar Buddhists", *New York Times* (21 June 2013)

Extremism Rises Among Myanmar Buddhists

The New York Times

June 21, 2013 Friday, Late Edition - Final

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Section: Section A; Column 0; Foreign Desk; Pg. 1

Length: 1450 words

Byline: By THOMAS FULLER; Wai Moe contributed reporting from Mandalay and Yangon, Myanmar, and Poypiti Amatatham from Bangkok.

Body

TAUNGGYI, Myanmar -- After a ritual prayer atoning for past sins, Ashin Wirathu, a Buddhist monk with a rock-star following in Myanmar, sat before an overflowing crowd of thousands of devotees and launched into a rant against what he called "the enemy" -- the country's Muslim minority.

"You can be full of kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog," Ashin Wirathu said, referring to Muslims.

"I call them troublemakers, because they are troublemakers," Ashin Wirathu told a reporter after his two-hour sermon. "I am proud to be called a radical Buddhist."

The world has grown accustomed to a gentle image of Buddhism defined by the self-effacing words of the Dalai Lama, the global popularity of Buddhist-inspired meditation and postcard-perfect scenes from Southeast Asia and beyond of crimson-robed, barefoot monks receiving alms from villagers at dawn.

But over the past year, images of rampaging Burmese Buddhists carrying swords and the vituperative sermons of monks like Ashin Wirathu have underlined the rise of extreme Buddhism in Myanmar -- and revealed a darker side of the country's greater freedoms after decades of military rule. Buddhist lynch mobs have killed more than 200 Muslims and forced more than 150,000 people, mostly Muslims, from their homes.

Ashin Wirathu denies any role in the riots. But his critics say that at the very least his anti-Muslim preaching is helping to inspire the violence.

What began last year on the fringes of Burmese society has grown into a nationwide movement whose agenda now includes boycotts of Muslim-made goods. Its message is spreading through regular sermons across the country that draw thousands of people and through widely distributed DVDs of those talks. Buddhist monasteries associated with the movement are also opening community centers and a Sunday school program for 60,000 Buddhist children nationwide.

The hate-filled speeches and violence have endangered Myanmar's path to democracy, raising questions about the government's ability to keep the country's towns and cities safe and its willingness to crack down or prosecute Buddhists in a Buddhist-majority country. The killings have also reverberated in Muslim countries across the region, tarnishing what was almost universally seen abroad as a remarkable and rare peaceful transition from military rule to democracy. In May, the Indonesian authorities foiled what they said was a plot to bomb the Myanmar Embassy in Jakarta in retaliation for the assaults on Muslims.

Ashin Wirathu, the spiritual leader of the radical movement, skates a thin line between free speech and incitement, taking advantage of loosened restrictions on expression during a fragile time of transition. He was himself jailed for eight years by the now-defunct military junta for inciting hatred. Last year, as part of a release of hundreds of political prisoners, he was freed.

Extremism Rises Among Myanmar Buddhists

In his recent sermon, he described the reported massacre of schoolchildren and other Muslim inhabitants in the central city of Meiktila in March, documented by a human rights group, as a show of strength.

"If we are weak," he said, "our land will become Muslim."

Buddhism would seem to have a secure place in Myanmar. Nine in 10 people are Buddhist, as are nearly all the top leaders in the business world, the government, the military and the police. Estimates of the Muslim minority range from 4 percent to 8 percent of Myanmar's roughly 55 million people while the rest are mostly Christian or Hindu.

But Ashin Wirathu, who describes himself as a nationalist, says Buddhism is under siege by Muslims who are having more children than Buddhists and buying up Buddhist-owned land. In part, he is tapping into historical grievances that date from British colonial days when Indians, many of them Muslims, were brought into the country as civil servants and soldiers.

The muscular and nationalist messages he has spread have alarmed Buddhists in other countries.

The Dalai Lama, after the riots in March, said killing in the name of religion was "unthinkable" and urged Myanmar's Buddhists to contemplate the face of the Buddha for guidance.

Phra Paisal Visalo, a Buddhist scholar and prominent monk in neighboring Thailand, says the notion of "us and them" promoted by Myanmar's radical monks is anathema to Buddhism. But he lamented that his criticism and that of other leading Buddhists outside the country have had "very little impact."

"Myanmar monks are quite isolated and have a thin relationship with Buddhists in other parts of the world," Phra Paisal said. One exception is Sri Lanka, another country historically bedeviled by ethnic strife. Burmese monks have been inspired by the assertive political role played by monks from Sri Lanka's Sinhalese majority.

As Myanmar has grown more polarized, there have been nascent signs of a backlash against the anti-Muslim preaching.

Among the most disappointed with the outbreaks of violence and hateful rhetoric are some of the leaders of the 2007 Saffron Revolution, a peaceful uprising led by Buddhist monks against military rule.

"We were not expecting this violence when we chanted for peace and reconciliation in 2007," said the abbot of Pauk Jadi monastery, Ashin Nyana Nika, 55, who attended a meeting earlier this month sponsored by Muslim groups to discuss the issue. (Ashin is the honorific for Burmese monks.) Ashin Sanda Wara, the head of a monastic school in Yangon, says the monks in the country are divided nearly equally between moderates and extremists.

He considers himself in the moderate camp. But as a measure of the deeply ingrained suspicions toward Muslims in the society, he said he was "afraid of Muslims because their population is increasing so rapidly."

Ashin Wirathu has tapped into that anxiety, which some describe as the "demographic pressures" coming from neighboring Bangladesh. There is wide disdain in Myanmar for a group of about one million stateless Muslims, who call themselves Rohingya, some of whom migrated from Bangladesh. Clashes between the Rohingya and Buddhists last year in western Myanmar roiled the Buddhist community and appear to have played a role in later outbreaks of violence throughout the country. Ashin Wirathu said they served as his inspiration to spread his teachings.

The theme song to Ashin Wirathu's movement speaks of people who "live in our land, drink our water, and are ungrateful to us."

"We will build a fence with our bones if necessary," runs the song's refrain. Muslims are not explicitly mentioned in the song but Ashin Wirathu said the lyrics refer to them. Pamphlets handed out at his sermon demonizing Muslims said that "Myanmar is currently facing a most dangerous and fearful poison that is severe enough to eradicate all civilization."

Many in Myanmar speculate, without offering proof, that Ashin Wirathu is allied with hard-line Buddhist elements in the country who want to harness the nationalism of his movement to rally support ahead of elections in 2015. Ashin Wirathu denies any such links.

Extremism Rises Among Myanmar Buddhists

But the government has done little to rein him in. During Ashin Wirathu's visit here in Taunggyi, traffic policemen cleared intersections for his motorcade.

Once inside the monastery, as part of a highly choreographed visit, his followers led a procession through crowds of followers who prostrated themselves as he passed.

Ashin Wirathu's movement calls itself 969, three digits that monks say symbolize the virtues of the Buddha, Buddhist practices and the Buddhist community.

Stickers with the movement's logo are now ubiquitous nationwide on cars, motorcycles and shops. The movement has also begun a signature campaign calling for a ban on interfaith marriages, and pamphlets are distributed at sermons listing Muslim brands and shops to be avoided.

In Mawlamyine, a multicultural city southeast of Yangon, a monastery linked to the 969 movement has established the courses of Buddhist instruction for children, which it calls "Sunday dhamma schools." Leaders of the monasteries there seek to portray their campaign as a sort of Buddhist revivalist movement.

"The main thing is that our religion and our nationality don't disappear," said Ashin Zabila, a senior monk at the Myazedi Nanoo monastery outside the city.

Yet despite efforts at describing the movement as nonthreatening, many Muslims are worried.

Two hours before Ashin Wirathu rolled into Taunggyi in a motorcade that included 60 honking motorcycles, Tun Tun Naing, a Muslim vendor in the city's central market, spoke of the visit in a whisper.

"I'm really frightened," he said, stopping in midsentence when customers entered his shop. "We tell the children not to go outside unless absolutely necessary."

<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/world/asia/extremism-rises-among-myanmar-buddhists-wary-of-muslim-minority.html>

Graphic

PHOTOS: Ashin Wirathu, center, is a Buddhist monk who critics say is helping to inspire violence through his anti-Muslim preaching. (A1)

A follower of Ashin Wirathu, a Buddhist monk who says Buddhism is under siege by Muslims, listened to his sermon on Tuesday in Taunggyi, Myanmar. More photos are at nytimes.com/world.

Burmese having breakfast on Sunday near a mosque in Mawlamyine. There is wide disdain in Myanmar for a group of about one million stateless Muslims, who call themselves Rohingya. (PHOTOGRAPHS BY ADAM DEAN FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES) (A8)

Load-Date: June 21, 2013

Annex 248

Hannah Beech, “The Face of Buddhist Terror”, *Time* (1 July 2013)

The Face of Buddhist Terror | July 1, 2013



TIME

Monday, Jul. 01, 2013

The Face of Buddhist Terror

By Hannah Beech / Meikhtila, Burma, And Pattani, Thailand

His face as still and serene as a statue's, the Buddhist monk who has taken the title "the Burmese bin Laden" begins his sermon. Hundreds of worshippers sit before him, palms pressed together, sweat trickling silently down their sticky backs. On cue, the crowd chants with the man in burgundy robes, the mantras drifting through the sultry air of a temple in Mandalay, Burma's second biggest city after Rangoon. It seems a peaceful scene, but Wirathu's message crackles with hate. "Now is not the time for calm," the 46-year-old monk intones, as he spends 90 minutes describing the many ways in which he detests the minority Muslims in this Buddhist-majority land. "Now is the time to rise up, to make your blood boil."

Buddhist blood is boiling in Burma, also known as Myanmar — and plenty of Muslim blood is being spilled. Over the past year, Buddhist mobs have targeted members of the minority faith. The authorities say scores of Muslims have been killed; international human-rights workers put the number in the hundreds. Much of the violence was directed against the Rohingya, a largely stateless Muslim group in Burma's far west that the U.N. calls one of the world's most persecuted people. The communal bloodshed then spread to central Burma, where Wirathu lives and preaches his virulent sermons. The radical monk sees Muslims, who make up at least 5% of Burma's estimated 60 million people, as a threat to the country and its culture. "[Muslims] are breeding so fast and they are stealing our women, raping them," he tells me. "They would like to occupy our country, but I won't let them. We must keep Myanmar Buddhist."

Such hate speech threatens the delicate political ecosystem in a country peopled by at least 135 ethnic groups that has only recently been unshackled from nearly half a century of military rule. Already some government officials are calling for implementation of a ban, rarely enforced during the military era, on Rohingya women's bearing more than two children. And many Christians in the country's north say recent fighting between the Burmese military and ethnic Kachin insurgents, who are mostly Christian, was exacerbated by the religious divides.

Radical Buddhism is also thriving in other parts of Asia. This year in Sri Lanka, Buddhist nationalist groups with links to high-ranking officialdom have gained prominence, and monks have helped orchestrate the destruction of Muslim and Christian property. And in Thailand's deep south, where a Muslim insurgency

has claimed some 5,000 lives since 2004, the Thai army trains civilian militias and often accompanies Buddhist monks when they leave their temples to collect alms, as their faith asks of them. The commingling of soldiers and monks — some of whom have armed themselves — only heightens the alienation felt by Thailand's minority Muslims.

Although each nation's history dictates the course radical Buddhism has taken within its borders, growing access to the Internet means that prejudice and rumors are instantly inflamed with each Facebook post or tweet. Violence can easily spill across borders. In June in Malaysia, where hundreds of thousands of Burmese migrants work, several Buddhist Burmese were killed — likely in retribution, Malaysian authorities say, for the deaths of Muslims back in Burma.

In the reckoning of religious extremism — Hindu nationalists, Muslim militants, fundamentalist Christians, ultra-Orthodox Jews — Buddhism has largely escaped trial. To much of the world, it is synonymous with nonviolence and loving kindness, concepts propagated by Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, 2,500 years ago. But like adherents of any religion, Buddhists and their holy men are not immune to politics and, on occasion, the lure of sectarian chauvinism.

When Asia rose up against empire and oppression, Buddhist monks, with their moral command and plentiful numbers, led anticolonial movements. Some starved themselves for their cause, their sunken flesh and protruding ribs underlining their sacrifice for the laity. Perhaps most iconic is the image of Thich Quang Duc, a Vietnamese monk sitting in the lotus position, wrapped in flames, as he burned to death in Saigon while protesting the repressive South Vietnamese regime 50 years ago. In 2007, Buddhist monks led a foiled democratic uprising in Burma: images of columns of clerics bearing upturned alms bowls, marching peacefully in protest against the junta, earned sympathy around the world, if not from the soldiers who slaughtered them. But where does social activism end and political militancy begin? Every religion can be twisted into a destructive force poisoned by ideas that are antithetical to its foundations. Now it's Buddhism's turn.

Mantra of Hate

Sitting cross-legged on a raised platform at the New Masoeyin monastery in Mandalay, next to a wall covered by life-size portraits of himself, Wirathu expounds on his worldview. U.S. President Barack Obama has "been tainted by black Muslim blood." Arabs have hijacked the U.N., he believes, although he sees no irony in linking his name to that of an Arab terrorist. Around 90% of Muslims in Burma are "radical bad people," says Wirathu, who was jailed for seven years for his role in inciting anti-Muslim pogroms in 2003. He now leads a movement called 969 — the figure represents various attributes of the Buddha — which calls on Buddhists to fraternize only among themselves. "Taking care of our religion and race is more important than democracy," says Wirathu.

It would be easy to dismiss Wirathu as an uneducated outlier with little doctrinal basis for his bigotry, one of eight children who ended up in a monastery because his parents wanted one less mouth to feed. But Wirathu is charismatic and powerful, and his message resonates. Among the country's majority Bamar — or Burman — ethnic group, as well as across Buddhist parts of Asia, there's a vague sense that their religion is under siege, that Islam has already conquered Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Afghanistan — all these formerly Buddhist lands — and that other dominoes could fall. Even without proof, Buddhist nationalists fear that local Muslim populations are increasing faster than their own, and they worry about Middle Eastern money pouring in to build new mosques.

Since Burma began its reforms in 2011, with the junta giving way to a quasi-civilian government, surprisingly few people have called for holding the army accountable for its repressive rule. This equanimity has been ascribed to the Buddhist spirit of forgiveness. But Burma's democratization has also allowed extremist voices to proliferate and unleashed something akin to ethnic cleansing. The trouble began last year in the far west, where clashes between local Buddhists and Muslims claimed a disproportionate number of Muslim lives. Machete-wielding Buddhist hordes attacked Rohingya villages; 70 Muslims were slaughtered in a daylong massacre in one hamlet, according to Human Rights Watch. The communal violence, which the government has done little to check, has since migrated to other parts of the country. In March, dozens were killed and tens of thousands left homeless as homes and mosques were razed. Children were hacked apart and women torched. In several instances, monks were seen goading on frenzied Buddhists.

In late March, the transport hub of Meikhtila burned for days, with entire Muslim quarters razed by Buddhist mobs after a monk was killed by Muslims. (The official death toll: two Buddhists and at least 40 Muslims.) Thousands of Muslims are still crammed into refugee camps where journalists are forbidden to enter. I was able to meet the family of 15-year-old Abdul Razak Shahban, one of at least 20 students at a local madrasah who were killed. Razak's own life ended when a nail-studded plank was slammed against his skull. "My son was killed because he was Muslim, nothing else," Razak's mother Rahamabi told me, in the shadow of a burned-out mosque.

Temple and State

Dreams of repelling Islam and ensuring the dominance of Buddhism animate the Bodu Bala Sena (BBS), Sri Lanka's most powerful Buddhist organization whose name means Buddhist Strength Army. At the group's annual convention in February in a suburb of Sri Lanka's capital Colombo, more than 100 monks led the proceedings, as followers clutched Buddhist flags, clasped their right hand to their chest and pledged to defend their religion. Founded just a year ago, the BBS insists that Sri Lanka, the world's oldest continually Buddhist nation, needs to robustly reclaim its spiritual roots. It wants monks to teach history in government schools and has called for religious headscarves to be banned, even though 9% of the

population is Muslim. Said BBS general secretary and monk Galaboda Aththe Gnanasara Thero at the group's annual meeting: "This is a Buddhist government. This is a Buddhist country."

Hard-line monks, like those in the BBS, have turned on minority Muslims and Christians, especially since the 26-year war against the largely Hindu Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam insurgency ended four years ago. After President Mahinda Rajapaksa, a conservative, was elected in 2005, Buddhist supremacist groups became more powerful. In recent months, their campaign of intimidation has included attacks on a Muslim-owned clothing store, a Christian pastor's house and a Muslim-linked slaughterhouse. Despite monks' being captured on video leading some of the marauding, none have been charged. Indeed, temple and state are growing ever closer in Sri Lanka, with a monk-dominated party serving as a coalition member of the government. In March, the guest of honor at the opening ceremony for the BBS-founded Buddhist Leadership Academy was Sri Lanka's Defense Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa, the President's brother, who said, "It is the monks who protect our country, religion and race."

Alms in Arms

In Thailand's deep south, it's the monks who need help — and in their desperation some have resorted to methods contrary to Buddhism's pacifist dogma. The southern provinces of Pattani, Yala and Narathiwat used to be part of a Malay sultanate before staunchly Buddhist Thailand annexed the region early last century. Muslims make up at least 80% of the area's population. Since a separatist insurgency intensified in 2004, many Buddhists have been targeted because their positions — such as teachers, soldiers or government workers — are linked to the Thai state. Dozens of monks have been attacked too. Now the Thai military and other security forces have moved into the wat, as Thai Buddhist temples are known, and soldiers go out each morning with monks as they collect alms. "There's no other choice," says Lieutenant Sawai Kongsit. "We cannot separate Buddhism from guns anymore."

Wat Lak Muang, in the town of Pattani, is home to 10 Buddhist monks and around 100 soldiers. The sprawling compound's main stupa has been taken over as an operational command center for the Thai army's 23rd battalion, with camouflage netting wrapped around the central base of the holy structure. Each year, thousands of Buddhist volunteers receive training at this wat to join armed civilian militias charged with guarding their villages. Prapaladsuthipong Purassaro, who was a monk for 16 years and now tends the temple, admits that when he wore monastic robes, he owned three pistols. "Maybe I felt a little bit guilty as a Buddhist," he says. "But we have to protect ourselves."

If Buddhists feel more protected by the presence of soldiers in their temples, it sends quite another signal to the Muslim population. "By inviting soldiers into the wat, the state is wedding religion to the military," says Michael Jerryson, an assistant professor of religious studies at Youngstown State University in Ohio and author of a book about Buddhism's role in the southern Thailand conflict. "Buddhists will never think we're Thai people," says Sumoh Makeh, the mother of a suspected insurgent who, with 15 others, was killed by Thai marines in February after they tried to raid a naval base. "This is our land but we are the outsiders." After all, Muslims too are running scared in the deep south. More of them have perished in the violence than Buddhists, felled by indiscriminate bombings or whispers that they were somehow connected to the state. (By proportion of population, however, more Buddhists have died.) Yet monk after monk tells me that Muslims are using mosques to store weapons, or that every imam carries a gun. "Islam is a religion of violence," says Phratong Jiratamo, a marine turned monk. "Everyone knows this."

It's a sentiment the Burmese bin Laden would endorse. I wonder how Wirathu reconciles the peaceful sutras of his faith with the anti-Muslim violence spreading across his Bamar-majority homeland. "In Buddhism, we are not allowed to go on the offensive," he tells me. "But we have every right to defend our community." Later, as he preaches to an evening crowd, I listen to him compel smiling housewives, students, teachers, grandmothers and others to repeat after him: "I will sacrifice myself for the Bamar race."

The Buddhist spirit of forgiveness, though, still exists in the unlikeliest of places. In 2011, Watcharapong Suttha, a monk at Wat Lak Muang, was doing his morning alms, guarded by soldiers, when a bomb detonated. The lower half of his body is covered in shrapnel scars. Now 29 and disrobed, Watcharapong is still traumatized, his eyes darting, his body beset by twitches. But he does not blame an entire faith for his attack. "Islam is a peaceful religion, like Buddhism, like all religions," he says. "If we blame Muslims, they will blame us. Then this violence will never end."

Find this article at:

<http://content.time.com/time/magazine/article/0,9171,2146000,00.html>

Annex 249

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Annex 250

Jonah Fisher, “Anti-Muslim monk stokes Burmese religious tensions”, *BBC* (29 August 2013)

Anti-Muslim monk stokes Burmese religious tensions

 bbc.com/news/world-asia-23846632

By Jonah Fisher BBC News, Mandalay

29 August 2013



Image caption Time magazine labelled Wirathu "the face of Buddhist terror"

This week, religious violence has once again flared in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma. Hundreds of Muslim homes have been burnt to the ground in Sagaing region after being attacked by Buddhist mobs.

In just over a year, more than 200 people, mostly Muslims, have been killed and many more displaced as unrest has spread from Rakhine state in the west to towns across the country.

Many are blaming a controversial monk and the nationalist organisation he helps lead for the rising tensions.

In a classroom at one of Mandalay's most famous monasteries, a teacher is at work. Shin Wirathu is taking a class of young monks at Masoeyin through the five precepts or pillars of the Buddhist faith.

This morning, he is lecturing on the importance of avoiding sexual misconduct.

Advertisement

"Yes, venerable monk," the young men chant in unison, as Wirathu softly delivers his advice on the need to avoid temptation.



Image caption Monk Kaylar Sa said the 969 movement was unnecessary

When the class is over, he shows me outside. On the wall of the monastery courtyard are graphic posters of the Buddhist victims of recent religious and ethnic violence in Rakhine state in western Myanmar.

They are unpleasant viewing. The pictures from October last year show dead children with their heads cut open and the bodies of women with their internal organs spilling out of their torsos.

Wirathu said he put them up as a reminder to Buddhists that the country is under attack from Muslim "invaders".

"Muslims are only well behaved when they are weak," he said. "When they become strong, they are like a wolf or a jackal; in large packs they hunt down other animals."

Wirathu believes there is a Muslim "master plan" underway to turn Myanmar into an Islamic state.

If he is right, it is a long-term project. Latest estimates suggest that of Myanmar's 60 million people, 90% are Buddhist and about 5% Muslim.

"Over the past 50 years, we have shopped at Muslim shops and then they became richer and wealthier than us and can buy and marry our girls," Wirathu said. "In this way, they have destroyed and penetrated not only our nation but also our religion."

'Master plan'



Image caption Muslims keep watch over Joon Mosque, the biggest in Mandalay, every night

Wirathu's solution lies in a controversial nationalist organisation called 969. It calls on Buddhists to shop, sell property and marry within their own religion.

Small, brightly-coloured stickers have been distributed to clearly brand businesses as Buddhist-owned.

Supporters of 969 argue it is a purely defensive organisation, created to protect Buddhist culture and identity. Listening to the rhetoric of Wirathu and 969's leaders, there is no doubt it is squarely aimed at Muslims.

We are just preaching and posting on the internet and Facebook for the safety and security of our nation

"In the past, there was no discrimination based on religion and race. We all stayed together in a brotherly way," Wirathu said. "But when their [Muslim] master plan has been revealed we can no longer stay quiet."

From Rakhine state in the west, to more central towns like Meiktila and Okkan, the link is being made between heightened religious tensions and the preaching and activities of monks and 969.

The outbreaks of violence usually have a depressing symmetry.

A small flashpoint, often a crime or perceived insult, perpetrated by a Muslim against a Buddhist, triggers a disproportionate wave of reprisals against the entire Muslim community.

Ten years ago, under the military junta, Wirathu was jailed for his anti-Muslim views. Now in these times of change, his message is widely disseminated through social media and DVDs. Far from being condemned, Wirathu now has backing from the very top.

In June, as his infamy reached its peak, Wirathu appeared on the front cover of Time magazine labelled "The face of Buddhist terror". Burmese monks were outraged and Myanmar's President Thein Sein quickly leapt to Wirathu's defence.

The Time issue was banned and a statement released with the president lauding Wirathu as a "son of Lord Buddha".

'Obstacle to reform'



Image caption Smar Nyi Nyi said religious tensions distracted the public from important issues

There is no shortage of theories inside Myanmar as to why Wirathu is now flavour of the month.

One theory is that continuing ethnic and religious violence could be used by the military as a pretext for maintaining a dominant role in Burmese politics. It is certainly an argument Myanmar's generals have made before.

"We are also wondering about this," Kaylar Sa, a monk jailed for his part in the Saffron revolution of 2007, told me as he chain-smoked his way through a pack of Red Ruby cigarettes.

He pointed out that the government has acted decisively and violently to end monk-led demonstrations against an army-backed copper mine last year, and yet now was unwilling to tackle them over hate speech.

"At the moment, we firmly believe that the 969 movement is unnecessary," he said. "If this movement continues to be taken seriously, it could become an obstacle to democratic reform."

A short drive from Wirathu's monastery, Muslim volunteers guard Joon Mosque, the biggest in Mandalay, each night. The men told me that in the event of a Buddhist attack, they expect no protection from the (Buddhist-dominated) police or the army.

Smar Nyi Nyi, a veteran of the 1988 student uprising and one of the elders at the mosque, took me to one side. He expressed views that many Burmese share, that shadowy elements within the establishment are stoking the unrest.

"Everybody is talking about the violence between Buddhists and Muslims," he said.

"Nobody is interested in the dam on the Irrawaddy River. No one is interested in the gas pipeline. If somebody is controlling things, he is a smart man!"

Some Muslims cling to the hope that there exists a silent majority of moderate Buddhists appalled by recent events, secretly rooting for them.

"Most of the Buddhists, they are just onlookers " a retired Muslim doctor tells me with a shrug. "A few might pass a heartfelt regard and say they're sorry, but that doesn't come above the surface."

For Wirathu, each fresh outbreak of religious conflict reinforces his view that Myanmar is part of a global war on militant Islam and that he is being badly misunderstood.

"We don't use drones - we haven't killed [Osama] Bin Laden or Saddam Hussein or the Taliban," he told me.

"We are just preaching and posting on the internet and Facebook for the safety and security of our nation. If we are all protecting our own nation who's the bad guy - Wirathu or Barack Obama?"

Burma's Transition

Annex 251

Kjell Anderson, “The Enemy Next Door: Hate Speech in Burma”, *The Sentinel*
(17 October 2014)



The Enemy Next Door: Hate Speech in Burma

by Dr. Kjell Anderson | Oct 17, 2014 | Burma, General News, Situations of Concern | 0 comments



Hate speech is a grave social harm. Even where it fails to provoke violence or immediate discrimination it can have the effect of deepening social divisions and creating the conditions necessary for future persecution and violence. It moves societies away from universal social bonds towards bonds based on other, narrower criteria. This narrowing of awareness creates the *Us-Them* dichotomies essential for genocide.^[1]

In the [first installment](#) of this blog series I examined the religious and ethnic dimensions of anti-Muslim violence in Burma. In Part Two I will focus on the use of hate speech to define “the enemy,” in this case, Burmese Muslims. The discourse found in Burmese nationalist hate speech characterises the Rohingya and other Muslims as a

hazardous and alien presence at the heart of the Burmese body politic, threatening the existence of the ethno-religious political community.

Defining The Enemy

Collective violence in Burma appears to be largely asymmetrical: the victims are almost always Muslim, or in the case of Rakhine state, Rohingya Muslims. But why the Rohingya and why Muslims? The answers to these questions lies in a common feature of ethnic conflict and genocidal violence: the fear of the wicked other. This other is a devious infiltrator, a covert, existential threat. In the case of Burma this fear is grounded in a particular way of understanding culture and history.

Rohingya Muslims had an influential and, in some ways, privileged position in pre-colonial Arakan. They held many important positions in the Arakanese bureaucracy, and the court itself was under the heavy cultural and political influence from the neighbouring Sultanate of Bengal.

Substantial South Asian immigration in the early years of the twentieth century culminated in 1927 with 480,000 people immigrating to Burma; this is particularly remarkable when you consider that the country only had a total population of 13 million people. In the larger cities in Burma such as Rangoon (Yangon) and Akyab (Sittwe) South Asian immigrants formed a majority of the population.

The perception of Muslim/Indian takeover was further exacerbated by the presence of a substantial South Asian (particularly Bengali) merchant class. As in other British colonial states (such as Fiji, Trinidad, and Malaysia) Indians became shopkeepers in order to open avenues for economic enrichment and upward mobility which were otherwise closed to them.

During the Second World War inter-communal tensions erupted and thousands of Rohingya fled Rakhine. Following the war, a jihadist movement was formed in Northern Arakan in order to seek a separate Muslim state (or possibly to join Pakistan). The perceived ascendancy of Muslim power in Burma, when coupled with divergent political demands and identity, contributed to the sense that the Rohingya and Muslims were a threat.

The resentment that some ethnic Burmese feel towards Rohingya and other Muslims is compounded by the perception that the Rohingya practice a violent, expansionist, and alien religion (Islam). The Rohingya are often (and officially) referred to as “Bengalis” as a means of showing that they do not belong in Burma.^[2] They are perceived as alien infiltrators seeking to subvert and dominate the Burmese. For example, the official government Rakhine Commission report states:

While there is no hard evidence to suggest the existence of a master plan of the Bengalis to control Rakhine State, there are voices pushing for recognition, and in the past requests for an autonomous region under their control.[3]

This characterisation of the lack of “hard evidence” implies that such a master plan might exist, it just cannot be proven. This inference is particularly strong when it is coupled with the Commission’s mention of Rohingya political demands. The Commission goes on to argue that “Measures need to be taken to instil a sense of loyalty and allegiance to the Union of Myanmar.”[4]

There is also a sense of contamination – that, in order for the Burmese to thrive, the toxic presence of the Rohingya must be removed either through their destruction, removal, or ‘quarantine.’[5] This is also reflected in Burmese government policies seeking to expel some Rohingya and move others to special “resettlement zones,” as well as the recommendations in the Rakhine commission report for Muslim family planning and the temporary separation of the Rohingya from the general population.[6]

Human Rights Watch has noted:

On June 29, monks in Sittwe distributed an incendiary pamphlet to the local Arakanese population, telling all Arakanese that they ‘Must not do business with Bengalis [Rohingya],’ and ‘Must not associate with Bengalis [Rohingya].’ The pamphlet alleged that the Rohingya sought to eliminate the Arakanese population, stating that the ‘Bengalis [Rohingya] who dwell on Arakanese land, drink Arakanese water, and rest under Arakanese shadows are now working for the extinction of the Arakanese.’ It implored the people to follow the demands to socially and economically isolate the Rohingya to prevent the ‘extinction of the Arakanese.’[7]

Beyond presenting the Rohingya as a toxic (and foreign) element Burmese nationalists have also made use of other typical tropes of dehumanising hate speech such as associating the victim group with disease, death, and animals. They are also sometimes referred to by the derogatory term “Kalar.”[8]

Consider the following three examples of hate speech from 969 Movement leader (and Buddhist monk) Ashin Wirathu:

1. On April 28, 2013 Wirathu argued: “It’s a very dangerous situation because in some cases the whole village becomes Muslim...The African catfish have a very great population and they eat each other and destroy nature. These catfish are not allowed into the country to breed.” In referring to the Rohingya euphemistically as “catfish” Wirathu is emphasizing the supposed foreignness of the Rohingya while also portraying them as an existential threat to the Burmese.

<http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/burmavisualization?datapoint=8>

2. Similarly, Wirathu warns, “Muslims are only well behaved when they are weak...When they become strong, they are like a wolf or a jackal, in large packs they hunt down other animals...Over the past 50 years, we have shopped at Muslim shops and then they became richer and wealthier than us and can buy and marry our girls,” Wirathu said. “In this way, they have destroyed and penetrated not only our nation but also our religion.” There are several interesting elements to this hate speech such as the portrayal of Muslims as dangerous animals, but also the spectre of sexual appropriation – the Muslims will not only take our money they will take “our girls.” This proprietary fear is a common precursor to violence (as we will see in [Part Three](#) of this blog series) as it entails a loss of sexual power but also an emasculating loss of honour.

<http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/burmavisualization?datapoint=48>

3. Finally, on September 3, 2013 Wirathu stated: “We cannot live together with wild elephants.” This characterisation of Muslims as “wild elephants” contains both the elements of dehumanisation and threat. The use of the imagery of wild elephants may also hold a particular connotation for Buddhists; a well-known Buddhist story recounts the near trampling of Buddha when his cousin and rival Devadatta intentionally released a wild elephant in Buddha’s path in the hopes that the elephant would crush him.

<http://threatwiki.thesentinelproject.org/burmavisualization?datapoint=54>

Conclusion

Anti-Muslim hate speech in Burma contains several common elements of genocidal speech. These include dehumanisation, the association of the victim group with negative cognitions (such as death, barbarity, and disease), and the creation of a *survival discourse*, which presents the victim group as being a threat to the very survival of the Burmese. Hate speech employs a discourse which is meaningful to and understood by its target audience (for example the speech above where Muslims are referred to as “wild elephants”). This understanding is highly contextual as it often makes use of local cultural knowledge and euphemistic language.

As a result of the process of hate speech all victims gain a high degree of symbolic attractiveness to perpetrators. Via the process of hostile framing, all actions of the victims are viewed through a negative lens.^[9] Moreover, the victims themselves become interchangeable – stigmatized objects to be acted upon rather than human beings who are full members of the moral community with its corresponding norms of reciprocity and protection. In such circumstances, violent action against the targeted group becomes permissible or even essential. Within an enabling context, hate speech and incitement have the potential to give flesh to the bones of resentment, to craft

neuroses into a human image. In short, hate speech against the Rohingya and other Burmese Muslims creates the conditions necessary for persecution. In some cases, it also directly incites violence, as the [next installment](#) of this blog series will demonstrate.

Kjell Anderson is a researcher and lecturer at the Netherlands Institute for War, Holocaust, and Genocide Studies ([NIOD](#)), as well as being on the Council of Advisors of the Sentinel Project. He holds a PhD in International Human Rights Law from the National University of Ireland.

[1] Kjell Anderson, *The Dehumanisation Dynamic: A Criminology of Genocide*, PhD thesis, International Human Rights Law, (Galway, Ireland: Irish Centre for Human Rights, National University of Ireland, 2011), p. 46.

[2] <http://www.hatebase.org/vocabulary/Bengali>

[3] Republic of the Union of Myanmar, *Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State (Rakhine Commission Report)*, 8 July 2013, p. iii.

[4] Republic of the Union of Myanmar, p. v.

[5] Rhiannon Neilson, "Toxification as a More Indicative Early Warning Sign for Genocide," International Association of Genocide Scholars Biennial Meeting, Winnipeg, 19 July, 2014.

[6] Republic of the Union of Myanmar, pps. 67 and 97.

[7] Human Rights Watch, *'All you can do is Pray': Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State*, (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2013), p. 32.

[8] <http://www.hatebase.org/vocabulary/kala>

[9] Aaron T. Beck, *Prisoners of Hate: The Cognitive Basis of Anger, Hostility, and Violence*, (New York: Harper, 2000).

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Annex 252

Alex Preston, “The Rohingya and Myanmar’s ‘Buddhist Bin Laden’”, *GQ* (12 February 2015)



Britain



LONG READS

The Rohingya and Myanmar's 'Buddhist Bin Laden'

By [Alex Preston](#)
12 February 2015

The UN claims that Burma's Muslim Rohingya are among the most persecuted minorities in the world. Their most vocal enemy is Ashin Wirathu, an influential Buddhist monk who is calling for the expulsion of the 'Bengali' few. *GQ* enters a hellish world of ethnic massacres, vicious reprisals and concentration camps.



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I'm in a tuk-tuk heading through the city centre, bouncing over potholed roads past trees in which fruit bats hang like giant seedpods. Gun-toting guards appear out of the heavy littoral haze and I shrink back into the damp canvas of the tuk-tuk's sunshade, pulling my cap down over my eyes. I'm in Sittwe, Rakhine State, western

Burma, the site of one of the most devastating humanitarian crises on the planet, called by many a genocide.

Sittwe, formerly home to 200,000 people but now decimated by ethnic violence, wears an air of terminal neglect, the once-grand colonial buildings green, mildewed and crumbling. Halfway down the high street, next to the picturesque but non-functioning clock tower, police officers swing low-slung machine guns in front of the city's main mosque, now a blackened shell. During religious riots in the summer of 2012, the majority of Sittwe's mosques were torched and left open to the creeping ravages of the sea air.

Around them, where once Muslims and Buddhists lived side by side, whole blocks stand empty, ghost towns, islands within the city. The security forces are everywhere, with guard huts every few hundred metres, blockades across all major roads, a dusk-to-dawn curfew for all of the city's inhabitants.





© Getty Images

I have come to Sittwe to meet the Rohingya people, whom the UN call "one of the most persecuted minorities in the world". The Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic group in this Buddhist-dominated country, were already a marginalised minority during Burma's half-century-long military dictatorship. But since 2011, when the junta began its tentative steps towards democracy, the plight of these stateless people has taken a desperate dive for the worse.

Subjected to punitive laws by the new "civilian" government (still, in fact, dominated by the military), which limits everything from marriage to education to the number of children they may have (a two-child policy), the Rohingya have suffered regular and bloody attacks from local Buddhists.

Often these attacks have been spearheaded by the same orange-robed monks who led a series of demonstrations against the junta in 2007, known as the "Saffron Revolution". A warped and violent version of Buddhism has grasped hold of many monasteries in Burma, with hate-speech directed against Muslims across the country, and particularly the Rohingya. Mosques have been attacked, villages set on fire and thousands chased from their homes.

Massacres have leapt from village to village in Rakhine State, with machetes the weapon of choice.

In May 2012, the rape and murder of a woman in the village of Tha Pri Chaung unleashed a wave of violence against the Rohingya.

In the subsequent months more than 600 were murdered, with scores of villages looted and burned. Then in March 2013, an argument in a jeweller's shop in the town of Meiktila sparked an orgy of violence. A Buddhist mob rampaged through the town's Muslim quarter, killing dozens, most of them women and children. Muslim youths retaliated, pulling a monk from his bicycle, dousing him in petrol and burning him alive. Then Buddhists attacked the Islamic boarding school of Mingalar Zayone, dragging students and teachers out onto the street and hacking 32 to death as the security services looked on.

Before my visit, Matthew Smith, founder of human-rights organisation Fortify Rights, sent me a video of the Meiktila massacre. Burmese police officers stand by as, like a scene from *Mad Max*, an already bruised and bleeding middle-aged Muslim man is tied by his ankles behind a motorbike by Buddhist youths. There is cheering as the bike roars off down the rock-strewn road, flaying skin from the bouncing body as it goes.

Until 2012, Sittwe was home to the largest concentration of Rohingya in the country - 40 per cent of the population. Now almost a quarter of a million Rohingya have been rounded up into concentration camps along Rakhine's low-lying coastline, with only a handful remaining in central Sittwe, trapped in a heavily guarded ghetto called Aung Mingalar.

The Rohingya camps lie to the west of town, past barbed-wire barricades, an army barracks and Sittwe university campus, which has been taken over by the security services - six Black Marias stand in the central forecourt as I pass. The camps are supposedly off limits to foreigners but, with the help of Fortify Rights, I've managed to find a local who will, for a price, get me inside. I keep my head down as we move through the police blockade, past another burnt-out mosque and into the camps.



© Getty Images

The horrors of the Rohingya camps stay with a man. International aid agencies were expelled from Rakhine State in early 2014, driven out by a mixture of localised violence and co-ordinated political pressure. I come across a makeshift clinic set up by a local volunteer and his wife in an attempt to make up for the lack of health care in the camps.

The Burmese government has shamefully neglected to fill the hole it helped to create, so the sick in the camps flock to shacks like this one, where out-of-date medicines are piled on a table in the shadowy interior and the harried health worker - he stresses that he's not a qualified doctor - attempts to help many of those who, by now, are beyond help. I sit beside a man in his sixties with a lacerating cough that sends out a spray of fine red mist. The health worker, portly, sweating,

introduces me to his wife. She's the only midwife in this section of the camp, looking after a population of many tens of thousands. There is a difficult labour across the river, she tells me, hefting herself onto the back of a motorbike.

We continue deeper into the camps. The huts and shacks look frighteningly flimsy, all the more so when you remember that Cyclone Nargis battered Burma in 2008, killing around 138,000. I meet babies blind and bloated from hunger, HIV patients who, now the aid agencies have gone, are unable to receive antiretroviral drugs. "I can maybe get treatment outside of the camp," one of them tells me, "but I'm scared. They will kill me quicker than the disease." A six-year-old boy, the age of my son, stands with his mother in front of their shack. He has TB and coughs every few minutes, his eyes bulging. He spits red at my feet. Tumours cluster around the skin of his neck and under his arms. His mother strokes his hair, sobbing.

By the end of the day, I've spoken to dozens within the camps.

I've seen the clinics built by the government but left locked and unstaffed, as if taunting the desperate and dying around them. I've seen so many lying out on their deathbeds, so many clearly suffering the effects of malnutrition, so many crushed by the poverty and drudgery and hunger.

That these camps exist anywhere in the world is a shock, worse still that they exist in a country which is currently receiving a flood of foreign investment in the wake of the military junta's tentative steps towards democracy. That evening, the tuk-tuk rattling through the rising mist, we leave over a bridge built by the British in the Second World War. As we wait for our turn to cross, a young man leans into the tuk-tuk. "Go to see Aung Mingalar," he says. "It is worse for them there."

Aung Mingalar is a ghetto under siege, wrapped behind ribbons of tangled barbed wire, heavily armed guards blocking every road leading in or out. I know several journalists who've tried to get in and failed. Aid agencies were allowed in until the end of 2013.

Since then, no one really knows how bad things are for those living in the ghetto. In my efforts to get inside, I'm introduced to a tuk-tuk driver who used to work for French NGO (non-governmental organisation) Action Contre la Faim. He tells me he knows one of the guards. We pull up to the gatepost and the driver gets out.

There is a moment when I think we've succeeded, but the driver's shoulders sag and comes back to me shaking his head.

I decide to try a more direct route. I get the driver to drop me a hundred yards from the western entrance to the ghetto. I can see six guards watching me approach, four on one side, two on the other. They hold their AK-47s across their chests. I can feel my pulse behind my eyes and force myself to take slow breaths.

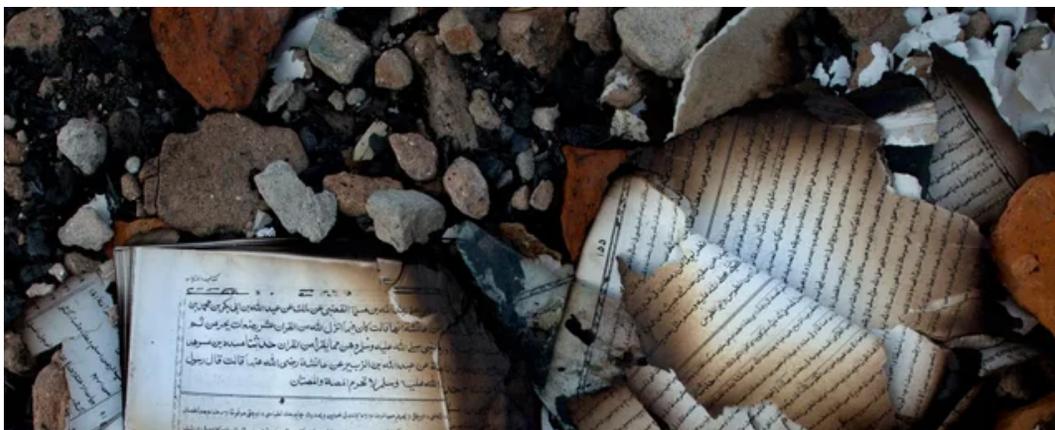
Ignoring the guards, I march forward, hurrying into something between a walk and a run when I pass the barricades. I make it 30 yards or so before the guards catch up with me. In that time I'm able to see wide, empty streets, a group of skinny youths breaking rocks by the roadside, a baby with his hands wrapped around a bulging belly.

The guards have their machine guns pointing at me, one is shouting in Burmese. I hold up my hands, smiling and allow myself to be led into the barracks beside the

gatehouse. I'm forced down into a chair and offered a cigarette. I don't smoke, but I take it anyway. The guards look at me closely and, for want of anything better to do, I hold out a photocopy of my passport. They pass it around, speaking animatedly. "Tourist," I say, smiling dumbly. "Just a tourist." Finally one of them gets on his motorcycle and heads off, not, as I'd thought, into Sittwe, but towards the centre of Aung Mingalar. I smoke the cigarette down as I wait. More guards arrive, a senior-looking police officer who's been awoken from a nap and is in his vest.

"As a monk I shouldn't say this, but there is only one way to solve the problem: we must fight back. We must fight violence with violence."

Finally the guard comes back on his motorbike with, riding pillion, a young Rohingya man. "I speak English," he says. "My name is Myo Win. You can't be here." I ask him why not and sudden, surprising tears spring to his eyes. "Because of the attacks, because of what it's like inside. They have told me to tell you that if you leave now, you can go. Otherwise..." He looks towards the police officer in the vest and shakes his head. I take him by the hand and say goodbye, wave buffoonishly to the guards and make my way back through the barricades, to freedom.





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"As a monk I shouldn't say this, but there is only one way to solve the problem: we must fight back. We must fight violence with violence." The chief monk of the village temple is in his early forties, a heavysset man in orange-gold robes, his bald head glistening with sweat in the fierce heat of early summer.

He won't give me his name. "Monks are still men," he continues, "and as men, we won't stand by and watch our villages being taken over, our women raped."

We are sitting on a raised bamboo platform at the back of the dilapidated monastery in a village in the western outskirts of Sittwe, just outside of the Rohingya camps. Surrounded by barbed wire, the monastery is a battered brick shell, fluttering bunting strung across its prayer hall, the roof open to the elements.

Towards the ocean, whose distant roar can be heard above the chirping of crickets and the crying of village children, dark-leafed mango trees droop their heavy green fruit.

It has taken a while to find the monastery. We'd stopped to ask directions at a village house. While a man made vague gestures westwards, his wife ran inside. As we walked away, my photographer, Kaung Htet, told me that he'd heard her

phoning the secret services, warning them that "Americans" were poking around a place off limits to foreigners. We'd have to be quick.

The road outside the monastery bore the scars of the vicious fighting that has rolled unchecked through the region since 2012 - broken glass, blackened hedges. We were ushered inside the monastery compound and onto the platform, where the chief monk sat cross-legged and stately, a line of wicked-looking machetes laid out to one side of the bamboo lean-to. Novices in robes of deep burgundy stood watching.

The chief monk sees himself as a frontline warrior in the battle to stop his country being invaded by the people he calls "Bengalis" - the Rohingya. He is one of the Buddhist monks who, in the face of what they see as an international conspiracy funded by Muslim countries from Saudi Arabia to Malaysia, are taking up arms against Islam. He points to white-lipped scars running across his arms, dark burns on his wrists and fingers. "I got these fighting the Bengalis," he says. "Danger is always here for us. There are Bengali houses just there." He gestures to a group of makeshift huts on the horizon, part of the Rohingya camps which stretch for mile after mile down the coast. "During the violence, hundreds of Bengalis attacked us and tried to set the village houses on fire.

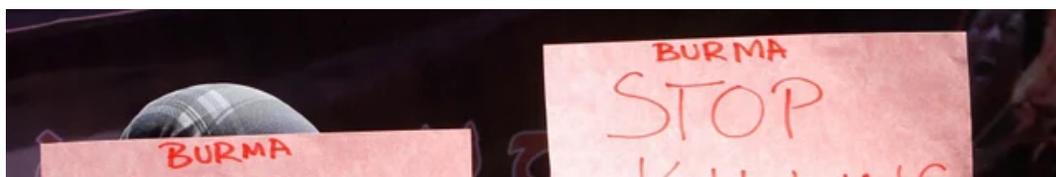
We caught a group of them with bottles of gasoline and lighters.

They told us their imam had ordered them to set the village on fire." In June 2012, he tells me, more than a thousand Rohingya launched an assault on the village. "At first we thought it was a Muslim funeral, there were so many of them. Then we realised it was an attack. We had to fight for our lives." Witness reports paint a

much murkier picture, suggesting that the Rohingya were merely fighting off Buddhist attackers.

I ask the chief monk about Ashin Wirathu, the monk who dubs himself the "Burmese bin Laden" and leads the viciously anti-Muslim 969 Movement. Wirathu had recently visited Rakhine State, giving hate-filled speeches to crowds of thousands about the wickedness of the "kalars" (a highly offensive term for Muslims) and the need for Rakhine Buddhists to defend themselves at all costs. "Wirathu is a good man," the chief monk says. "He's just trying to prevent bad things happening, to protect the integrity of Buddhism. "The media are all owned by Muslims, and they paint only negative pictures of him." At the mention of Wirathu, the chief monk's temper seems to snap. His voice rises, his words coming out fast and jumbled. One of the novice monks begins to smack a hammer into his hand just behind me. "The media accuse us of having put the Bengalis in concentration camps. But there are no gas chambers here. The NGOs like Médecins Sans Frontières and Malteser International were all helping the Bengalis. They were training the Bengalis to attack our country. We found explosives and ammunition in the NGOs' warehouses."

His voice has pitched to a shriek. All of a sudden, he stands, lifting his heavy body remarkably quickly, and orders us from the monastery. When Kaung Htet tries to take his picture, he holds up a hand and gestures again for us to leave, marching us out of the gates and back into the village. He is there, watching, arms crossed, as we walk back along the dusty road towards town.





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Four days later, I'm at Mandalay airport to meet Ashin Wirathu. Wirathu's 969 Movement has been the vanguard of Burma's anti-Muslim feeling, with the monk leading rallies in which he calls for Muslims to be expelled from the country, for a crackdown on the Muslim men he accuses of forcing Buddhist females into polygamy and apostasy.

Wirathu has been an extraordinary beneficiary of the country's recent reforms. Arrested with four of his followers in 2003 for inciting anti-Muslim violence, he was originally sentenced to 25 years in jail. He was released in 2011 as the government liberated the vast majority of political prisoners. Since then, Wirathu has seized upon the huge growth of social media in a country where Facebook was banned until three years ago. Every day, Wirathu's Facebook page is updated with the details of alleged new Muslim atrocities - murders, bomb attacks and, above all, rape, which he claims is used by Muslims not only as an instrument of terror, but as a way of carrying out a sub rosa colonisation of the country. He tours Burma constantly, his vituperative speeches swiftly disseminated on YouTube.

GQ has been granted a rare audience with Wirathu; better still, he's invited me to come and spend two days in the compound from which he runs the 969 Movement. It's an unprecedented glimpse into the activities of this charismatic monk, one of the key players in the rapidly evolving Burmese political scene.

The next day, having caught only a brief glimpse of the monk as he was shuttled from the airport to a late-night 969 rally, I set off for our meeting. We drive through Mandalay's sprawling grid of streets, past the vast, walled palace, once the home of the royal family, now headquarters of the Tatmadaw, Burma's mighty military.

Still, signs adorn the walls cheerily proclaiming that "Tatmadaw

[will] crush all those harming the union."

Wirathu's compound sits within the New Masoeyein Monastery, over the brackish waters of the Irrawaddy River from the town's huge jade market. In the stillness of the morning, as we step from the car, the cries of market traders can be heard across the river.

A novice sweeps the ground in front of the building in which Wirathu lives and works, a three-storey wooden block. Clouds of dust whip up around the huge billboard pinned to the side of the building. It is a grisly collage of alleged Muslim atrocities: a beheaded baby, blue and green gore spewing from the dark hole of his neck; murdered monks lying in a road; machete-hacked women; a group of men in Muslim garb burning bodies outside a pagoda.

Wirathu arrives in his SUV and we stand talking for a moment in the cool morning air. I notice that a hair protrudes from a follicle in his neck. It is thick and dark and

at least eight inches long. We make our way into the building, where a group of 969 members stand around. Others sit eating breakfast in the refectory that seems to double as a dormitory. Wirathu eases himself into a wicker chair and gestures for me to sit at his feet.

I do so, reaching to stroke the dog that patters in and out of the building, searching for titbits.

Noises echo around us as we talk: the shriek of brainfever birds outside, a monk hawking and spitting in an upper room, the clatter of plates. Behind Wirathu stands a monk who introduces himself as 969's press officer. He records our discussion and, every time Wirathu uses the word "kalar" (as loaded and abhorrent as "nigger"), he leans respectfully forwards and intones, "Muslim."

Wirathu ignores the correction.

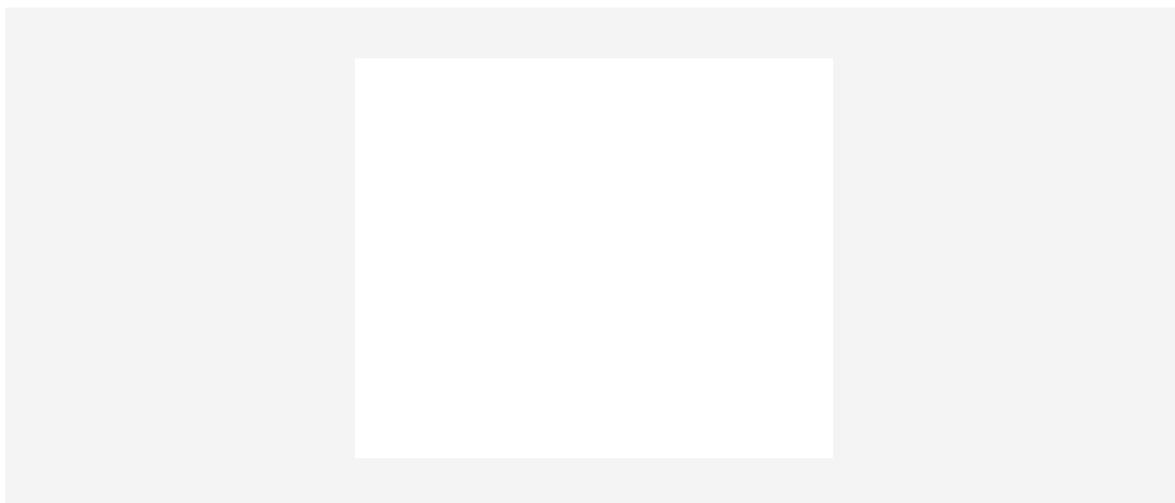
I ask Wirathu about the situation in Rakhine. There is a serious threat from terrorists, he tells me, with Muslims looking to carry out attacks across the state. The blame lies firmly with the international community. "You should go there and see the terrible things the NGOs have done," he tells me. "Most of the money from the Muslim world that is supporting the Bengalis [the Rohingya] is being channelled through the NGOs. Saudi Arabia is funnelling money through the NGOs. The NGOs are all working for the Rohingya; they are discriminating against the native Rakhine."

He tells me how Muslims have taken over the country, flooding across the border from Bangladesh, snapping up jobs, seizing control of key industries. "In Yangon," he says, "most of the construction companies are owned by Muslims. You can rarely

find Buddhists there. They have contacts within government that allow them to do business more easily in Burma than Buddhists."

We move on to speak about Wirathu's Facebook campaign to spread news of alleged Muslim crimes in the country. I question whether the small number of Muslims in the country - at last count less than five per cent of the population - could really carry out attacks on the scale that Wirathu claims. "Rape by Muslims of Buddhist girls is a very frequent event in Burma," he tells me. "An everyday occurrence. I post as many of them as I can on my Facebook page, just to let people know how common it is. Today I'll post a case on my site that happened last month and the man has just been sentenced."

He goes on to say that one of 969's key roles is supporting the families of those attacked by Muslims. "There was a case in Mandalay," he says. "A six-year-old Burmese girl was raped by a 55-year-old 'kalar' landlord. I supported the family of the girl. I found them another place to stay during the trial. There was another rape case in Yangon, a similar situation, where I supported the family with money from my own pocket."



It feels strange to come this far in an article about Burma without mention of the country's great human-rights heroine, Aung San Suu Kyi, but this is symptomatic of her stance on anti-Muslim violence in general and the plight of the Rohingya in particular.

She has been silent in the face of the bloodshed, trying to explain it away as the natural result of the country's move towards democracy. More charitable commentators suggest that Daw Suu, as she's known, is playing a political game.

Others, such as Mark Farmaner of Burma Campaign UK, are more critical. "I think she has seriously miscalculated her response to anti-Muslim violence in Burma," he tells me. "She has ended up with the worst of both worlds. On the one hand, she hasn't spoken up for an oppressed and endangered minority, on the other hand, she's still being attacked by the 969 Movement and losing support because there remains a perception that she's friendly to Muslims. Because she didn't take a firm moral stance against anti-Muslim feeling from the start, using her moral authority, she has opened the way for people like Wirathu to act with absolute impunity."

I notice that Wirathu wears a deep-blue tattoo of a peacock on his inner arm - symbol of Aung San Suu Kyi's National League For Democracy party. He gives a little chuckle and makes as if to scrub it away. "As a political leader, I used to really admire her, but from a nationalist point of view, I don't think she should be president. There's no way she should run the country. She is inefficient in terms of national security, but more than this, she has opposed the 969 Movement, publicly criticised us. For example, she said that the two-child policy and interfaith marriage law were against human rights. This means she is against us."

I finally touch on Wirathu's closeness to the very same military that imprisoned him. From external commentators to the people I meet on the streets of Mandalay to members of Wirathu's own inner circle, I hear repeated claims of government support of 969 and, particularly, of Wirathu's relationship with a member of

Burma's lower house by the name of Aung Thaung. The monk bristles visibly when I say the name, his voice dropping into a deep growl, his eyes fixing themselves upon me. "I've only met Aung Thaung once in my life, after my release from prison after the amnesty in 2012. The minister came here and sat exactly where you are now and I offered him some robes. That's the extent of our relationship. I've had no contact with him by phone, or email or letter. Nothing. Not with him, nor with his followers."

Wirathu stands up. It is clear that the interview is over.



© PA Photos

Barack Obama has held up Burma as an avatar of global democratic meliorism. He speaks of offering the "hand of friendship" to President Thein Sein and was swift to remove most of the US sanctions against the regime in the wake of 2011's reforms.

The Western world want to put their faith in a narrative that sees Burma as a rehabilitated pupil

Obama and the majority of the Western world want to put their faith in a narrative that sees Burma - previously lumped with North Korea and Iran as an "outpost of tyranny" - as a rehabilitated pupil, won over to the benefits of political and economic liberalism. The truth, alas, is far murkier and much more sinister.

Certainly the government has released the vast majority of its political prisoners, although many still remain in jail, including a number of Rohingya arrested only for voicing their anger at the treatment of their friends and family. The press has theoretical freedom of speech, although, again, to speak of the Rohingya is a risky business, with several journalists locked up for reporting on life in the camps.

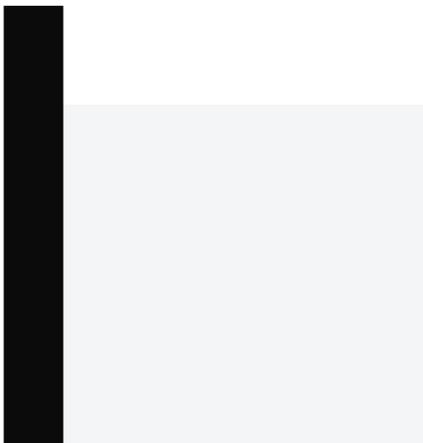
With elections in 2015, it is too soon to know whether the military will truly let the opposition contest freely. Aung San Suu Kyi is still banned from taking office due to a line in the constitution that forbids those married to foreigners becoming president (her late husband was the Oxford academic Michael Aris).

Burma is of enormous importance for both China and India as the great eastern economic migration continues. As Thant Myint-U, one of Burma's leading intellectuals, has said, "What China is lacking is its California, another coast that would provide its remote interior provinces with an outlet to the sea." Burma, Thant Myint-U says, is seen by China "as the bridge to the Bay of Bengal and the waters beyond". And yet, colouring everything, is the stain of the "slow-burning genocide" taking place in Rakhine State, the violence against Muslims across the rest of the country. Some try to paint this as a sad but understandable corollary of the coming of democracy, others claim that the Rohingya are recent arrivals from Bangladesh and ought to be sent back.

The clamour for action grows louder. Many now argue that the government of Burma should be held responsible for the horrors being perpetrated. As Tomás Ojea Quintana, the UN's special rapporteur on Burma, put it to me when I spoke to him on my return from Sittwe, "There has been a history of systematic discrimination against Rohingyas in Rakhine State. This has been aggravated by the government, with the conditions in IDP [internally displaced people] camps becoming dire and the police being accomplices in some of the massacres carried out against the Rohingya."

Another staunch defender of the Rohingya, former US senator Tom Andrews, now head of human-rights organisation United To End Genocide, sees in Burma the victory of "the politics of hate, the politics of fear [led by] a few bitter, radical monks". He views the plight of the Rohingya as a crucial test, not only of Burma's emerging democracy, but of the West's willingness to intervene in humanitarian crises. "There's no one domestically to stand up and speak out for the Rohingya. This makes it all the more important for the international community to exert power and make it count."

Originally published in the February 2015 issue of *British GQ*



Annex 253

Ishaan Tharoor, “Why Does This Buddhist-Majority Nation Hate These Muslims So Much?”,
The Washington Post (13 February 2015)

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Why does this Buddhist-majority nation hate these Muslims so much?

By **Ishaan Tharoor**

Feb. 13, 2015 at 8:30 a.m. GMT

In 2009, Burma's then-consul general in Hong Kong [sent a letter](#) to local newspapers and fellow diplomats posted in the Chinese territory. It was addressing concerns over the treatment of refugees from Burma's Rohingya population, a Bengali-speaking Muslim minority long marginalized in the country. [Incidents of shipwrecked boats](#) bearing half-starved, desperate Rohingya from Burma had won wider attention in the region.

Ye Myint Aung, the Burmese envoy in Hong Kong, hoped to dissuade others from feeling sympathy for the Rohingya. His method for doing this was by revealing his shocking racism. The Rohingya, he said, "are as ugly as ogres" and do not share the "fair and soft" skin of other Burmese ethnic groups.

Therefore, the Burmese consul general concluded, "Rohingya are neither Myanmar people nor Myanmar's ethnic group," using the other name for Burma while trotting out his government's long-standing contention that the Rohingya are interlopers in Burma and don't deserve citizenship rights.

More than half a decade has passed since then, and the situation in Burma has changed for the better. The country has opened up. The secretive, dictatorial military junta that once held sway has allowed the advent of a fledgling, albeit heavily curtailed democracy. Nobel laureate [Aung San Suu Kyi](#) was freed from decades of house arrest and is now a main leader of the opposition.

But the miserable condition of the Rohingya, a [forgotten, stateless people](#), persists. The United Nations [deems](#) them "one of the most persecuted minorities in the world." There are some 1.3 million Rohingya, the majority of whom live in Burma's Rakhine state, on the western border with Bangladesh and India, and struggle to access basic state services. As [WorldViews reported](#) last year, around 140,000 Rohingya eke out a squalid existence in ramshackle camps, displaced by ethnic and sectarian strife in 2013 and neglected by the Burmese government.

Recent [U.N. calls](#) on the Burmese government to grant the Rohingya full citizenship rights, including a General Assembly resolution passed in December, have been received with hostility. Angry anti-Rohingya marches this week persuaded the government to scrap tentative plans to give Rohingya carrying temporary documents the right to vote in an upcoming referendum.



Much of the ire is fanned by a hard-core of nationalist Buddhist monks. Certain groups play an outsized role in fanning sentiment against the Rohingya, whom they like to characterize as "Bengali" illegal immigrants rather than a distinct Burmese ethnic group. (Never mind that many generations of Rohingya have lived on Burmese soil.)

Ashin Wirathu, a Buddhist monk notorious for his xenophobic rhetoric, even earned a spot on the cover of TIME magazine's international edition, with the cover line: "The Face of Buddhist Terror." The saffron-clad Ashin Wirathu dubs himself the "Burmese bin Laden," and indulges in frenzied, un-monk-like speeches calling for tough action against Muslims. He raises the fear of forced conversions and terrorism. Last year, he addressed a gathering of nationalist monks in Sri Lanka, another nation with a Buddhist majority, warning of "a jihad against Buddhist monks."

But critics say Ashin Wirathu and his ilk, more often than not, are the ones inciting mob violence against Burma's Muslims, including non-Rohingya Muslims. Hundreds have died in recent years amid riots and tit-for-tat attacks.

It's a worrying development in a diverse nation that's just emerging from the straightjacket of authoritarian rule. Perhaps the most depressing indication of the Rohingya's plight is the relative silence of Suu Kyi, a global icon for democracy and human rights. The Nobel Peace Prize winner, in keeping with Burmese government policy, refuses to even say the word "Rohingya" — which in Burma's polarized context would be an act of recognizing the community's rights, let alone its very existence.



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Annex 254

Nobel Zaw, “Population Control Bill Could ‘Stop the Bengalis’: Wirathu”, *The Irrawaddy*
(18 May 2015)

Burma

Population Control Bill Could ‘Stop the Bengalis’: Wirathu



Nationalist monk U Wirathu lashes out against opponents of controversial legislation that would restrict birth rates at the discretion of local authorities.

By **NOBEL ZAW** 18 May 2015

RANGOON — Nationalist monk U Wirathu on Monday lashed out against calls for Burma’s Parliament to oppose controversial legislation that would restrict birth rates at the discretion of local authorities, claiming the bill was designed with the dual purpose of protecting women’s health and “stopping the Bengalis.”

The comments, made to The Irrawaddy during a telephone interview, supported criticisms that the legislation was intended to target minorities, particularly stateless Rohingya Muslims in western Burma’s Arakan State, also known as Rakhine.

“If the bill is enacted, it could stop the Bengalis that call themselves Rohingya, who are trying to seize Rakhine State,” Wirathu said. The Burmese government and much of the

general public refuse to recognize the term Rohingya, referring to the group as Bengalis to imply that they are illegal immigrants.

In recent weeks, the persecuted minority has been at the center of a regional crisis, as thousands are believed to have fled by boat to seek refuge in neighboring countries, often to find themselves caught in an expansive human trafficking circuit.

The Population Control Bill, which was approved by Burma's Union Parliament last week and now awaits the President's approval, is one of four bills known collectively as the Protection of Race and Religion package, proposed by the nationalist Buddhist organization Ma Ba Tha.

New York-based Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a statement on Saturday calling on lawmakers to reject the bill on the grounds that it violated women's rights and could be used to target minorities. The vote, however, had already been cast in favor without garnering much attention from the media.

Of particular concern, the group said, was a provision mandating that women wait three years between birthing children, which human rights activists and women's advocates view as an assault on female reproductive rights.

HRW also pointed out that the drafting process did not involve participation by ethnic and religious minority women, who would likely be most affected should the bill become law.

Wirathu, a radical monk closely associated with Ma Ba Tha and largely viewed as an anti-Muslim agitator, defended the legislation as a health measure that women need not be involved in drafting.

"[The Population Control Bill] was drafted for healthcare. The World Health Organization [WHO] also advised a three-year interval between each child," he said, an apparent reference to 2005 research recommending birth spacing to reduce infant and child mortality. "Will it only be legal when women join the discussion? Did women have any participation in Sharia Law?"

Under the bill, divisional and state governments are granted the ability to request a presidential order limiting reproductive rates if it is determined that population growth, accelerating birth rates, or rising infant or maternal mortality rates are negatively impacting regional development.

An “imbalance between population and resources, low socio-economic indicators and regional food insufficiency because of internal migration” can also be cited in invoking the law.

The legislative package, which includes provisions that would restrict interfaith marriage, polygamy and religious conversion, have been lambasted by human rights groups and women’s rights advocates since it was first proposed in 2013.

Critics claim the legislation undermines women’s right to freedom of faith and family planning, while leaving ethnic and religious minority women particularly vulnerable to abuse by authorities.

Western governments have warned that enacting the laws would not be in keeping with the country’s transition toward democracy.

Topics: A_Factiva



Nobel Zaw
The Irrawaddy

Annex 255

Timothy McLaughlin, “Myanmar Releases Census Data, but Excludes Rohingya Minority”,
Reuters (29 May 2015)

MAY 29, 2015 / 5:01 AM / UPDATED 5 YEARS AGO

Myanmar releases census data, but excludes Rohingya minority

By Timothy McLaughlin



YANGON (Reuters) - Myanmar released the final results of its first nationwide census in 30 years on Friday, but the count excluded the country's Muslim Rohingya minority, as well as sensitive data on ethnicity and the religious beliefs of its 51.5 million people.



Abdulami (C), 22, who was released from a human trafficking boat, points at pictures of people he recognises from the boat as he rests at a refugee camp outside Sittwe, Myanmar May 27, 2015. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

Most of Myanmar's 1.1 million Rohingya are stateless and live in apartheid-like conditions in the western state of Rakhine. Almost 140,000 were displaced in deadly clashes with majority Buddhists in Rakhine in 2012. They are denied citizenship and have long complained of state-sanctioned discrimination.

Delegates from Southeast Asian countries were gathered in the Thai capital on Friday for talks on the "boat people" crisis, which involves thousands of migrants - many of them Rohingya - floating on ships abandoned by traffickers after a recent crackdown in Thailand. Myanmar said it could not be held responsible.

The Myanmar government had promised international sponsors the Rohingya would be free to identify themselves as such in the census, conducted in March-April 2014, but backtracked a day before it started and said the use of the term would not be allowed.

"In northern Rakhine state, a considerable segment of the population was left out of the exercise amid ongoing communal tensions and the demand of many local people to self-identify as Rohingya, a demand not conceded by the authorities," said Vijay Nambiar, Special Adviser to the U.N. Secretary-General on Myanmar.

The count has also been criticized after its organizers based it on a list of 135 ethnic groups, which activists and critics say is outdated and inaccurate.

The biggest surprise of the preliminary results from the count released in August was data showing Myanmar's population stood at 51.4 million, some 9 million less than estimates. The full census broadly confirmed it, putting it at 51.5 million.

The results of the census also showed a literacy rate of adults at almost 90 percent. But other data reflected economic mismanagement under the 49 years of military rule, which plummeted the country into poverty, before reforms in 2011.

Only a third of Myanmar's households have electric lights, the infant mortality rate is at 62 per 100,000 live births, and life expectancy stands at just 66.8 years compared to neighboring Thailand's 74 years, according World Bank data.

The data on ethnicity and religion, as well as figures on occupation and maternal mortality, will be released next year after the country's general election scheduled for November.

Reporting by Timothy Mclaughlin; Editing by Nick Macfie

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Annex 256

George Soros, “As a Jew in Budapest, I too Was a Rohingya”, *Newsweek* (31 May 2015)

Soros: As a Jew in Budapest, I Too Was a Rohingya

N newsweek.com/soros-jew-budapest-i-too-was-rohingya-337443

Eric Swalwell

May 31, 2015



I have been a supporter of Burma's democracy movement since 1993. For most of that time, the prospect of change seemed remote, and I felt increasingly discouraged.

Then, in 2010, quite suddenly, or so it seemed, the ruling military junta decided to abandon absolute authoritarian rule. The world was stunned.

My engagement in Burma during those dark days taught me an important lesson. Sometimes it's necessary to support a lost cause for a long time just to keep the flame alive. That way, when the situation changes, groundwork for progress has already been laid.

As of today, I find myself again growing discouraged. Making the transition from military rule to a more open society is not easy, and in many ways the government of Burma has made real progress in its reform efforts.

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I fear that many of these reforms are not sustainable, because they have not yet been institutionalized. It's also true that political and economic power remains mostly concentrated in the hands of a privileged few who monopolize the revenue from Burma's abandoned natural resources.

The most immediate threat to Burma's transition is the rising anti-Muslim sentiment and officially condoned abuse of the Rohingya people. That has occurred under the watch of the current rulers in Naypyidaw.

From private conversations with progressive Burmese officials, I know that some in power genuinely want to see a Burma where all are treated equally, but these officials also fear the potential of extremist violence from the small but powerful group of religious radicals. These extremists have created a tinderbox that could blow up the entire reform process.

The government must confront these extremists and their financial supporters. In January, when I visited Burma for the fourth time in as many years, I made a short visit to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, in order to see for myself the situation on the ground. I

met with state and local leaders and both Rakhine and Rohingya populations, and also talked to internally displaced persons and those mostly Rohingya living in a section of Sittwe called Aung Mingalar, a part of the city that can only be called a ghetto.

In Aung Mingalar, I heard the echoes of my childhood. You see, in 1944, as a Jew in Budapest, I too was a Rohingya. Much like the Jewish ghettos set up by Nazis around Eastern Europe during World War II, Aung Mingalar has become the involuntary home to thousands of families who once had access to health care, education and employment.

Now, they are forced to remain segregated in a state of abject deprivation.

The parallels to the Nazi genocide are alarming. Fortunately, we have not reached a stage of mass killing.

I feel very strongly that we must speak out before it is too late, individually and collectively. The Burmese government's insistence that they are keeping the Rohingya in the ghetto for their own protection simply is not credible.

Government authorities have tried to reassure me. They say things are under control and not as bad as reported by outsiders, who they claim don't understand the local culture or the long and complicated history of Rakhine State.

I understand that half a century of living in isolation under repression can make a population vulnerable to intermediation and exploitation in all sorts of ways, but I also know that most of the people of Burma are fair-minded and would like their country to be a place where all can live in freedom.

2015 is a crucial year for Burma; a tipping point, in the words of Yanghee Lee, U.S. Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. With the prospect of democratic changes to the 2008 constitution and the holding of free and fair elections, meaningful reform could take hold.

As a longtime friend and supporter of Burma, I hope for a positive outcome for all the people of the country. But where I once felt a great sense of optimism, I am now filled with trepidation for the future.

I hope those in power will immediately take the steps necessary to counter extremism and allow open society to take root. In the lead-up to the elections, it's crucial that official acts should be taken to counter the pervasive hate and anti-Rohingya propaganda on social

media and the racist public campaigns of the 969 movement.

The promise of Burma as a flourishing and vibrant open society is still within reach. It's up to Burma's leaders and people whether this promise is fulfilled.

George Soros is the founder of the Open Society Foundations and chairman of Soros Fund Management LLC. This was his contribution to last week's Oslo Conference on Rohingyas.

Annex 257

Hnin Yadana Zaw, “Myanmar’s president signs off on law seen as targeting Muslims”, *Reuters*
(31 August 2015)

Myanmar's president signs off on law seen as targeting Muslims

 [reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics/myanmars-president-signs-off-on-law-seen-as-targeting-muslims-idUSKCN0R011W20150831](https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics/myanmars-president-signs-off-on-law-seen-as-targeting-muslims-idUSKCN0R011W20150831)

World News

August 31, 2015 6:37 AM Updated 5 years ago

By Hnin Yadana Zaw

3 Min Read

NAYPYIDAW (Reuters) - Myanmar's president on Monday signed into law the last of four controversial bills championed by radical Buddhists but decried by rights groups as aimed at discriminating against the country's Muslim minority.

Myanmar's President Thein Sein speaks at the Mekong-Five Economic Forum hosted by Japan External Trade Organization (JETRO) in Tokyo, July 3, 2015. REUTERS/Toru Hanai

Myanmar, which will hold its first democratic national poll in more than two decades on Nov. 8, has seen a flowering of anti-Muslim hate speech since the military gave up full power and opened up politics and the economy in 2011.

President Thein Sein signed the Monogamy Bill after it was passed by parliament on August 21, Zaw Htay, a senior official at the president's office, told Reuters. The law was briefly sent back to parliament for review before being signed.

The bill sets punishments for people who have more than one spouse or live with an unmarried partner other than the spouse.

The government denies it is aimed at Muslims, estimated to make up about 5 percent of the population, and some of whom practice polygamy.

The president also signed two other laws, which restrict religious conversion and interfaith marriage, on August 26, Zaw Htay said.

The measures are part of four "Race and Religion Protection Laws" championed by the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion, or Ma Ba Tha.

The laws were dangerous for Myanmar, said an official of New York-based Human Rights Watch.

“They set out the potential for discrimination on religious grounds and pose the possibility for serious communal tension,” said Phil Robertson, deputy director of the Asia division of Human Rights Watch.

“Now that these laws are on the books, the concern is how they are implemented and enforced.”

In May, the president signed a Ma Ba Tha-backed population control bill that forces some women to space three years between each birth.

The monk-led group has stoked sentiment against Muslims, whom it has accused of trying to take over Myanmar and outbreed its Buddhist majority.

Hundreds of people have been killed in flare-ups of religious violence in Myanmar. In 2012, an incident in Rakhine State led to the displacement of more than 140,000 people, most of them members of the stateless Rohingya Muslim minority.

Additional reporting and writing by Aubrey Belford in Yangon; Editing by Clarence Fernandez

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Annex 258

Joshua Carroll, “The Man Who Wrote Ma Ba Tha’s ‘Race and Religion Laws’”, *Frontier*
(10 October 2015)



The man who wrote Ma Ba Tha's 'Race and Religion' laws

OCTOBER 10, 2015



Octogenarian former lawyer U Ye Khaung Nyunt was drawn out of retirement to help compose the recently passed 'Race and Religion' laws. He told *Frontier* why.

U Ye Khaung Nyunt, a frail, wispy-haired, bespectacled man of 80 years, tottered into to the living room of his east Yangon mansion supported at one arm by his daughter. Though struggling to walk, he remained standing long enough to list a series of ailments, including diabetes, that are troubling him in his old age.

“I am not well,” he said. “I can’t go the monastery anymore.” Despite his frailness, this elderly retired lawyer recently mustered his strength to help compose the Race and Religion Protection Laws, a legislative package decried around the world as a veiled attack by extremist Buddhists on the rights of Myanmar’s Muslims, who comprise less than 5% of the population.

The last of the laws was signed by President U Thein Sein at the end of August.

“After independence, Bengali Muslims encroached on our land,” U Ye Khaung Nyunt said, referring to the end of British colonial rule in 1948 and to an ethnic group who identify themselves as Rohingya. “They took so many wives, had lots of children and spread very rapidly.”

This perceived invasion by Muslims via marriage and reproduction has been a key theme of a flourishing hate-speech campaign led by Buddhist monks in recent years. The message, shouted through megaphones at rallies and burnt onto CD recordings of religious sermons, is that Buddhism in Myanmar is under attack, and will be wiped out entirely if nothing is done to curb the spread of Islam.

In 2013, following country-wide religious violence that began the year before, an ultra-nationalist group called Ma Ba Tha was formed to push for a legislative solution — four new laws that impose restrictions on giving birth, interfaith marriage, extramarital affairs and religious conversions. While the laws do not explicitly mention Muslims, it is clear that they are the target. The idea came after a meeting in Yangon in May that year by “senior monks of the Sangha” – Myanmar’s Buddhist clergy – to discuss how to “get peace between the two factions”, according to U Ye Khaung Nyunt.

“After the meeting they made a resolution that they wanted a law enacted by the government to get full protection for Burmese Buddhists. One of the Sayadaws (senior monks,) U Pinnya Wara, came to my house and he asked me to draft this law,” U Ye Khaung Nyunt said. He initially refused, twice, telling the monk that he did not want to get involved in politics. After retiring from law in the nineties, the former lawyer devoted much of his time to meditation. “I wanted to give up all mundane affairs.”

“These laws are a shield, not a sword... In every country the population must be controlled according to the national needs.”

On his living room wall there is a painting of the Shwedagon Pagoda, Myanmar's holiest temple, that U Ye Khaung Nyunt painted himself in the 1970s. It features a monk that he said represents himself, a woman prostrating before him that represents his late wife, and two nuns in the background depicting his daughters. The pagoda was the starting point last month for a two-week long celebration by Ma Ba Tha monks and supporters to welcome the recent passing of the bills. The festivities involved prayers, nationalist songs and photo exhibitions portraying crimes by extremist Muslims.

The third time the Venerable U Pinnya Wara, a senior Sangha Maha Nayaka member, approached U Ye Khaung Nyunt asking him to help write the laws, he relented. "He had retired from politics ... but monks came and talked to him after the 2012 violence and said 'Are you just going to watch this or are you going to do something?' and they persuaded him," said Ma Khin Swe Thit, U Ye Khaung Nyunt's daughter, who is herself a retired lawyer and helped her father to draft the religious bills by researching books on family law.

Ma Ba Tha, apparently aware of their appalling reputation abroad and to a lesser extent in Myanmar, are at pains to counter their image as aggressive bullies. During the interview a two-man Ma Ba Tha camera crew filmed both U Ye Khaung Nyunt and this reporter.

A key part of Ma Ba Tha's message is that the work they do is defensive, rather than aggressive, something that U Ye Khaung Nyunt echoed: "These laws are a shield, not a sword... In every country the population must be controlled according to the national needs."

U Ye Khaung Nyunt did not write every word of each law, but rather drafted short versions of two of them – the Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Bill and the Religious Conversion Bill – and submitted the proposals to the legislature after they were approved by Ma Ba Tha monks. The rest of the work, he said, was done by the relevant ministries.

U Ye Khaung Nyunt thinks his contribution to Ma Ba Tha's campaign will boost his Buddhist merit. "By doing this, I'm not doing any sin, I realised. I'm making no harm to any person and doing good for all, meaning all persons in all religions.



“I have a duty, as a citizen of Myanmar I have to protect our national interests. [Buddhist women] have been insulted, they are forced to marry, forced to convert religions.”

The laws didn't make it through parliament exactly as he had intended though. He wanted to explicitly ban any non-Buddhist man from marrying a Buddhist woman, something he regarded as one of the most important elements of the bills. But as the law stands now, non-Buddhist men can, technically, wed Buddhist women, but these couples are subjected to a raft of restrictions. For example, local authorities have the power to publicise an interfaith marriage and invite objections from members of the public.

He helped draft the laws pro bono and without “any ulterior motive, no hatred to any other person,” he said. “I don't want to offend any person.”

It was at this point that U Ye Khaung Nyunt, who remained outwardly affable even when supporting ideas many find abhorrent, made a bold claim, seemingly unaware that he was using a cliché widely attributed to bigots: “I have got many Muslim friends.”



BY JOSHUA CARROLL

Joshua Carroll is a journalist based in Yangon. He reports on human rights, politics and development.

More stories



Annex 259

Richard C. Paddock, “Aung San Suu Kyi Asks U.S. Not to Refer to ‘Rohingya’”,
The New York Times (6 May 2016)

Aung San Suu Kyi Asks U.S. Not to Refer to 'Rohingya'

By Richard C. Paddock

May 6, 2016

BANGKOK — Myanmar recognizes 135 ethnic groups within its borders. But the people who constitute No. 136? They are the people-who-must-not-be-named.

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the leader of Myanmar's first democratically elected government since 1962, embraced that view last week when she advised the United States ambassador against using the term "Rohingya" to describe the persecuted Muslim population that has lived in Myanmar for generations.

Her government, like the previous military-led one, will not call the Rohingya people by that name because it does not recognize them as citizens, said her spokesman, U Kyaw Zay Ya, a Foreign Ministry official.

"We won't use the term Rohingya because Rohingya are not recognized as among the 135 official ethnic groups," said Mr. Kyaw Zay Ya, who was at the meeting. "Our position is that using the controversial term does not support the national reconciliation process and solving problems."

The stance does not bode well for the Rohingya or for rights activists who had hoped Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, a Nobel Peace Prize laureate, would reverse discriminatory policies that have marginalized the Rohingya and prompted many to flee.



Aung San Suu Kyi in Naypyidaw, Myanmar, in March. The issue of what to call the Rohingya has taken on great significance as her party establishes the country's first nonmilitary government in decades. Pool photo by Nyein Chan Naing

"She is not saying anything about the Rohingya people in Myanmar and their rights to religion and education and health care," said U Aung Win, a Rohingya community leader in Rakhine State. "As a Nobel Peace Prize winner, why is she so silent?"

The United States Embassy confirmed that the newly arrived ambassador, Scot A. Marciel, had met with Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi but would not comment on their discussions.

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's position on the name has taken on great significance as her party, the National League for Democracy, or N.L.D., establishes the country's first nonmilitary government in decades. Barred by the military-drafted Constitution from serving as president, Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi holds the posts of state counselor and foreign minister, among others, but she is the country's de facto leader. The new government took over in March.

The Rohingya in Myanmar, Muslims in a primarily Buddhist land, are denied basic rights, including citizenship, freedom of worship, education, marriage and freedom of travel. More than 100,000 who were driven from their homes by violence in 2012 are in resettlement camps. Many fled on dangerous sea voyages.

Many nationalist Buddhists reject the name Rohingya and call them Bengalis, implying that they are interlopers from Bangladesh, a position also taken by the former military government.

Annex 259

The United States Embassy recently drew criticism for using the word Rohingya in a statement expressing condolences for the deaths of at least 20 people whose boat capsized on April 19 off the coast of Rakhine.

Nationalist Buddhists challenged the new Myanmar government to protest the Americans' use of the word and staged a demonstration outside the United States Embassy in Yangon.

At an April 28 news conference, Mr. Marciel responded by saying that it was standard practice around the world to let communities decide for themselves what to be called. "And normally, when that happens, we would call them what they want to be called," he said. "It's not a political decision; it's just a normal practice."

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi's decision to raise the issue with Mr. Marciel the next day was an apparent concession to the extremists and was welcomed by the nationalist Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, also known as Ma Ba Tha.

"We don't want that word because they are not our nationality," said U Thaw Bar Ka, a leader of the group. "And now I read the news that the Foreign Ministry agrees with us. It's really good. At first, I thought the new government would be useless on this issue."

Rights advocates expressed disappointment that Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was not willing to go against popular opinion and support a dispossessed people.

"It's dismaying that the new N.L.D.-led government is continuing this wrongheaded effort to police the language of Yangon-based diplomats about the Rohingya," said Phil Robertson, deputy director for Asia at Human Rights Watch.

Mr. Kyaw Zay Ya said that Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi had not ordered the Americans to stop using the word or threatened consequences if they did.

Annex 260

Khin Maung Oo, "The Thorn Needs Removing If It Pierces!", *The Global New Light of Myanmar* (31 October 2016)

The Thorn Needs Removing If It Pierces!

gnlm.com.mm/the-thorn-needs-removing-if-it-pierces

Khin Maung Oo

October 31, 2016

A lie can travel half way around the world while the truth is putting on its shoes.

A lie tends to easily & promptly spread more than the truth. As per human nature, men are more interested in gory and compromising things than pleasing ones. They usually prefer idle gossips to true stories. World-famous persons such as Mark Twain, Winston Churchill and Thomas Jefferson quoted the above saying that depicts definitely human nature in their speeches. However, some lies and concocted stories are found to be conspiracies with subversive aims behind, putting on the wrong face of seeming common gossips.

Following the October 9 armed violent attack in Maungtaw District, northern border area of Rakhine State in which nine border guard policemen were killed and over 50 firearms were taken away, the area was designated as the military operation zone and area clearance operations had to be launched. Generally analyzing, timely conspired violent attacks with the aids of foreign-based terrorists and terrorist groups can be said to have achieved the success of their strategic objectives to some extent. They waged violent attacks, targeting at going astray in the government's activities to build a state of peace and stability in Rakhine State and for local ethnics to abandon their locations for fear. Concurrently, they spread rumours through website media linking with religious and racial extremists—claiming that females were raped, religious edifices burnt down and their belongings looted—worldwide without hesitation.

As regards the armed attacks in Rakhine State, the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi emphasized, “The government's attempts to solve the problem in all fairness and calibre under rule of law need to be declared to the world. Myanmar government is trying its best in solving problems and claims on violation of human rights, and the meaning of human rights is broad, it is concerned with every country, hence the need for the global understanding and acknowledgement over the government's efforts for stability and peace in the country,” in the press conference held on 12 October with the Netherlands Foreign Minister.

In October 9 violent armed attacks, border guard policemen were killed, as were the Tatmataw troops in area clearance operations. Besides, local minorities abandoned their dwelling places and farmlands to leave for safe locations. Some locals fetching firewood and wood in the forest were shot down. To hide the actual situations, social media are spreading false news and information in connection with terrorist groups via internet website, and international media also spread them, lacking the scrutiny as to whether news are confirmed or not.

As a matter of fact, affairs in northern Rakhine are not concerned with racial and religious conflicts. It is the sole affair which offends the sovereignty of Myanmar and trespasses Myanmar territory. Simultaneously, Rakhine nationals are not the aggressive ones towards

foreigners who profess other religions. They have been living together with Islamists Kamans for years. The government is responsible for solving any problems of offending the country' sovereignty, threatening its populace's lives and property, violating rule of law and causing instability.

In other words, the thorn has to be removed as it pierces.

Annex 261

Khin Maung Oo, “A Flea Cannot Make a Whirl of Dust, But-”, *The Global New Light of Myanmar* (26 November 2016)

A Flea Cannot Make a Whirl of Dust, But—

gnlm.com.mm/a-flea-cannot-make-a-whirl-of-dust-but

Global New Light of Myanmar

November 26, 2016

Khin Maung Oo

As per nature, we all want to live in peace and stability. Somehow, some want others to live differently. These people make our environment unstable and plunge it into chaos. The mass media brings us global news around the clock, unlike the situations in olden times. Naturally, good things accompany bad ones. Out of watching scenic views, wonders of the world, happy & interesting lives of different peoples/races around the world, war victims and scourges of wars, we get vicarious joys, thrills, sorrows and fears. Once we begin using the internet, a mosaic of news, views and information come into our sight. As per usual, we would like to accept only the crème de la crème of the news. Very often, a childish idea occurs to me about whether it would be better for us to have never seen any bad news. How impossible! Our planet is not a utopia, an imaginary place that exists only in mind. People live in different parts of the world, and they live different lives. Each and every individual has woes, difficulties and sufferings. In this regard, I suddenly remembered a paragraph which appeared in the “Looking at the children of other lands” when I was in the standard 8. It reads: “Can you imagine what it would be like if the climate were the same all over the world? All the flowers and the trees would be the same. Then, the animals might be the same, and the same crops would be grown in the ground. This would mean that the people would all be alike. They would look alike and dress alike and they would all eat the same food. What a dull world this would be! Fortunately this is not so. Because of the change of climate on the earth, the people change too. Their habits change and their ways of living are different. Oh, quite right in saying so! We are in favor of nature, having places of pleasure to live, abundance of edible foods, fruits and vegetables, enormous natural resources to exploit and use. So our natural world is a pleasant and lovable place per se for all beings to peacefully dwell together. Simultaneously, the nature gives us bad guys who are morally bad and wishing to cause trouble or harm — villains”.

It is a sure thing that those evil guys in our world are infinitesimal in number in proportion to the rest of our human society. In fact, extremists, terrorists, ultra-opportunists and aggressive criminals can be likened as fleas that we greatly loathe for their stench and for sucking our blood. Those human fleas are destroying our world by killing people and harming others’ sovereignty. Likewise, our country is also facing the danger of the human fleas. A flea cannot make a whirl of dust, but they are trying to combine with each other to amass their force. And they are trying to disintegrate our unity and strength in many ways, by waging armed attacks, spreading rumours and performing subversive activities. We

should not underestimate this enemy. At such a time when the country is moving toward a federal democratic nation, with destructive elements in all surroundings, we need to constantly be wary of the dangers of detestable human fleas.

Annex 262

Syed Zain Al-Mahmood, "Timeline: A Short History of Myanmar's Rohingya Minority",
Wall Street Journal (23 December 2016)

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<https://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2016/12/23/timeline-a-short-history-of-myanmars-rohingya-minority/>

INDIA REAL TIME

Timeline: A Short History of Myanmar's Rohingya Minority



Rohingya women and children waited in a queue to collect water at the Leda camp, an unregistered camp for Rohingya in Teknaf, near Cox's Bazar, about 183 miles south of Dhaka, Bangladesh, Dec. 3, 2016. PHOTO: A.M. AHAD/ASSOCIATED PRESS

By Syed Zain Al-Mahmood

Dec 23, 2016 6:46 pm IST

Thousands of men, women and children from Myanmar's Rohingya minority have fled the country over what the army is calling a crackdown on insurgents.

A Wall Street Journal article examines the intensification of a long-simmering conflict between Yangon and the Rohingya Muslims, who are denied citizenship in the predominantly Buddhist Southeast Asian state.

Here is a short history of the Rohingya people.

8th Century: The Rohingya, a people of South Asian origin, dwelled in an independent kingdom in Arakan, now known as Rakhine state in modern-day Myanmar.

9th to 14th Century: The Rohingya came into contact with Islam through Arab traders. Close ties were forged between Arakan and Bengal.

1784: The Burman King Bodawpaya conquered Arakan and hundreds of thousands of refugees fled to Bengal.

1790: Hiram Cox, a British diplomat sent to assist refugees, established the town of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where many Rohingya still live today.

1824 to 1942: Britain captured Burma—now known as Myanmar—and made it a province of British India. Workers were migrated to Burma from other parts of British India for infrastructure projects.

1942: Japan invaded Burma, pushing out the British. As the British retreated, Burmese nationalists attacked Muslim communities who they thought had benefited from British colonial rule.

1945: Britain liberated Burma from Japanese occupation with help of Burmese nationalists led by Aung San and Rohingya fighters. Rohingyas felt betrayed as the British didn't fulfill a promise of autonomy for Arakan.

1948: Tensions increased between the government of newly independent Burma and the Rohingya, many of whom wanted Arakan to join Muslim-majority Pakistan. The government retaliated by ostracizing the Rohingya, including removing Rohingya civil servants.

1950: Some Rohingya resisted the government, led by armed groups called Mujahids. The insurgency gradually died down.

1962: General Ne Win and his Burma Socialist Programme Party seized power and took a hard line against the Rohingya.

1977: The junta began Operation Nagamin, or Dragon King, which they said was aimed at screening the population for foreigners. More than 200,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh, amid allegations of army abuses. The army denied any wrongdoing.

1978: Bangladesh struck a U.N.-brokered deal with Burma for the repatriation of refugees, under which most Rohingya returned.

1982: A new immigration law redefined people who migrated during British rule as illegal immigrants. The government applied this to all Rohingya.

1989: The army changed the name of Burma to Myanmar.

1991: More than 250,000 Rohingya refugees fled what they said was forced labor, rape and religious persecution at the hands of the Myanmar army. The army said it was trying to bring order to Rakhine.

1992 to 1997: Around 230,000 Rohingya returned to Arakan, now known as Rakhine, under another repatriation agreement.

2012: Rioting between Rohingya and Rakhine Buddhists killed more than 100 people, mostly Rohingya. Tens of thousands of people were driven into Bangladesh. Nearly 150,000 were forced into camps in Rakhine.

2016: Rohingya militant group Harakah al-Yaqin attacked border guard posts, killing nine soldiers. The army retaliated. More than 25,000 people fled Rakhine to Bangladesh, bringing accounts of killing, rape and arson. Aung San Suu Kyi's government denied the atrocities.

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BANGLADESH

MYANMAR

ROHINGYA

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Annex 263

Matthew Smith, “Bringing Burma Back From the Brink”, *Wall Street Journal*
(15 February 2017)

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<https://www.wsj.com/articles/bringing-burma-back-from-the-brink-1487181031>

OPINION | COMMENTARY

Bringing Burma Back From the Brink

The U.N. could help investigate the country's recent atrocities and save a generation of Rohingya from radicalization.

By Matthew Smith

Feb. 15, 2017 12:50 pm ET



A teacher and Rohingya refugee children at Kutupalang Makeshift Refugee Camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh on Feb. 12.

PHOTO: REUTERS

The rattle of gunfire awoke a Rohingya man on the morning of Oct. 9 in his hometown of Wa Peik, a dusty hamlet of Kye Kan Pyin village in a remote corner of Burma's Rakhine state. "We were very scared," he told me on the Bangladesh border. "All we could hear was yelling and gunfire."

Several hundred ethnic Rohingya men and boys had attacked the local police headquarters. Rohingya militants simultaneously targeted two other police posts in the state. In total they killed nine policemen and wounded five, according to the government.

The Burmese army responded with brutal efficiency, rolling into Wa Peik in six vehicles, weapons at the ready. “When the soldiers entered the village, they started shooting,” the man recalled. “I saw them shoot at people as they fled.”

Since December, my colleagues and I at Fortify Rights, a human-rights organization based in Southeast Asia, conducted more than 70 in-depth interviews with Rohingya eyewitnesses and survivors from Maungdaw township, where the army has been conducting “clearance operations” in response to the October attack.

Our findings are horrific. Soldiers raped Rohingya women and girls, razed entire villages and killed unarmed civilians with abandon. State security forces slit men’s throats and burned people alive, in some cases killing children and infants.

A 25-year-old widowed Rohingya mother witnessed soldiers shoot and kill her 7-year-old son in Sali Parang, a village also known as Myau Taung. She then watched a soldier slit her husband’s throat before burning both bodies in their home. “I saw when my son was shot,” she told me. “He was running to his father.”

Men and boys who survived attacks on several villages in Maungdaw township were arrested en masse. They have not been heard from since.

Such atrocities aren’t new to the Rohingyas. Denied citizenship since 1982, they have suffered wave after wave of attacks. The last episode was in 2012, when tit-for-tat violence between Buddhists and Muslims escalated into state-sponsored assaults on Rohingyas throughout Rakhine state.

I arrived on the scene shortly after the attacks began. Entire villages were razed. To this day the government confines 120,000 Rohingya survivors of those attacks to more than 40 internment camps in what amounts to a situation of mass arbitrary detention.

The Trump administration has not determined its policy toward Burma. But there are indications officials understand that the country doesn’t represent the foreign-policy success story previously claimed by President Barack Obama.

In a written response to a question about the Rohingya from Senator Ben Cardin of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson correctly warned that the mistreatment of Rohingya in Burma “threatens to radicalize a generation of young Rohingya.” Mr. Tillerson called upon the U.S. “to support regional and international efforts to investigate abuses and pressure the Burmese [Myanmar] government and military.”

A United Nations-mandated Commission of Inquiry would do just that. When the U.N. Human Rights Council meets next month in Geneva, it should pass a resolution mandating a Commission of Inquiry into possible violations of international criminal law in Rakhine state.

There is already explicit high-level support for such an initiative. “There must be at least a Commission of Inquiry, if not more,” said U.N. Human Rights chief Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein earlier this month, suggesting also a possible referral to the International Criminal Court. Mr. Zeid was responding to a damning U.N. report released on Feb. 3 documenting “widespread human rights violations against the Rohingya population,” including “mass gang-rape” and killings “of babies and young children.”

The U.N. special rapporteur on human rights in Burma, Yanghee Lee, also said she’ll call for an inquiry when she reports to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva on March 13. This echoes 40 Burma-based civil-society organizations that in January called for a “truly independent” international investigation—an unexpected domestic rebuke to the government.

Commissions of inquiry aren’t unusual. Various U.N. bodies have established them over the years in response to human-rights violations in places like Burundi, North Korea and Syria. They play a vital role in establishing the facts, identifying perpetrators with a view to ensuring accountability and stemming violations.

A U.N. commission would focus attention where it belongs—on the military and state security forces. State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi’s callous inaction and shameful propaganda campaign denying abuses against Rohingya—alleging “fake rape” while suggesting Rohingya burned down their own homes—shouldn’t get a pass. But the commission should expose the extent to which the military continues to dominate the elected government.

Some diplomats and U.N. member states are hesitant to establish a commission of inquiry lest it destabilize Burma. That's an understandable concern. But allowing atrocities to continue unpunished would be even more destabilizing for Burma and the region.

Mr. Smith is co-founder and chief executive officer at Fortify Rights.

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Annex 264

Matthew J. Walton, “Misunderstanding Myanmar’s MaBaTha”, *Asia Times* (9 June 2017)

[AT FINANCE, MALAYSIA, MYANMAR, THAILAND](#)

Misunderstanding Myanmar's Ma Ba Tha

Many observers misapprehend the true nature of the Buddhist nationalist group and its underlying popularity as a defender of the faith

By **MATTHEW J WALTON**

JUNE 9, 2017



A Buddhist monk walks with his alms bowl early morning in the Myanmar city of Mandalay. Photo: Reuters/Jorge Silva

The last few weeks in Myanmar have witnessed a confusing flurry of activity and news related to Buddhist nationalist and activist groups, marked by official bans, defiant public meetings, the creation of subsidiary groups and multiple re-brandings.

Yet, as has been the case consistently over the past few years, both domestic and foreign media reports continue to get basic facts and dynamics of the situation wrong, while statements from Myanmar public officials have often been dismissive and misguided. This matters not only for journalistic integrity but also for the policy approaches that might be adopted in response to the country's persistent and rising inter-religious tensions and violence.

A new approach to the phenomenon of “Buddhist nationalism” is needed in Myanmar, put in scare quotes here because, while some groups openly acknowledge the nationalist aspects of their efforts, others are more oriented towards the protection of Buddhism, and at times we need to be able to differentiate between the two.

This new approach should recognize nuance and variation among Buddhist and nationalist groups, and acknowledge that the sentiments that have at times motivated unacceptable anti-Muslim violence and discrimination are also connected to more acceptable religious and community-building activities.

Buddhist monks and activists from Myanmar protest in front of the Thai embassy in Yangon, Myanmar, against Thailand's military government's invoking a special emergency law to arrest a former abbot, February 24, 2017. Reuters/Soe Zeya Tun

A brief review of recent events is in order. In April and May, court cases against some prominent lay and monastic self-described nationalists generated public protests that seemed linked to vigilante actions by Buddhist groups and individuals in Yangon.

These included the May 9 closure of allegedly unsanctioned Islamic schools in Thaketa Township on April 28 and trespassing in a private residence to search for “illegal” residents in Mingalar Taung Nyunt Township.

After local authorities took relatively swift action against the perpetrators, another protest took place in the new capital of Naypyitaw, calling for the resignation of the Minister of Religious Affairs, U Aung Ko.

All of this took place in the lead-up to the fourth annual conference of Ma Ba Tha, the Organization for the Protection of Race and Religion, scheduled to take place on May 27-28. Before Ma Ba Tha could hold its conference, however, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee – the country’s official Buddhist authority that uses the Burmese acronym Ma Ha Na – issued an official statement on May 23 directed at the group.

Buddhist monks from the nationalist Ma Ba Tha group attend a meeting to celebrate their anniversary with a nationwide conference in Yangon, Myanmar May 27, 2017. Photo: Reuters/Soe Zeya Tun

This statement has been almost universally misunderstood and misreported as a “ban” on Ma Ba Tha, in a problematic pattern consistent with other coverage of the group and “Buddhist nationalism” generally in Myanmar. The statement cites several sections of both the Sangha Organization Law and the Sangha Organizational Procedures in declaring that Ma Ba Tha was not formed in accordance with these directives.

It goes on to say that neither the group nor individuals associated with it can use the full Burmese name it currently uses and that all of the organization’s signboards across the country must be taken down by July 15. It also provides for the Buddhist authorities and the Ministry of Home Affairs to take action against those who do not comply with the directive.

The indirect—yet oddly specific—wording throughout the statement is consistent with some of Ma Ha Na’s earlier directives, including a September 2013 order banning the “political use” of the 969 symbol and its July 2016 statement clarifying that Ma Ba Tha was not officially formed according to Ma Ha Na policies. These were carefully calculated statements that sought the appearance of disciplinary action without direct confrontation.

None of these statements, including the most recent one, make any comment on the aims, motivations or activities of the relevant groups and, indeed, always stop short of banning the groups outright.

Ma Ba Tha leadership seems to understand the game that is being played here, as its two top officials contritely signed the document in the presence of Ma Ha Na members. The group quickly pivoted to re-brand itself as the “Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation” at the conclusion of its rescheduled conference.

Myanmar Buddhist monk U Wirathu speaks during a meeting following the State Sanhga Committee's ruling against the Ma Ba Tha group, in Yangon on May 27, 2017. Photo: AFP/ Ye Aung Thu

Ma Ha Na, Myanmar's official Buddhist authority, is often misunderstood. While some of its 47 member monks are well-respected for their scholarship or preaching, popular perception of the body is of a rubber stamp for former military governments.

It is probably more appropriate to see Ma Ha Na as an arm of the government more generally, meaning that it is a conservative group that is strongly constrained and pressured by whoever is in power and has generally been guided more by an interest in maintaining a stable status quo rather than supporting authoritarianism.

Beyond this, its main interest is in protecting the image of Buddhism writ large, and it is through this lens that we can understand its recent actions to separate itself from the negative press associated with Ma Ba Tha.

Ma Ha Na is also constrained in several ways from acting more directly against a group like Ma Ba Tha. First, it must be very careful at taking any action that could be seen as causing a schism in the monkhood, as this was strictly forbidden by the Buddha.

But more importantly (and problematically), Ma Ha Na simply doesn't have the popular support to overtly challenge Ma Ba Tha in a way that would threaten its continued existence.

Not only does Ma Ba Tha continue to enjoy widespread support but Its leading figures are near-universally beloved monks like the Insein Ywama Sayadaw, who commands much more respect among the population than most of the Ma Ha Na monks.

Devotees pray inside Mahamuni Buddhist temple in Mandalay October 6, 2015. Photo: Reuters/Jorge Silva



Media coverage or other analysis that sloppily equates Ma Ba Tha with the firebrand monk U Wirathu in the public's perception is simply wrong, and one reason why observers continue to misapprehend the nature of the group.

This does not mean that some of these leading lay and monastic figures do not express problematic, exclusionary anti-Muslim views, but this isn't the lens through which many Ma Ba Tha supporters view the group.

Since Ma Ba Tha's founding, it and similar groups have regularly been the subjects of erroneous and misleading media reporting. One cause of this seems to be an overwhelming desire on the part of journalists and other

(mostly urban local or international) commentators for the empirical reality of Ma Ba Tha's existence and popularity to be different than it actually is.

The breathless enthusiasm with which the media greets every minor development that might be viewed as a setback for Ma Ba Tha or “Buddhist nationalists” reflects an inability or unwillingness to really understand the dynamics of this phenomenon.

Simply put, a large proportion of Buddhists in Myanmar continue to be genuinely worried about the fate of their religion. This anxiety has been problematically and inaccurately directed towards Islam and Muslims, often through misinformation.

People and Buddhist monks protest while Malaysian NGO's aid ship carrying food and emergency supplies for Rohingya Muslims arrives at the port in Yangon, Myanmar February 9, 2017. Photo: Reuters/Soe Zeya Tun



Yet it is also necessary to better understand what animates these fears that continue to drive the popularity of Ma Ba Tha and other groups, and to encourage monks and other Buddhist leaders to articulate peaceful and inclusive narratives about the protection of Buddhism. The indiscriminate and blanket use of incendiary descriptors such as “extremist” or “ultranationalist” only serves to obscure a complicated set of motivations and actions.

Thinking beyond support motivated by fear, analysis of Ma Ba Tha continues to ignore what is probably the most important aspect of the group's existence. Alongside a narrative of external threats to Buddhism exists a sentiment among many Buddhist leaders that weaknesses in Buddhist belief and practice have also rendered the religion vulnerable.

As has often occurred in the country in the past, this has prompted a range of prescriptions that look internally to strengthen and deepen Buddhist faith and institutions. While the international community sees the group through the lens of its attention-grabbing, hate-spewing proxies such as U Wirathu, many (perhaps most) people across Myanmar understand Ma Ba Tha through the lens of its local activities and affiliates.

As anti-Rohingya protests and campaigns in favor of the four “Race and Religion” laws have dominated Ma Ba Tha-related English language news over the past few years, the organization has built up its base of support through aligning with Buddhist Sunday Schools, volunteer groups, legal clinics, relief campaigns, donation drives and other community-oriented activities.

In many cases, these aren't necessarily official Ma Ba Tha activities, but rather they are organized locally and feed back into Ma Ba Tha's broader branding and agenda of protecting and propagating Buddhism. Not only are many of these activities welcome in the eyes of Myanmar Buddhists, they are the kinds of things that any social service-oriented group ought to be encouraged to do.

Sadly, some of Myanmar's political elites persist in believing that support for Ma Ba Tha comes through nefarious nationalist leaders' manipulation of ignorant, self-interested rural pawns. In response to the May 20 protest organized against him in Naypyitaw by a collection of nationalist groups, religious affairs minister U Aung Ko said dismissively, "Money is the only motivation for people—especially at a grassroots level—to participate in such a demonstration."

If this is the attitude of Myanmar's leadership, no wonder the current government has yet to find an effective way to respond to this phenomenon. The swift action taken by Yangon police to arrest people connected with the vigilante actions in May was a welcome change.

But broader policy responses must also find a way to engage productively with those groups interested in the protection and propagation of Buddhism while making clear that certain violent, discriminatory or lawless actions will not be tolerated.

And it does seem that navigating a path through the thicket of distinct yet overlapping nationalist groups is absolutely essential to dealing effectively with these persistent tensions. Ma Ba Tha's leadership appears to have taken the message from the public rebuke it received indirectly through the November 2015 election.

Novice Buddhist monks wait for Myanmar's then pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi on the campaign trail. Photo: Reuters/Soe Zeya Tun

Even though at the time its official spokespeople were careful to avoid explicitly endorsing candidates or parties, the statements of prominent affiliated monks were enough to dampen some people's support for Ma Ba Tha as an appropriate vehicle for the protection of Buddhism, even as they continued to endorse its broader aims.

The recent creation of the Dhamma Wunthanu Rakita organization, as a lay ally of Ma Ba Tha (that will take on tasks seen as inappropriate for monks, such as filing lawsuits), and the subsequent formation of the 135 United Patriots Party, demonstrate a further disaggregation and specialization on the part of a movement that emerged in a relatively undifferentiated religio-political landscape but has been adapting effectively to changes in Myanmar's political opportunity structures.

There is an aspect of Ma Ba Tha's official position on its members' and affiliates' statements and actions that is disingenuous. That is, the group wants to claim for its own any monks or laypeople who are working "sincerely" for the protection of race and religion.

Yet when members and affiliates go too far, as in the vigilante attacks several weeks ago, Ma Ba Tha is quick to try to distance itself from their words or

actions. It can't have its cake and eat it too.

But in blithely painting Ma Ba Tha in broad “ultra-nationalist” brushstrokes and automatically associating every anti-Muslim action in Myanmar with the group, politicians, journalists and analysts are missing an opportunity to hold Ma Ba Tha's leadership accountable to its own claims of being an organization committed to peace and to protecting the religious beliefs of all of its citizens.

Buddhist monks protest alongside activists against United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon for using the term 'Rohingya' during the Asean summit in Yangon November 29, 2014. Photo: Reuters/Soe Zeya Tun



If that may seem like a naïve prospect, it is the only way to make progress on the very real and troubling violence faced by religious minorities in Myanmar today.

The current government is hesitantly and inconsistently taking steps to try to change the enabling environment that the previous government created for consequence-free anti-Muslim violence, but it needs to sincerely engage with these complex feelings of Buddhist vulnerability (without sanctioning violence or discrimination) if it hopes to facilitate reconciliation and peace.

Alongside a narrative of external threats to Buddhism exists a sentiment among many Buddhist leaders that weaknesses in Buddhist belief and practice have also rendered the religion vulnerable.

Similarly, if Ma Ba Tha's leadership wants its group to be seen as distinct from the more radical statements and actions of the Patriotic Monks Union, or even U Wirathu, then it must do more than just claim not to have been involved.

It must condemn particular instances of hate speech, violence and lawless actions (especially by its members), and not just make general superficial statements regarding peace. And if journalists and other commentators want to play a productive role, they need to honestly seek to understand the dynamics of this phenomenon, even as they preserve space for critical investigation.

This article is not an attempt to defend Ma Ba Tha, its actions or the rhetoric and actions of those monks associated with it. Instead, it is a call to recognize Myanmar's "Buddhist nationalist" movement as complicated, dynamic and populated by multi-faceted individuals and groups operating in an opaque environment that blurs religious and political motivations.

Vulnerable religious minorities must be defended vigorously, but reporting, analysis and policy-making must also acknowledge the nuances of this phenomenon, or risk further alienating Buddhists who already see their religion as under siege. Myanmar's religio-political situation needs to be better understood if efforts to curtail religious violence and discrimination are to succeed.

*Matthew J Walton is the Aung San Suu Kyi Senior Research Fellow in Modern Burmese Studies at St Anthony's College, Oxford University. His book *Buddhism, Politics and Political Thought in Myanmar* was recently published by Cambridge University Press.*

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Annex 265

Htet Naing Zaw, “U Zaw Htay: Kofi Annan Commission is Govt ‘Shield’”, *The Irrawaddy*
(10 July 2017)

In Person

U Zaw Htay: Kofi Annan Commission is Govt ‘Shield’



Government spokesperson U Zaw Htay / Htet Naing Zaw / Twitter

By **HTET NAING ZAW** 10 July 2017

U Zaw Htay, government spokesperson and director-general of the President's Office recently talked to The Irrawaddy about the threats facing Rakhine State and press freedom in Myanmar.

Fourteen parties including the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) have called for a state of emergency to be declared in Rakhine State. What is the government's response to their demand?

The parties have concerns over national security, so they gave the government suggestions. We welcome this. A special meeting was held at the presidential

residence on June 30 with an extensive discussion on the Rakhine issue. At the meeting, the military presented future plans and we discussed our 'responsibility to protect.' I can assure you the government is handling this issue seriously, though we cannot explain everything in detail. What I can tell you is we are doing everything that we should be doing.

National security is not only the concern of a single political party, but an issue the entire country should join hands to tackle together. I'd like to urge all political parties to disseminate knowledge about national security to the people.

As for the government, it is working to protect national security. The parties calling for a state of emergency need to understand this. We'd like to urge them to cooperate with us in a constructive way.

Does their statement hassle the government?

We aren't hassled by it. It is usual for political parties to do such things. Some may not know about the procedures of the UN, and they may have drawn the wrong conclusions as a result. They can come and discuss with our foreign ministry experts to get a better understanding of UN procedures.

USDP lawmaker U Hla Htay Win said the government did not try to put a UN resolution to form a fact-finding mission on Rakhine State to a vote at the Human Rights Council. Is that the case?

There were disagreements over whether or not to put it to a vote. We had to think about whether the resolution would change even after a vote was taken. This is a technical matter and it is difficult to explain. So, what I want to say is, we welcome suggestions and we invite [the USDP and other parties] to come and talk with our UN experts.

They were demanding the declaration of a military administration in Rakhine State, so what is the take of the Myanmar Army? Is it fully cooperating with the government?

Yes, the army fully cooperates with the current government. It cooperates and collaborates with us. The responsibility of national security lies with the military. The Myanmar Police Force was under the direct control of the army in the past, but it has

been under its own ministry since 2010. We [the government] still have a lot to learn about national security. At the same time, the army is doing what it should do, I'd say.

Deputy Foreign Minister U Kyaw Tin said the government was handling the Rakhine issue through diplomatic channels on the international stage, and urged security personnel to take action with responsibility and accountability for human rights. Will the government investigate alleged human rights abuses?

The army has formed an internal investigation team, as have the police. There are a lot of alleged human rights violations. But the commission led by the vice-president has yet to publish its report. One of its three responsibilities is to investigate alleged human rights violations. The commission will investigate and publish its report.

The government, Myanmar Army, Myanmar Army leaders, police chiefs, and the home affairs minister are not denying all of the allegations. What they have said is to present the cases to them with strong evidence if there were such violations. If there is evidence, they will investigate and find the truth. We've told this to the UN and all of the other organizations.

So, give us strong evidence, and we will take action in line with the law if allegations are found to be true. Military leaders share the same stance. So, we will have to review the reports of all investigative bodies to determine if those allegations are true.

Why did the government decide to appoint Kofi Annan as chair of the Rakhine State Commission despite criticism and opposition? What is the benefit to the country?

We formed the Rakhine State Advisory Commission led by Kofi Annan last August, and its mandate is to give us advice. It is an advisory commission, and is responsible for assessing the issue from various aspects and providing recommendations to bring about sustainable development.

Our government also released a statement that we are implementing the recommendations of the Kofi Annan Commission. There was no problem [insurgency] at the time we formed the commission last August. We formed it at that time so that we could explain to the international community in case of a problem in the future.

Whenever there is an accusation from the international community, we say we are taking action in line with the recommendations of the Kofi Annan commission. The

commission is serving as a shield for us. Was it not for Kofi Annan commission, the allegations would be much worse, I think.

The government has appointed a national security advisor. What is his role? What can he do for national security?

Most countries have a national security advisor. India has one and the US has a national security advisor and a national security council. In protecting national interests and national security, the first line of defense is diplomacy, and the last line of defense is the military.

It is not unusual to appoint a national security advisor. Those who criticize this may have their own reasons to do so. But, we need to observe international practices. If we take a look at where our national security advisor is going and what he is doing, then we'll see.

The media often covers his statements and you can know what he is doing by assessing those statements. National security advisor U Thaug Tun is a former ambassador and has lots of experience and served as an ambassador under Snr-Gen Than Shwe amid mounting pressure [from the international community.]

He has a network and other advantages that he gained from his experiences as an ambassador. He will contribute to national security and national interests.

Does the government have a strategic master plan for security and economic development of the entire country, including Rakhine State?

The vision of our government is 'Peace, Prosperity, Democracy.' The State Counselor is focusing her efforts on peace. As for prosperity, the government is working for the promotion of education, health services and administrative reforms. These are priorities under our 12-point economic policy.

As for democracy, we are working for constitutional amendments and to build a democratic federal Union through the 21st Century Panglong peace conference.

Members of the media are facing prosecution under laws such as Article 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law and 17(1) of the Unlawful Associations Act. Why should the media face such restrictive laws under a democratic government?

It is about the application of the laws. It is up to the complainant to choose under which law and article to file a lawsuit. The government can't intervene in this. And it is the job of judges to decide with their own rationale if the charges fit the offenses or not.

What the government can do is to assess how the laws are applied and their consequences and propose that Parliament changes the laws if necessary. The government may take political conditions and the democratic cause into account in considering violations of those laws. But, it is difficult for us to tell the complainants not to use this and that law because this is a democracy.

Speaking of the media, we can't just look at Article 66(d) and Article 17(1). We need to think about its entirety and have a long-term view. Similar things will happen in the future, and we need to think about how to monitor the media. There should be an institutional mechanism that monitors the media on their behalf before other institutions directly sue them. If there is an internal control, direct lawsuits from outsiders will be less likely.

The complainants may not accept it if we ask them not to use charges of 66(d) and 17(1). What I prefer is a mechanism like the press council, which will monitor the media and then prosecution will be the last option.

The media is also involved in the democratic transition of the country. Based on democratic norms, the media usually gets freedom of expression first. They can expand their space and rights – such as the right to information – during the transitional stage [of a democracy.] Once democracy is rooted, then [the government] will be able to protect the media.

Our transition has not reached a firm stage. And both parties need to understand this. Concerned institutions and stakeholders should join hands and brainstorm how to solidify this transitional stage. Each side will have their own views and concerns, but they should discuss the advantages, disadvantages, and consequences of the existing laws to find a solution that is acceptable to all.

Translated from Burmese by Thet Ko Ko.

Topics: Press Freedom, Rakhine State, U Zaw Htay, UN



Htet Naing Zaw

The Irrawaddy

Htet Naing Zaw is Senior Reporter at the Burmese edition of The Irrawaddy.

Annex 266

Oliver Holmes, “Massacre at Tula Toli: Rohingya recall horror of Myanmar army attack”,
The Guardian (7 September 2017)

The Guardian

Massacre at Tula Toli: Rohingya recall horror of Myanmar army attack

Exclusive: Villagers who fled attack and crossed border into Bangladesh recall seeing their family and neighbours killed

by Oliver Holmes in Cox's Bazar

Main image: Smoke billows above what is believed to be a burning village in Rakhine state as members of the Rohingya Muslim minority take shelter in a no-man's land between Bangladesh and Myanmar. Photograph: K.m. Asad/AFP/Getty Images

Thu 7 Sep 2017 18.29 EDT

It was the fast-flowing river that doomed the inhabitants of Tula Toli.

Snaking around the remote village on three sides, the treacherous waters allowed Burmese soldiers to corner and hold people on the river's sandy banks. Some were shot on the spot. Others drowned in the current as they tried to escape.

Zahir Ahmed made a panicked dash for the opposite bank, where he hid in thick jungle and watched his family's last moments.

"I was right next to the water," he recalled in an interview a week later at a refugee camp in neighbouring Bangladesh, his eyes bloodshot and his shirt stained with sweat and dirt.

Ahmed said teenagers and adults were shot with rifles, while babies and toddlers, including his youngest daughter, six-month old Hasina, were thrown into the water.

He cried as he described seeing his wife and children die, meticulously naming and counting them on both hands until he ran out of fingers.

More than 160,000 of Myanmar's 1.1 million ethnic Rohingya minority have fled to Bangladesh, bringing with them stories that they say describe ethnic cleansing.

During interviews with more than a dozen Rohingya from Tula Toli, the Guardian was told of what appeared to be devastating carnage as Myanmar's armed forces swept through the village on 30 August and allegedly murdered scores of people.



Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar on Tuesday. Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

Those who escaped fled to the hills in the west to make the three-day trek to Myanmar's border with Bangladesh. The rest were buried in a mass grave, villagers said.

Myanmar, where the majority of people are Buddhist, has blocked access to the area, meaning the Guardian cannot independently corroborate the villagers' accounts.

Many of the interviews were conducted separately over two days, however, and the villagers confirmed details of each other's statements without prompting.

The story of Tula Toli, while horrific, is not unique. The army, in retribution for guerrilla-style ambushes on 25 August by an emergent Rohingya militant group, has led a huge counteroffensive across northern Rakhine state.

Many Rohingya had already escaped. Communal clashes with Buddhists in Rakhine prompted 140,000 Rohingya to leave their homes in 2012. Thousands have since died either at sea or in brutal jungle camps run by people smugglers.

A United Nations report released this year detailed what happened to those that stayed. The report described mass killings and gang rapes by the armed forces in actions that "very likely" amounted to crimes against humanity.

The current wave of violence is the worst so far, and rights groups have said it could constitute a final campaign to rid Myanmar of the Rohingya. Satellites have recorded images of whole villages burnt to the ground.



Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar. Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

All UN aid work in the conflict area has been blocked. Aung San Suu Kyi's administration, which did not immediately respond to a request for comment, has said it is fighting "extremist terrorists" who are burning their own villages. Accounts of cruel sectarian attacks by Rohingya militants on Hindus and Buddhists in Rakhine have also surfaced. Around 26,000 non-Muslims have been displaced in the violence.

The subsistence farmers of Tula Toli, who spent their lives growing rice and chillies, said there were no militants in their village when the army attacked.

Here are their stories:

Khaled Hossein, 29, labourer



Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

Three days before the massacre, Hossein said about 90 soldiers ordered the village's several hundred residents to an area east of the settlement, a place locals call "the sands" for its infertile ground.

"Their leader had two stars on his shoulder. He told us: 'Rumours are being spread around by people in the village that soldiers have been killing people in Rakhine. But you should all keep farming and fishing. The one thing we ask is that if you see soldiers, you don't run away. If you run, we will shoot.'

"After the speech, the soldiers went from house to house. They were with [local Rakhine Buddhists] and took everything they could find that was valuable: gold, cash, clothes, potatoes and rice. They smashed up houses of three or four people they said had been spreading rumours. They were looking for fighters. The Buddhists had told them about fighters, but there were none there."

Petam Ali, 30, rice distributor



Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

A day before the attack, people from a village across the river called Dual Toli swam over to escape the army. More than 10 died in the river, according to Petam Ali, who sheltered some of the displaced in his family home. They watched their village burn from across the river.

At 3.30am the next day, Ali heard shooting but was not sure of the direction.

“I live on the north side of the village and the army had crossed the river further north and were marching down. I left my family to run out to the jungle to try and spot the soldiers. We waited until 8am and then they moved in, wearing dark green clothes. All of them were on foot.

“I ran back to get my family, but we were too rushed and my grandmother was too old to run. From the forest, we watched them burn our house. It was the first in Tula Toli to be burned.”

Ali’s home, an eight-bedroom wooden structure that he built with his three brothers for 16 members of their extended family, went up in flames fast. Its roof was covered in straw and leaves.

“The soldiers used rocket-propelled grenades, and they set fire to the houses with matches. Once they had gone past, I went back. All the houses were burned. In the road, I saw a dead man I recognised called Abu Shama. He had been shot in the chest. He was 85.”

In the ruins of his house, Ali saw the singed and decapitated corpse of his grandmother. “Her name was Rukeya Banu. She was 75. When I returned to the jungle, I described the whole incident to the rest. They burst into tears. We walked for three days.”

Kabir Ahmed, 65, rice farmer



Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

“When I heard the army attacking to the north, I jumped into the river,” said Kabir Ahmed. “My two sons came with me. They are 10 and 12.”

Eight members of his family died, he said, and two of his other sons who are unaccounted for.

“They threw the children into the river. My three-year-old granddaughter, Makarra, and Abul Fayez, my one-year-old grandson. I was hiding on the south side of the river. They gathered everyone together and told them to walk away. Then they shot them.

“We were on hills, hiding behind trees. In the evening, they collected all the bodies on the river bank, dug into the sands and burned them. It happened 40 metres away from me, on the other side of the river. They are buried two to three metres from the riverside.”

Zahir Ahmed, 55, rice farmer (Kabir’s brother)



Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

When the army arrived, Kabir Ahmed's brother, Zahir, was also down by the river but in another spot. His son ran out of their home out in a panic.

"'Leave us!' he shouted. I jumped into the river and swam to the other side.

"I waited in the jungle, listening to the military firing. I was right next to the water. My son had gone to save other members of the family." But he says all were killed.

He starts to count on his fingers those who died: "My wife, Rabia Begum, 50; my first son, Hamid Hassan, 35; his daughter, Nyema, two to three, and his son, Rashid, six to seven months; my second son, Nour Kamel, 12; my third son, Fayzul Kamel, 10; my fourth son, Ismail, seven; my eldest daughter, Safura 25; her husband, Azhir Hassan, 35; my second daughter, Sanzida, 14; my third daughter, Estafa, six; my fourth daughter, Shahina Begum, five; my sixth daughter, Nour Shomi, two to three; my seventh daughter, Hasina, six months old.

"I waited for five hours and then left."

Mohammed Idriss, 35



Photograph: Noor Alam/The Guardian

In Bangladesh, the refugees from Tula Toli have made camp on hills that were empty just a few days before. Several thousand Rohingya have felled the trees, levelled out the beige mud and erected tents using sliced bamboo frames and black tarpaulin bought in the market.

All are hungry, and hundreds mob the rickety open-back trucks that local mosques have deployed to hand out donated clothes and food. For fear of being overwhelmed, volunteers throw shirts and trousers into the heaving crowd as they slowly drive along.

Children sleep on the mud in tents, their parents looking on anxiously, worried about flu or diarrhoea. At a clearing nearby, liquid excrement soaks the ground.

When heavy rains arrive, Tula Toli's displaced shower in the open. Women and children hold dented metal pots at the side of the tent to collect fresh water. Thousands have come to these hills, but the area is almost entirely absent of any belongings. Many fled in terror and few made it out of Myanmar with anything.

Mohammed Idriss lived on the western side of Tula Toli, which borders an area thick with trees and he was able to collect some things before leaving. He holds up a white sack that has two large holes in it.

“I had a bag filled with oil, sugar, flour, 10,000 kyat, rice - things I had taken from the house when we left. When we got to the Naf river [the Bangladesh border], the Myanmar army started shooting.

“I jumped into the river and then hid behind a sandbank. The soldier came and shot at the bag, opened it and took everything. Once we got to the Bangladesh border, the guards told us to head here.”

He says he carried the bag for three days during the 10-mile trek through the trees and hills from Tula Toli.

At camp, Idriss gets a phone call to a dusty mobile, being charged by a cheap solar panel someone found in the market. On the line was another Rohingya refugee near the border. They had found a woman with a gunshot wound to her arm who matched the description of his missing sister.

“They thought she might have been Rabia, but she wasn’t,” he said. “We’re not sure if she was killed or not. We are hoping.”

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Annex 267

Cindy Saine, "US VP Condemns 'Terrible Savagery' Against Rohingya Muslims", *VOA News*
(20 September 2017)

East Asia Pacific

US VP Condemns 'Terrible Savagery' Against Rohingya Muslims

By VOA News, Cindy Saine
September 20, 2017 10:45 AM



Vice President Mike Pence, speaking about the Rohingya crisis in the strongest terms used by any senior official to date, on Wednesday condemned the “historic exodus” of the Rohingya from Myanmar to Bangladesh in the face of violent attacks.

Speaking at a U.N. peacekeeping meeting, Pence said the world was witnessing a “great tragedy unfolding” in the Southeast Asian nation, also known as Burma.

“Recently, Burmese security forces responded to militant attacks on government outposts with terrible savagery, burning villages, driving the Rohingyas from their homes,” Pence said at the high-level Security Council meeting. “The images of the violence and its victims have shocked the American people, and decent people all over the world.”

Over the past month, more than 400,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Myanmar, where they face human rights violations and discrimination. Pence noted that tens of thousands of those who fled on foot were children.

Rohingya militants attacked Burmese security forces in late August. Since then, analysts and rights workers say, the Burmese military has carried out a brutal crackdown, burning villages and killing women and children as they fled.

Pence noted that U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson had spoken with Myanmar's civilian leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, about the Rohingya refugees Tuesday and had urged the Burmese military and security forces to facilitate humanitarian aid.

"While we welcome [Aung San] Suu Kyi's comments that returning refugees have nothing to fear, the United States renews our call on Burma's security forces to end their violence immediately and support diplomatic efforts for a long-term solution," Pence noted.



Rohingya Muslims, who crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh, wait their turn to collect aid near Balukhali refugee camp, Bangladesh, Sept. 20, 2017.

US aid to Rohingya

The State Department on Wednesday announced the United States was set to contribute \$32 million worth of humanitarian aid to help the Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar.

The U.S. aid package — the first major response from the Trump administration to the situation — will include food, medical supplies, water, emergency shelter and other support.

Simon Henshaw, acting assistant secretary of state for population, refugees and migration, briefed reporters at the U.N. on the humanitarian aid announcement. He clarified that of the \$32 million, \$28 million would go to Bangladesh.

Henshaw thanked the Bangladeshi government and people for their "warm response and their strong response" in supporting the Rohingya who have come across the border.

"Bangladesh, as we all know, is not one of the richest countries in the world, and for a country which has its own struggles to open its arms to the Rohingya is really remarkable, and I think will be long remembered," he added.

Aung San Suu Kyi has condemned the human rights violations taking place in her country's western Rakhine state, but she has come under strong international criticism for not speaking out more forcefully on the situation. She canceled her appearance at the U.N. General Assembly this week, in part to address the crisis at home.

In a nationally televised speech in her country Tuesday, Aung San Suu Kyi said her country did not fear international scrutiny, and she offered her assurance that any human rights violations or "acts that impair stability and harmony" would be dealt with "in accordance with strict norms of justice."

The Nobel Peace Prize laureate insisted, however, that all "allegations are based on solid evidence before we take action."

U.N. Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, during a Tuesday speech before the General Assembly, said he was "shocked by the dramatic escalation of sectarian tensions" in Myanmar, and he called on authorities to "end the military operations" in Rakhine.

The State Department said the \$32 million, which brought the total amount of U.S. aid provided to Myanmar refugees in fiscal 2017 to \$95 million, would make

up about a quarter of what human rights groups say will be needed to address the crisis. The remaining money is expected to be provided by other countries.



By
VOA News



By
Cindy Saine
VOA Diplomatic Correspondent



Annex 268

“France calls for UN action on Rohingya ‘genocide’”, *Anadolu Agency* (21 September 2017)

POLITICS, EUROPE, ASIA - PACIFIC

France calls for UN action on Rohingya 'genocide'

President Emmanuel Macron says UN Security Council must condemn genocide, ethnic cleansing in Myanmar

21.09.2017



French President Emmanuel Macron



PARIS



President Emmanuel Macron on Wednesday became the latest voice to brand the killing of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar as "genocide".



"France will work with its partners at the UN Security Council to take the initiative to get the UN to condemn the continuing genocide and ethnic cleansing," Macron said in an interview with French broadcaster TMC in New York.



In his first address to the UN General Assembly on Tuesday, Macron used the words "ethnic cleansing" to describe the mass killing of Rohingya in Myanmar's western state of Rakhine.



"We must condemn the ethnic purification which is under way and act," he added in his Wednesday interview.

Since Aug. 25, more than 421,000 Rohingya have crossed from Rakhine into Bangladesh, according to the UN.

The refugees are fleeing a fresh security operation in which security forces and Buddhist mobs have killed men, women and children, looted homes and torched Rohingya villages.

According to Bangladeshi Foreign Minister Abul Hasan Mahmood Ali, who has also termed the killings "genocide", around 3,000 Rohingya have been killed in the crackdown.

Turkey has been at the forefront of providing aid to Rohingya refugees.

The Rohingya, described by the UN as the world's most persecuted people, have faced heightened fears of attack since dozens were killed in communal violence in 2012.

Last October, following attacks on border posts in Rakhine's Maungdaw district, security forces launched a five-month crackdown in which, according to Rohingya groups, around 400 people were killed.

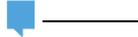
The UN documented mass gang rapes, killings -- including of infants and young children -- brutal beatings, and disappearances committed by security personnel. In a report, UN investigators said such violations may have constituted crimes against humanity.

Reporting by Murat Unlu;Writing by Fatih Hafiz Mehmet,Sorwar Alam

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Annex 269

AFP, “Min Aung Hlaing says Rakhine refugee exodus ‘exaggerated’”, *Frontier*
(12 October 2017)



Min Aung Hlaing says Rakhine refugee exodus ‘exaggerated’

OCTOBER 12, 2017



By AFP

YANGON — The media has “exaggerated” the number of Rohingya refugees fleeing an army crackdown, Myanmar’s commander-in-chief said Thursday, in a brash rebuttal of accusations of ethnic cleansing by his forces.

Some 520,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar’s Rakhine State since August 25, when the military launched a sweeping campaign against Rohingya militants.

The crackdown has been so intense that the UN on Wednesday accused Myanmar of trying to purge its entire Rohingya population.

A new UN report released Wednesday described the army-led crackdown as “well-organised, coordinated and systematic, with the intent of not only driving the population out of Myanmar but preventing them from returning to their homes”.

Half of Myanmar’s Rohingya have bolted over the seven weeks, fleeing incinerated villages to join w

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has become the world's largest refugee camp in neighbouring Bangladesh.

Thousands more are still trying to escape, massing on beaches and hoping to cross the Naf River before their food runs out.

But in a Facebook post on his official page on Thursday, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing was unrepentant, describing the military response as proportionate and playing down the scale of the exodus.

It is an "exaggeration to say that the number of Bengalis fleeing to Bangladesh is very large," the post quoted him as saying, using a pejorative term for the Rohingya that classifies them as illegal immigrants.

Instead, he blamed "instigation and propaganda" by the media, who have become a punching bag for anger inside Myanmar, where there is little sympathy for the Rohingya.

The humanitarian needs of the refugees who have made it to Bangladesh are immense with limited food, shelter and the threat a disease outbreak deepening by the day.

But Min Aung Hlaing, who rights groups say carries personal responsibility for the crisis, insisted the Rohingya are merely returning to their motherland.

"The native place of Bengalis is really Bengal," he said. "They might have fled to the other country with the same language, race and culture as theirs by assuming that they would be safer there."

He also reiterated the army's view on the contested history of the Rohingya, saying they were moved in from Bangladesh by British colonialists and have no legitimate claim to lineage on Myanmar soil.

While immigration increased under British rule, historians say Muslim communities were recorded living in the Rakhine region long before the colonial era.

His comments followed a meeting with US Ambassador Scot Marciel, who according to the post "expressed concern" over the half million refugees and offered to help aid efforts.

This week an *AFP* reporter on a rare government-steered trip to the conflict-hit Rakhine heard testimony from Rohingya villagers who are scared and fast running out of food.

They said ethnic Rakhine Buddhist villagers are trying to starve them out of their homes.

Authorities are providing supplies to the Rohingya left behind, Min Aung Hlaing, glibly adding food is plentiful in Rakhine where "fish can easily be caught" in its waterways.



BY AFP

More stories

Annex 270

Hannah Beech, “Across Myanmar, Denial of Ethnic Cleansing and Loathing of Rohingya”,
The New York Times (24 October 2017)

Across Myanmar, Denial of Ethnic Cleansing and Loathing of Rohingya

By Hannah Beech

Oct. 24, 2017

SITTWE, Myanmar — The Buddhist abbot tucked his legs under his robes and began to explain.

Rohingya Muslims do not belong in Myanmar, and they never have, he said. Their fertility allowed them to overwhelm the local Buddhist population. But now, somehow, many Rohingya seemed to be gone.

“We thank the Lord Buddha for this,” said U Thu Min Gala, the 57-year-old abbot of the Damarama Monastery in Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State in western Myanmar. “They stole our land, our food and our water. We will never accept them back.”

An overwhelming body of published accounts has detailed the Myanmar Army’s campaign of killing, rape and arson in Rakhine, which has driven more than 600,000 Rohingya out of the country since late August, in what the United Nations says is the fastest displacement of a people since the Rwanda genocide.

But in Myanmar, and even in Rakhine itself, there is stark denial that any ethnic cleansing is taking place.

The divergence between how Myanmar and much of the outside world see the Rohingya is not limited to one segment of local society. Nor can hatred in Myanmar of the largely stateless Muslim group be dismissed as a fringe attitude.

[Read: *U.N. court orders Myanmar to protect Rohingya muslims.*]

Government officials, opposition politicians, religious leaders and even local human-rights activists have become unified behind this narrative: The Rohingya are not rightful citizens of Buddhist-majority Myanmar, and now, through the power of a globally resurgent Islam, the minority is falsely trying to hijack the world’s sympathy.



People gathering in the village of Sin Ma Kaw, which has banned Muslims from staying there. Adam Dean for The New York Times

Social media postings have amplified the message, claiming that international aid workers are openly siding with the Rohingya. Accordingly, the Myanmar government has blocked aid agencies' access to Rohingya still trapped in Myanmar — about 120,000 confined to camps in central Rakhine and tens of thousands more in desperate conditions in the north.

The official answer to United Nations accounts of the military's mass burning of villages and targeting of civilians has been to insist that the Rohingya have been doing it to themselves.

"There is no case of the military killing Muslim civilians," said Dr. Win Myat Aye, the country's social welfare minister and the governing National League for Democracy party's point person on Rakhine. "Muslim people killed their own Muslim people."

When asked in an interview about the evidence against the military, the minister noted that the Myanmar government had not sent any investigators to Bangladesh to vet the testimony of fleeing Rohingya, but that he would raise the possibility of doing so in a future meeting.

"Thank you for advising us on this idea," he said.

The Rohingya, who speak a Bengali dialect and tend to look distinct from most of Myanmar's other ethnic groups, have had roots in Rakhine for generations. Communal tensions between the Rohingya and ethnic Rakhine Buddhists exploded in World War II, when the Rakhine aligned themselves with the Japanese, while the Rohingya chose the British.

Although many Rohingya were considered citizens when Myanmar, also known as Burma, became independent in 1948, the military junta that wrested power in 1962 began stripping them of their rights. After a restrictive citizenship law was introduced in 1982, most Rohingya became stateless.

Even the name Rohingya, which the ethnic group has identified with more vocally in recent years, has been taken from them. The Myanmar government usually refers to the Rohingya as Bengalis, implying they belong in Bangladesh. The public tends to call them an epithet used for all Muslims in Myanmar: kalar.



Daw Soe Chay, an ethnic Rakhine Buddhist from Myebon Township, was beaten and publicly shamed after her husband delivered aid to Rohingya Muslims in their camp in Sittwe. Adam Dean for The New York Times

The nomenclature is so sensitive that in a speech this month, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize laureate and de facto leader of the government, referred only to “those who have crossed over to Bangladesh.”

Some ethnic Rakhine politicians are hailing the Rohingya exodus as a good thing.

“All the Bengalis learn in their religious schools is to brutally kill and attack,” said Daw Khin Saw Wai, a Rakhine member of Parliament from Rathedaung Township. “It is impossible to live together in the future.”

Buddhist monks, moral arbiters in a pious land, have been at the forefront of a campaign to dehumanize the Rohingya. In popular videos, extremist monks refer to the Rohingya as “snakes” or “worse than dogs.”

Outside Mr. Thu Min Gala’s monastery in Sittwe, a pair of signs reflected an alternate sense of reality. One said that the monastery, which is sheltering ethnic Rakhine who fled the conflict zone, would not accept any donations from international agencies. The other warned that multifaith groups were not welcome.

The abbot claimed that the authorities in Rakhine had stopped a car owned by the International Committee of the Red Cross that was filled with weaponry destined for Rohingya militants who carried out attacks against the security forces in August. Mr. Thu Min Gala claimed that sticks of dynamite had been wrapped in paper with the Red Cross logo. The Red Cross denied these accusations.

“We don’t trust the international society,” the abbot said. “They are only on the side of the terrorists.”

At another monastery in Sittwe, an elderly abbot, U Baddanta Thaw Ma, halted my conversation with a young monk by slapping the air in front of my face. “Go! Go! Go!” he yelled in English, before switching to the local Rakhine dialect. “Go away, you foreigner! Go away, you kalar lover!”

Public sentiment against Muslims — who are about 4 percent of Myanmar’s population, encompassing several ethnic groups, including the Rohingya — has spread beyond Rakhine. In 2015 elections, no major political party fielded a Muslim candidate. Today no Muslims serve in Parliament, the first time since the country’s independence.

A couple of hours outside Yangon, the country’s largest city, U Aye Swe, an administrator for Sin Ma Kaw village, said he was proud to oversee one of Myanmar’s “Muslim-free” villages, which bar Muslims from spending the night, among other restrictions.

“Kalar are not welcome here because they are violent and they multiply like crazy, with so many wives and children,” he said.

Mr. Aye Swe admitted he had never met a Muslim before, adding, “I have to thank Facebook because it is giving me the true information in Myanmar.”

Social media messaging has driven much of the rage in Myanmar. Though widespread access to cellphones only started a few years ago, mobile penetration is now about 90 percent. For many people, Facebook is their only source of news, and they have little experience in sifting fake news from credible reporting.

One widely shared message on Facebook, from a spokesman for Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi’s office, emphasized that biscuits from the World Food Program, a United Nations agency, had been found at a Rohingya militant training camp. The United Nations called the post “irresponsible.”

The Myanmar government, however, insists the public needs to be guided.

“We do something that we call educating the people,” said U Pe Myint, the nation’s information minister. He acknowledged, “It looks rather like indoctrination, like in an authoritarian or totalitarian state.”



A Buddhist woman and her son were staying at the Damarama Monastery, in Sittwe, after being displaced by violence in northern Rakhine. Adam Dean for The New York Times

In Yangon, Mr. Pe Myint this month gathered local journalists to discuss what he called “fabricated news” by foreign reporters and a “political war” in which international aid groups favored the Rohingya.

Last month, a mob in Sittwe attacked Red Cross workers, who were loading a boat with supplies that locals believed would only go to the Rohingya.

Even among officials who might otherwise champion human rights, frustration has been directed at foreign critics. Quietly, some defend Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi’s failure to call out the military and protect the Rohingya by saying it would be political suicide in a country where hatred of the Rohingya is so widespread. They see the recent international pressure, at best, as ignorant of domestic complexities and, at worst, as intent on hindering Myanmar’s development.

“We ask the international community to acknowledge that these Muslims are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and that this crisis is an infringement of our sovereignty,” said U Nyan Win, a spokesman for the National League for Democracy, which shares power with Myanmar’s military. “This is the most important thing with the Rakhine issue.”

U Ko Ko Gyi, a democracy advocate who was jailed for 17 years by the military when it ruled Myanmar, also evoked national interest.

“We have been human-rights defenders for many years and suffered for a long time but we are standing together on this issue because we need to support our national security,” he said.

“We are a small country that lies between India and China, and the DNA of our ancestors is to try to struggle for our survival,” Mr. Ko Ko Gyi said. “If you in the West criticize us too much, then you will push us into the arms of China and Russia.”



Sin Ma Kaw, where an official said "he was proud to oversee one of Myanmar's "Muslim-free" villages. Adam Dean for The New York Times

Last month, those two permanent members of the United Nations Security Council shielded Myanmar from an attempt by other nations to condemn the Myanmar military for its offensive in Rakhine.

The humanitarian situation has grown desperate within Rakhine while the official block on aid largely continues.

Throughout the state, ethnic Rakhine have been warned by community leaders not to break the blockade. Last month in Myebon Township, in central Rakhine, women's activists prevented international aid groups from delivering assistance to an internment camp where thousands of Rohingya have been sequestered since the 2012 sectarian violence, according to foreign staff.

But U Tun Tin, a Rakhine trishaw driver, needed the money and delivered food to the Rohingya camp. Shortly after, his wife, Daw Soe Chay, said she was accosted by a crowd that forced her to a nearby monastery.

Inside the religious compound, they beat her and sheared her hair. Then the mob marched her through Myebon, wearing a sign calling her a "national traitor."

Despite his wife's ordeal, Mr. Tun Tin said he did not regret having sent supplies to the camp, where Rohingya say their rations are running low.

"They are human," he said. "They need to eat, just like us."

Saw Nang contributed reporting from Yangon, Myanmar.

A version of this article appears in print on , Section A, Page 1 of the New York edition with the headline: Across Myanmar, a Denial of Ethnic Cleansing

Annex 271

Fiona MacGregor, “Rohingya girls under 10 raped while fleeing Myanmar, charity says”,
The Guardian (25 October 2017)

The Guardian



This article is more than **2 years old**

Rohingya girls under 10 raped while fleeing Myanmar, charity says

Médecins Sans Frontières says more than half the girls it has treated after sexual assaults are under 18

Fiona MacGregor in Cox's Bazar

Wed 25 Oct 2017 04.56 EDT

Rohingya children, some of them under 10 years old, are receiving treatment for rape in camps on the Bangladesh border, according to medics who say that young refugees account for half of those sexually assaulted while fleeing violence in Myanmar.

Médecins Sans Frontières says dozens of Rohingya girls have been given medical and psychological support at its Kutupalong health facility's sexual and reproductive health unit - a specialist clinic for survivors of sexual assault based in the largest refugee camp in Cox's Bazar.

Of those fleeing Rakhine state who come to the clinic for treatment relating to rape, "about 50% are aged 18 or under, including one girl who was nine years old and several others under the age of 10", an MSF spokesperson said.

The organisation stressed this was just a fraction of those believed to have been sexually assaulted and raped since military operations began on 25 August, as most survivors faced practical and cultural barriers to accessing treatment.

“Women and girls often don’t seek medical care for sexual violence due to the stigma, shame and fear of being blamed for what’s happened to them,” said Aerlyn Pfeil, an MSF midwife focusing on support for survivors of sexual and gender-based violence (SGBV) in Cox’s Bazar.

In the last week a nine-year-old girl was among the new arrivals who received medical treatment after being raped, as military violence against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine continues.

Rohingya refugees have repeatedly described incidents of gang rape and sexual assaults by the Myanmar army during military operations the UN has said amount to ethnic cleansing, but this is the first time evidence of a large number of children being targeted has emerged.

According to another SGBV medical specialist working in the camps, who asked not to be named because of patient privacy, most cases she has dealt with involve the army gathering all the women and girls in a village in one place and picking “the most beautiful” to be taken away and raped, either by individual soldiers or groups.

“A lot of them are just 12 or 13 years old,” she said.

One recent case she dealt with involved a child under 10 with severe bleeding who had been raped by three soldiers, she said.

Her account backs the stories of numerous refugees who describe similar incidents of mass rape, with many saying some victims were subsequently killed.

After speaking to psychological experts in the camps who warned such interviews could increase trauma for victims, the Guardian did not seek to speak directly to child rape survivors.

However, during an interview with a 27-year-old woman from the Buthidaung area of Rakhine, who said her husband and father were rounded up and killed by the Myanmar military shortly after 25 August, it emerged the woman’s 14-year-old sister had been raped during the attack.

“The military put all the male people to one side and took all the female people into the jungle,” she said, adding that the soldiers then selected some girls and women.

“I cried when they took away my little sister, but I couldn’t stop them.

“They tortured and raped many girls and women. When they stopped and left I went looking for my sister and saw many bodies on the ground. When I found my sister I didn’t know if she was alive or dead, but she was breathing.

“She was bleeding a lot so I carried her to a little river and washed her. Then I took her on my shoulders till I found a small medical clinic [in Rakhine] and got some medicine for her.”

The woman said her sister had later told her she had been raped by two soldiers and by one of the ethnic Rakhine Buddhist civilians who had been involved in the attack on their village.

She said she had not heard about the specialist clinics in the camp and that her sister had not received any support or medical care since reaching Bangladesh.

“What I’m finding is that many of the survivors I’ve met are recent arrivals from Myanmar and have not previously been aware that there are specific medical services, or any medical services at all, available to them,” said Pfeil.

“When I’ve been speaking to survivors of sexual violence, one of the more heartbreaking and common requests I’ve had is for new cloth skirts, because [weeks] later, they’re still wearing the same clothes they were raped or assaulted in.”

More than 600,000 people have fled from Myanmar into Bangladesh since 25 August and are now struggling to survive in terrible conditions in sprawling makeshift camps.

Human Rights Watch said last week: “The Burmese military has clearly used rape as one of a range of horrific methods of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya.”

Annex 272

“Information released by the Tatmadaw True News Information Team on the findings of the Investigation Team in connection with the performances of the security troops during the terrorist attacks in Maungtaw region, Rakhine State”, *The Global New Light of Myanmar* (14 November 2017)

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Information Released By The Tatmadaw True News Information Team On The Findings Of The Investigation Team In Connection With The Performances Of The Security Troops During The Terrorist Attacks In Maungtaw Region, Rakhine State

Information released by the Tatmadaw True News Information Team on the findings of the Investigation Team in connection with the performances of the security troops during the terrorist attacks in Maungtaw region, Rakhine State

🕒 November 14, 2017 🌐 Global New Light of Myanmar 👁️ 1381



1. An Investigation Team with Inspector-General of the Defence Services Lt-Gen Aye Win as the Chairman has already been formed and the team has been assigned with the task of conducting ground inspection to know the true situation in connection with terrorist attacks of the ARSA Bengali terrorists on 30 police outposts and an army battalion headquarters in Buthidaung, Maungtaw and Yathedaung townships in Rakhine State on 25 August 2017 and to ascertain whether security troops conducted the military operations in accord with their duty assignments during the time the Tatmadaw was trying to restore regional peace and stability.
2. The Investigation Team led by Lt-Gen Aye Win toured Maungtaw, Buthidaung and Yathedaung townships for 26 days from 13 October to 7 November 2017, and interviewed 195 ethnic people of two ethnic villages, 205 Hindus of two Hindu villages, and 2,817 Bengalis of 54 Bengali villages totalling 3,217 villagers. The team also collected the accounts of 804 witnesses.
3. The findings of the investigation have proved that all security members up from the leaders to the privates were aware of and strictly abided by the orders and directives of superior bodies, especially the rules of engagement-ROE in connection with the rights of self-defence and in discharging duties during the armed conflicts and anti-terrorist operations.
4. It is found that during the terrorist attack ARSA Bengali terrorists in the form of combined village-wise gangs attacked police outposts, an army battalion HQ and Tatmadaw columns conducting area combing operations with the use of small/heavy weapons, remote controlled home-made mines, sticks, knives, jingalees and directional mines as from 1 am on 25 August using superior manpower. In accord with the rights of self-defence and ROE, the security troops including Tatmadaw columns which were accompanied by members of Border Guard Police Force first gave warning shouts to the

mob to halt the advance, if the mob did not stop they fired warning shots and only when the mob reached the striking distance, the security troops started firing single shots in intervals aiming only at the legs between the foot and knee of the leader. Because of the use of such tactics, the security troops could disperse the terrorist mobs and there was no death of innocent people. Although the Bengali villages where the engagements took place were burning and women and children were fleeing their homes, not a single shot was fired on them. The security forces were only fighting against the ARSA Bengali terrorists. They never shot at the innocent Bengalis.

5. Strengths of Bengali terrorists originally estimated as about 4,000 Bengali terrorists who committed attacks on the morning of 25 August 2017 were 6,200 in minimum and more than 10,000 in maximum in total according to the scrutiny. As the strengths of Bengali terrorists who attacked security columns, police outposts, local Rakhine ethnic villages and Hindu villages were about 500 in each place, it is found that their strengths were larger than those from security forces. Moreover, Bengali terrorists used home-made bombs, local-made mines exploded by remote controls, and local-made vehicle attacked mines in attacks, but the security forces opened fire with the use of small arms only without totally using heavy weapons, launchers and grenades. As such, the security forces abided by laws related to the wars in conducting area clearance operations. So, it is found that those security forces did not perform the use of excessive force.
6. In discharging duty of peace and stability of the regions, the security forces exposed and arrested ARSA Bengali terrorists and their supporters. A total of 114 Bengalis are still arrested now. Among them, five Bengalis participated in attacking Chutpyin police outpost in person. While fleeing there, they set fire to the village. The remaining arrestees were related to the terrorists. In arresting, only members of Border Guard Police Force who were attached to the Tatmadaw columns arrested those Bengalis, and Tatmadawmen took security measures. After arresting, those Bengalis were systematically handed over in good situations to the local police stations. Members of security forces did not commit persecution against those persons in arresting. It was found that those Bengalis were exposed and arrested under provisions of the Geneva Convention and the law of wars.
7. In the terror incident, ARSA Bengali terrorists holding arms committed besieging and threatening villagers from ethnic villages, members of Myanmar Police Force, departmental personnel and members of the Sangha by chanting and raided the villages and police outposts where least police members were assigned one after another by fleshing torches at night. In fact, it was found that security forces carried out security duty in time and transported local ethnic people, departmental personnel, members of the Sangha and innocent Bengali villagers, totalling 27,235 to the safer places for saving their lives from dangers.
8. Engagements and fights happened in the incidents of Rakhine State during 12 days only from 25 August 2017 to 5 September. During the period, there were 94 engagements, 27 times of arresting Bengali terrorists and 11 times of seizures, totalling 132 events. In the incidents, a total of 376 bodies of ARSA Bengali terrorists, 15 assorted arms, 97 rounds of ammunition, 30 packages of gunpowder and 67 home-made mines were seized and 78 ARSA Bengali terrorists arrested. A total of 13 members of security forces were posthumous and 15 members injured and one missing. The security forces lost 11 assorted small arms, 1,676 rounds of ammunition, four magazines and one walkie-talkie.
9. According to the answers of 2,817 villagers from 54 Bengali villages in interviews and confessions of 362 villagers from 105 Bengali villages, security forces did not commit shooting at innocent villagers and sexual violence and rape cases against women. They did not arrest, beat and kill the villagers. They did not totally destroy, rob and take property, gold and silver wares, vehicles and animals of villagers from the villages and displaced villages. They did not set fire to the mosques in Bengali villages. They allow the Bengali villagers to perform their faiths in freedom without banning them to attend the mosques and join prayers. They did not threaten, bully and drive out the villagers not to be able to live in the villages and they did not set fire to the houses. They are joining hands with relevant administrative bodies in systematically supervising the tasks to protect the remaining houses in villages against destruction and stealing of unscrupulous persons. It is found that mobile medical teams gave health care services to the locals in villages for 291 times, and rice, edible oil, salt and foodstuffs weighing 234 tons were provided to the locals for 273 times.

10. According to accounts of witnesses, terrorist leaders at different levels instructed to launch synchronized terrorist attacks, and core ARSA Bengali terrorists and many villagers and children joined the attacks. As the attacks failed, ARSA Bengali terrorists torched houses and fled to Bangladesh, and were reported to have threatened villagers, saying: **“Run away or be attacked by the government troops with launchers, the village will be torched, they will be shot with machine guns and will be dropped bombs by helicopters”, “Come out or we’ll label you as traitors of Islam and slit your throat”, “We’ll kill you for the cooperation with the government”,** and were also reported to have persuaded villagers through various ways saying: **“You’ll be able to lead a life of ease with international aid when you get into Bangladesh”, “You’ll be able to go to a third country, and get good jobs, better incomes and get rich”, “Every villager come out, and leave your belongings behind because when you get into Bangladesh, we, who have phoned you, will give the money equivalent to your belongings if only five of your peer villagers who are the members of terrorist organization back you up.”** Again, terrorists propagated at refugee camps in Bangladesh, saying **“We’ll label Bengali villagers who chose not to flee as traitors having converted to Buddhism, and cooperating with the government.”** So Bengalis fled for fear that they would be killed when terrorist came into their villages again. Meanwhile, some are the relatives of those who had participated in terrorist attacks, and fled for fear that they would be punished under the law for hiding the secret. Some lost their houses and had no place to live because of some terrorists who came back from refugee camps in Bangladesh and set fire to Bengali villages under instructions. Some villagers fled out of pure fear. The flocks of Bengalis fled into Bangladesh for above-mentioned reasons. Not only administrative authorities but also international diplomats to Myanmar met them and discouraged them from leaving. But they refused and fled to Bangladesh whose people belong to the **same race and religion** as them.
11. According to accounts of witnesses, terrorists abducted 52 Hindus from Ye Baw Kya Village and 53 from Kha Maung Seik (South) Village on 25 August morning, 2017. They took gold and silver wares and destroyed altars, Buddha images, and set fire to citizenship scrutiny cards from houses of Hindus. They inhumanely tortured 45 Hindu villagers of Ye Baw Kya in front of a Hindu female villager of Ye Baw Kya and eight Hindu female villagers of Kha Maung Seik (South) Village. They made the villagers lie on their back beside the pit already dug by them, and then slit their throats. Of 105 Hindu abductees, 60 remain missing till today. They persuaded the remaining Hindu women to marry them, and forced them to wear Islam women’s garment Burqa, and convert to Islam by making them repeat Koran verses. The women were then taken to Bangladesh. Myanmar security forces contacted Hindu faith leaders, and brought back eight female Hindu abductees on 27 September, 2017. Moreover, terrorists forcibly set fire to seven ethnic Mro villagers of Khong Taing Village, Badaga Village-tract in Maungtaw Township on August 29 morning. ARSA Bengali terrorists killed a **total of 131** ethnic/Hindu/Bengali people in order to assert authority through fear.
12. Since the 9 October attacks, ARSA Bengali terrorists had been brutally killing non-supporters, departmental personnel, those dealing well with security forces, Bengalis unwilling to attend terrorism courses and local ethnics. Moreover, they radicalized others with the spirit of crushing people of different races or faiths. Although they carried out killings and committed atrocities against minorities, they, while staying in a refugee camp of the other country, made up news about Myanmar’s Tatmadaw committing genocide and ethnic cleansing when international diplomats and media arrived there.
13. According to accounts of witnesses, after the 9 October incidents, ARSA Bengali terrorist leader Artar Ula appointed terrorist leaders in respective village-tracts and villages. Rector of Arabi University in Myinlut Mawlawi Musetar Armat was appointed as in-charge of southern part of Maungtaw Township, Mawlawi Adu Rahman as in-charge of Ngakhuya in northern part of Maungtaw, Mawlawi Jama and Mawlawi Mawshita Mauk from Nanthataung Village as in-charges of Taungpyoletwe region and Mawlawi Kumoro from Michauzay Village as in-charge of Buthidaung Township. With the help of those leaders, the terrorist group was extended based on Mawlawis and village administrators. They killed those close to government, non-supporters and those unwilling to do terrorism courses by slashing their throats. Bengali villagers were forced to take oaths holding the Koran and made terrorists. Villagers from the most of the Bengali villages were

persuaded to become terrorists. Despite the extended terrorist group, the issue including atrocities committed by the terrorists could not be exposed as officials in the concerned region were weak in acquiring information. Consequently, the ARSA Bengali terrorist group was able to carry out extensive attacks on 25 August.

14. As such weaknesses in doing management and acquiring security information were found, action will be taken against those responsible and arrests of the remaining ARSA Bengali terrorists will continue.

Tatmadaw True News Information Team

ABOUT US

Originally established on 12th January 1964 as "The Working People's Daily", the New Light of Myanmar is Myanmar's oldest Read More ...

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Annex 273

Steve Sandford, “UN Gathers Horror Stories from Rohingya Women Fleeing Myanmar”, *Voice of America* (28 December 2017)

East Asia Pacific

UN Gathers Horror Stories from Rohingya Women Fleeing Myanmar

By Steve Sandford

December 28, 2017 07:34 PM



Rohingya women who say they fled mistreatment by the military in Myanmar have told tales of horror that leading human rights groups have documented.

Now, living in massive refugee camps and settlements near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, victims must deal with past traumas and face new risks.

Rejina is a grandmother who didn't want her last name used. She said she has felt empty inside since losing contact with her 15-year-old granddaughter, following the army's first wave of so-called clearance operations targeting the teenager's village of Khadi Bil in Myanmar's Maungdaw township. The military action in October 2016 followed deadly insurgent attacks on border guard posts in Myanmar's troubled Rakhine state.

"I heard that the military came and entered the house and grabbed her and stole her property," said Rejina, 65, now living in the Kutipalong camp in Bangladesh.

"They checked the house and grabbed whatever they wanted. If they found any young women, they took them away. Lots of women were raped," Rejina said.



A Rohingya Muslim woman holds on to a blanket and rests on the road after collecting aid at the Kutupalong refugee camp in Ukhiya, Bangladesh, Dec. 21, 2017. Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people have crossed over from Myanmar into Bangladesh.

?Severe after-effects

While thousands of female refugees might appear to be coping with conditions in the border camps, many survivors of alleged sexual violence by Myanmar security forces suffer from severe depression and post-traumatic stress disorder.

Accounts gathered by rights groups support the accusations of widespread rape by the Myanmar army on the Rohingya population.

Pramila Patten, the U.N. special representative on sexual violence in conflict, interviewed survivors in Bangladesh in November and said, "I heard the most heartbreaking and horrific accounts of sexual atrocities, reportedly committed in cold blood out of a lethal hatred for these people, solely on the basis of their ethnicity and religion. The wounds are extremely raw, dozens of women and girls dissolving to tears when recounting acts of unmitigated brutality."

Access to therapy and treatment is lacking as more pressing issues like food supplies and adequate shelter take precedence in the 10 camps. Lack of communication adds to the dilemma, as efforts to get the word out to women in need prove difficult.



This 28-year-old mother of six, who did not want her name used, says she was raped by members of Myanmar's armed forces in late August. She caresses her daughter while being photographed in her tent in the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh, Nov. 22, 2017.

"Many women also lost their husbands, so you have many female-headed households," said Jessica Olney, regional spokeswoman for the Center for Social Integrity.

"Women are still needing to figure out how services work and how to access them, and they don't necessarily have experience advocating for them, so they are going without and that puts them in a vulnerable position," Olney said.

To aid in treatment, NGOs like the International Organization for Migration are building women's safe areas where they can receive psychosocial support from medical professionals.

Safe place to talk

"In these centers, it's safe and secure and there are only other women there and they can talk about the things that are important to them," said Fiona MacGregor, IOM communications officer.



A Rohingya Muslim woman covers her face from the afternoon dust and heat as she walks through Jamtoli refugee camp, Nov. 27, 2017, in Bangladesh. Since late August, more than 630,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar's Rakhine state into neighboring Bangladesh.

"It's an opportunity to hear what their needs are and find ways of reacting to that," MacGregor said.

"These are also people who come from very small villages, and suddenly they are finding themselves in a place where there are more than 800,000 people living in the camps," she said.

In addition to previous traumas, many of the new arrivals face the added risk of human trafficking as criminal networks prey on those seeking work.

"One thing we identified as a particular risk in the camps here is trafficking," MacGregor said. "Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, and we're hearing about traffickers approaching women and tricking them or persuading them to go for what they think are safe jobs somewhere else and they are ending up in situations of real exploitation." She said some wind up "in the sex industry, or we are hearing about girls and women being promised domestic work and find they're in different situations."

More than 600,000 Rohingya Muslims have left Rakhine state since August 25, after insurgents attacked security forces and prompted a brutal military crackdown that has been described as ethnic cleansing. Since then, the IOM has provided 2,500 people with psychological first aid, but if stories gathered by rights groups are accurate, the refugees face a long road to recovery.

Myanmar's government has repeatedly rejected claims that atrocities, including rape and extrajudicial killings, are occurring in northern Rakhine, the epicenter of the violence.

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Lun Min Mang, “Tatmadaw probe found soldiers responsible in Inn Din village killings”,
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Tatmadaw probe found soldiers responsible in Inn Din village killings

[Lun Min Mang](#) 11 Jan 2018

The graveyard where the bodies were found. Photo - Commander-in-Chief's Facebook
Tatmadaw probe found soldiers responsible in Inn Din village killings

The Myanmar armed forces on Wednesday admitted its troops were responsible for the mass killings in the troubled northern Rakhine State, a rare admission of the military to accusations of atrocities committed by its personnel in the area.

A military investigation on the mass grave found near Inn Din village in Maungdaw township concluded the Myanmar's security forces broke the Rules of Engagement and was responsible for the killings, according to a military statement.
Security personnel and some villagers admitted they killed "10 Bengali terrorists" and broke the Rules of Engagement, said the statement.

"Villagers involved and security personnel who broke the Rules of Engagement will be taken action in accordance with the law," it added.

The statement also said that responsible military officials who did not directly commit the killings but failed to supervise the detention and seek instruction from the higher command would also face sanctions.

After being informed that there was a mass grave found near Inn Din village's cemetery, a team of five investigators led by Lt-Gen Aye Win from the office of commander-in-chief of Defense Services probed the case in December last year.

Northern Rakhine is home to millions of the country's Muslim minority but the government does not recognise them as one of the ethnic groups and has labeled them as "Bengalis", meaning intruders from neighbouring Bangladesh.

After two attacks in last two years each by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, whom government declared as 'terrorist organization', the Tatmadaw conducted clearance operations in the northern Rakhine, which drew criticism from abroad, accusing Myanmar's security forces of committed human rights abuses.

The investigation team heard the accounts of 49 witnesses including military personnel, police, government officials and six villagers, according to the statement

The killings were also linked in the military statement to the murder of U Maung Ni who was killed by the terrorists during the August 25 attacks last year. Security forces had to protect Inn Din village because it is surrounded by Muslim villages of which residents threatened the Inn Din villagers, it said.

When security forces conducted clearance operations on September 1 near the village, about 200 people approached them with knives and sticks who the Tatmadaw statement said were "Bengali terrorists". After security forces fired warning shots into the air, the mob ran away and 10 were arrested.

The statement also said the 10 men admitted during the detention that they were linked to the terrorist organisation and were recruits to carry out terror attacks.

Because of the troops' order to maintain stability in areas where terrorist attacks have continued, security forces decided to kill them with the assistance of about 10 villagers including U Maung Ni's sons, said the Tatmadaw statement.

The statement also claimed that two sons of U Maung Ni and another villager started to strike the detainees with knives. When the detainees fought back, four security personnel shot them.

The military statement claimed the killing of U Maung Ni by the terrorists and the continuing threat to ethnic people bred retaliatory attitudes, which eventually led the killings.

Annex 275

Eli Meixler, “U.S. Advisor Bill Richardson Refuses a Role in Myanmar’s ‘Whitewash’ Crisis Panel”, *Time* (25 January 2018)

U.S. Advisor Bill Richardson Refuses a Role in Myanmar's 'Whitewash' Crisis Panel

Former New Mexico governor Bill Richardson speaks during an interview in Yangon, Myanmar on Jan. 24, 2018. Ann Wang
—Reuters

Former New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson has resigned from an international advisory board on Myanmar's Rakhine state, where recent army operations have been described as ethnic cleansing of the country's Rohingya Muslim minority, calling the effort a "whitewash."

Richardson, also a former U.S. Ambassador to the U.N., concluded a three-day visit to the country with a frank statement of "great disappointment," saying that he cannot in good faith remain on a board that is "likely to become a cheerleading squad for government policy."

Richardson criticized Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi for her lack of "moral leadership" amid the crisis; the Nobel laureate and democracy icon has come under increasing censure for her failure to stop or denounce military atrocities committed against the Rohingya.

BY **ELI MEIXLER**

JANUARY 25, 2018 2:33 AM EST

He also said that he was “extremely upset” by Suu Kyi’s “furious response” when he urged her to address the detention of two Reuters reporters accused of violating the country’s draconian Official Secrets Act. The case caused international outrage and is viewed as an attack on press freedom.

His departure from the board is a serious blow to the credibility of Suu Kyi’s civilian government, which is floundering amid the crisis. At least 688,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh since an insurgent attack on the military triggered brutal reprisals.

Top U.N. officials have described the military operations as “ethnic cleansing” and suggested that they could amount to “genocide.” Defense Secretary Jim Mattis said the violence could be even “worse” than portrayals in the international media.

Read more: *Myanmar’s Case Against Two Reuters Reporters Is a War on the Truth*

The multinational, 10-member advisory board was formed last year to advise Myanmar on implementing the recommendations a previous commission,

headed by former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

But on his visit this week, Richardson said he was “taken aback by the vigor” with which Myanmar government officials blamed international actors for the crisis, as well as the government’s “lack of sincerity” on the issue of Rohingya citizenship. Nearly all of the estimated 1.1 million Rohingya are stateless.

Richardson boycotted a planned visit to a relocation camp, where Myanmar intended to temporarily house refugees upon their return, dismissing the trip as “a big photo-op,” according to the Associated Press. Myanmar and Bangladesh have reached a provisional agreement to return hundreds of thousands of refugees over the next two years, but rights groups and U.N. agencies warn it’s too soon to ensure a safe and voluntary return.

Annex 276

Foster Klug, “AP finds evidence for graves, Rohingya massacre in Myanmar”, *AP News*
(1 February 2018)

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AP finds evidence for graves, Rohingya massacre in Myanmar

FOSTER KLUG February 1, 2018 GMT

BALUKHALI REFUGEE CAMP, Bangladesh (AP) — The faces of the men half-buried in the mass graves had been burned away by acid or blasted by bullets. Noor Kadir finally recognized his friends only by the colors of their shorts.

Kadir and 14 others, all Rohingya Muslims in the Myanmar village of Gu Dar Pyin, had been choosing players for the soccer-like game of chinlone when the gunfire began. They scattered from what sounded like hard rain on a tin roof. By the time the Myanmar military stopped shooting, only Kadir and two teammates were left alive.

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AP NEWS

Days later, Kadir found six of his friends among the bodies in two graves.

They are among at least five mass graves, all previously unreported, that have been confirmed by The Associated Press through multiple interviews with more than two dozen survivors in Bangladesh refugee camps and through time-stamped cellphone videos. The Myanmar government regularly claims such massacres of the Rohingya never happened, and has acknowledged only one mass grave containing 10 “terrorists” in the village of Inn Din. However, the AP’s reporting shows a systematic slaughter of Rohingya Muslim civilians by the military, with help from Buddhist neighbors — and suggests many more graves hold many more people.

“It was a mixed-up jumble of corpses piled on top of each other,” said Kadir, a 24-year-old firewood collector. “I felt such sorrow for them.”

The graves are the newest piece of evidence for what looks increasingly like a genocide in Myanmar’s western Rakhine state against the Rohingya, a long-persecuted ethnic Muslim minority in the predominantly Buddhist country. U.N. spokesman Stephane Dujarric called the AP report “extremely troubling,” and urged Myanmar to allow access to the region for further investigation. Spokeswoman Heather Nauert also said the U.S. State Department was “deeply, deeply troubled by these reports of mass graves.”

Repeated calls to Myanmar’s military communications office went unanswered Wednesday and Thursday. Htun Naing, a local security police officer in Buthidaung township, where the village is located, said he “hasn’t heard of such mass graves.”

Myanmar has cut off access to Gu Dar Pyin, so it’s unclear just how many people died, but satellite images obtained by the AP from DigitalGlobe, along with video of homes reduced to ash, reveal a village that has been wiped out. Community leaders in the refugee camps have compiled a list of 75 dead so far, and villagers estimate the toll could be as high as 400, based on testimony from relatives and the bodies they’ve seen in the graves and strewn about the area. A large number of the survivors carry scars from bullet wounds, including a 3-year-old boy and his grandmother.

Almost every villager interviewed by the AP saw three large mass graves at Gu Dar Pyin's northern entrance, near the main road, where witnesses say soldiers herded and killed most of the Rohingya. A handful of witnesses confirmed two other big graves near a hillside cemetery, not too far away from a school where more than 100 soldiers were stationed after the massacre. Villagers also saw other, smaller graves scattered around the village.

In the videos of the graves obtained by the AP, dating to 13 days after the killing began, blue-green puddles of acid sludge surround corpses without heads and torsos that jut into the air. Skeletal hands seem to claw at the ground.

THE MASSACRE

Survivors said that the soldiers carefully planned the Aug. 27 attack, and then deliberately tried to hide what they had done. They came to the slaughter armed not only with rifles, knives, rocket launchers and grenades, but also with shovels to dig pits and acid to burn away faces and hands so that the bodies could not be identified. Two days before the attack, villagers say, soldiers were seen buying 12 large containers of acid at a nearby village's market.

The killing began around noon, when more than 200 soldiers swept into Gu Dar Pyin from the direction of a Buddhist village to the south, firing their weapons. The Rohingya who could move fast enough ran toward the north or toward a river in the east, said Mohammad Sha, 37, a shop owner and farmer.

Sha hid in a grove of coconut trees near the river with more than 100 others and watched as the soldiers searched Muslim homes. Dozens of Buddhists from neighboring villages, their faces partly covered with scarves, loaded the possessions they found into about 10 pushcarts. Then the soldiers burned down the homes, shooting anyone who couldn't flee, Sha said.

At the same time, another group of soldiers closed in from the north, encircling Gu Dar Pyin and trapping villagers in a tightening noose.

When Mohammad Younus, 25, heard explosions from hand grenades and rocket launchers, he ran to the road. He was shot twice while trying to call his family. One of the bullets, still in his hip, can be seen when he pinches the skin. **AP NEWS**

His brother found him crawling on his hands and knees and carried him to some underbrush, where Younus lay for seven hours. At one point, he saw three trucks stop and begin loading dead bodies before heading off toward the cemetery.

Buddhist villagers then moved through Gu Dar Pyin in a sort of mopping-up operation, using knives to cut the throats of the injured, survivors said, and working with soldiers to throw small children and the elderly into the fires.

“People were screaming, crying, pleading for their lives, but the soldiers just shot continuously,” said Mohammad Rayes, 23, a schoolteacher who climbed a tree and watched.

Kadir, the chinlone player, was shot twice in the foot but managed to drag himself under a bridge, where he removed one of the bullets himself. Then he watched, half-delirious, for 16 hours as soldiers, police and Buddhist neighbors killed unarmed Rohingya and burned the village.

“I couldn’t move,” he said. “I thought I was dead. I began to forget why I was there, to forget that all around me people were dying.”

Near dawn, three boys creeping toward the bridge from another village to see what had happened heard Kadir’s groans and brought him back with them.

For days, Rohingya from the area stole into Gu Dar Pyin and rescued people who’d been left for dead by the soldiers. Thousands of people from the area hid deep in the jungle, stranded without food except for the leaves and trees they tried to eat. More than 20 infants and toddlers died because of the lack of food and water, villagers said.

A day after the shooting began, another group of survivors watched from a distant mountain as Gu Dar Pyin burned, the flames and smoke snaking up into a darkening sky.

THE MASS GRAVES

Six days after the massacre, Kadir risked his life to dodge the dozens of Myanmar soldiers occupying the local school so he could look for his four cousins. That's when he found his teammates half-buried in the mass graves. He also saw four plastic containers that turned out to contain acid.

AP NEWS

In the next days and weeks, other villagers braved the soldiers to try to find whatever was left of their loved ones. Dozens of bodies littered the paths and compounds of the wrecked homes; they filled latrine pits. The survivors soon learned that taller, darker green patches of rice shoots in the paddies marked the spots where the dead had fallen.

As monsoon rains pounded the sometimes thin layer of dirt on the graves to mud, more bloated bodies began to rise to the surface.

“There were so many bodies in so many different places,” said Mohammad Lalmia, 20, a farmer whose family owned a pond that became the largest of the mass graves.

“They couldn't hide all the death.”

Eleven days after the attack, Lalmia set out to see if the soldiers had destroyed the Quran in the village mosque. He walked quickly along the edge of the jungle to the mosque, where he found torn pages from the Muslim sacred book scattered about.

As he tried to clean up, someone shouted that the soldiers were coming. He fled through an open window, looking back over his shoulder at about 15 patrolling soldiers.

When he turned back to the path, he stopped abruptly: A human hand stuck out of a cleared patch of earth.

Lalmia counted about 10 bodies on the grave's surface. Although he was worried about the military finding him, he used a six-foot bamboo stick to check the pit's depth. The stick disappeared into the loose soil, which made him think that the grave was deep enough to hold at least another 10 bodies.

“I was shocked to be that near so many bodies I hadn't known about,” Lalmia said. He and other villagers also saw another large grave in the area.

He estimates that soldiers dumped about 80 bodies into his family's pond and about 20 in each of the other four major graves. He said about 150 other bodies were left where they fell. **AP NEWS**

Three of the big graves were in the north of the village. Two of those pits were about 15 feet wide and 7.5 feet long, villagers said. The pond, which Lalmia had helped dig, measured about nine feet deep and 112 square feet.

Many other smaller graves with three, five, seven, 10 bodies in them were scattered across Gu Dar Pyin. During a short walk, Abdul Noor, an 85-year-old farmer, saw three dead bodies stuffed into what might have been a latrine hole and covered with soil. He saw another two near some banana plants, and three in the corner of a compound.

"I tried to see more, but the stench was overwhelming and the soldiers were still at the school," he said.

Two other men separately said they saw another latrine filled with bodies and covered with a thin layer of soil. They said it contained between five and 10 bodies on the top, and thought there were at least five more corpses below.

After 12 days, Younus went to try to find four family members who'd been killed. He saw people in the graves without hair or skin who he thought had been burned with acid, and dozens of decomposing bodies in the rice fields.

The next day, on Sept. 9, villager Mohammad Karim, 26, captured three videos of mass graves that were time-stamped between 10:12 a.m. and 10:14 a.m., when he said soldiers chased him away. When he fled to Bangladesh, Karim removed the memory card from his phone, wrapped it in plastic and tied it to his thigh to hide it from Myanmar police.

In the Bangladesh refugee camps, nearly two dozen other Rohingya from Gu Dar Pyin confirmed that the videos showed mass graves in the north of the village. They easily picked out details from a geography they knew intimately, such as the way certain banana plants were positioned near certain rice paddies.

The videos show what appear to be bones wrapped in rotting clothing in a soupy muck. In one, the hands of a headless corpse grasp at the earth; most of the skin

seems melted away by acid that has stained the earth blue. Nearby are two bloated legs clad in shorts. A few paces away, the bones of a rib cage emerge from the dirt.

AP NEWS

The AP saw several other videos that appeared to show graves in the village, but only Karim's contained the original time stamps. In some cases, villagers said Myanmar soldiers took their phones and memory cards, sometimes at knife and gun point, at the checkpoints they had to pass through on the way to Bangladesh.

Some survivors never found the bodies of their loved ones.

Rohima Khatu, 45, recounted her story as tears streamed down the face of her 9-year-old daughter, Hurjannat, who sat silently by her mother's side.

Khatu was determined to find her husband, even though women risked not only death but rape if they were caught by the soldiers. Villagers said her husband was shot after he stayed home to protect their 10 cows, five chickens and eight doves, along with their rice stockpiles.

So 15 days after the massacre, she searched for him in the graves at Gu Dar Pyin's northern entrance, trying to identify him by the green lungi and white button-down shirt he had been wearing. Only 10 minutes passed before someone shouted that about 20 soldiers were coming.

"There were dead bodies everywhere, bones and body parts, all decomposing, so I couldn't tell which one was my husband," Khatu said. "I was weeping while I was there. I was crying loudly, 'Where did you go? Where did you go?'"

"I have lost everything."

—

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Annex 277

“Myanmar government denies AP report of Rohingya mass graves”, *AP* (3 February 2018)

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Myanmar government denies AP report of Rohingya mass graves

February 3, 2018 GMT

YANGON, Myanmar (AP) — Myanmar’s government has denied a report by The Associated Press documenting at least five mass graves containing Rohingya Muslim civilians killed by the military with help from Buddhist neighbors, saying that only “terrorists” were killed and they were “carefully buried.”

The AP reported on Thursday that the mass graves in the village of Gu Dar Pyin were confirmed through multiple interviews with more than two dozen survivors who had fled to refugee camps in neighboring Bangladesh, and through time-stamped cellphone videos. Satellite images and video of destroyed homes also showed that the village had been wiped out.

The Myanmar government's information committee said in a statement Friday that 17 government officials including Border Guard Police went to Gu Dar Pyin to investigate the AP report and were told by villagers and community leaders that "no such things happened."

According to the government statement, a group of Rohingya "terrorists" skirmished with security forces in the village during "clearance operations" by the military. It said about 500 villagers attacked the security forces with weapons such as knives, sticks and wooden spears, and the security forces were forced to shoot in self-defense.

It said 19 "terrorists" died and their bodies were "carefully buried" by the security forces.

"The Myanmar government will not deny any human rights violations and will investigate if there is strong evidence. And if there are human rights violations after an investigation, prosecutors will take actions according to the law," the government statement said.

In regard to Gu Dar Pyin village, "the preliminary result of the examination has proven that AP's report is wrong," it said.

"The AP stands by our reporting," spokeswoman Lauren Easton said.

More than 680,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar's northwestern Rakhine state to Bangladesh to escape a crackdown by Myanmar's military that began following attacks by a Rohingya militant group on Aug. 25. The United Nations and the United States

have described the crackdown as “ethnic cleansing.” The U.N. human rights chief has also suggested that it may be genocide.

Many Rohingya refugees have accused Myanmar troops of a rampage of murder, rape and arson to drive them out of their homes and the country. The government has blocked international media from traveling to Rakhine state to investigate reports, and has not heeded calls by the U.N., U.S. and others for an independent investigation.

Gu Dar Pyin was one of at least four large massacres that are known of in Myanmar since August, and many smaller-scale killings have been reported.

Survivors told the AP that hundreds of soldiers swept into the village Aug. 27 firing weapons, including hand grenades and rocket launchers, and burning down houses. They said Buddhists from neighboring villages joined the soldiers, cutting the throats of the injured and helping to throw small children and the elderly into the fires.

Community leaders from Gu Dar Pyin in the refugee camps in Bangladesh have compiled a list of 75 dead so far, and villagers estimate the toll could be as high as 400, based on testimony from relatives and the bodies they’ve seen in the graves dug by the soldiers and strewn about the area.

Rohingya are a long-persecuted Muslim ethnic minority in predominantly Buddhist Myanmar. Myanmar’s government regularly says massacres of Rohingya never happened, and has acknowledged only one mass grave containing 10 “terrorists” in the village of Inn Din.

Annex 278

Poppy McPherson, “Witness to a massacre: the former Myanmar soldier who saw his village burn”, *The Guardian* (5 February 2018)

The Guardian



Witness to a massacre: the former Myanmar soldier who saw his village burn

Nazmul Islam watched as the army prepared to attack his home in Tula Toli, where its Rohingya residents were raped and murdered

Poppy McPherson *in Cox's Bazar*

Mon 5 Feb 2018 00.43 EST

After they finished burning the bodies, the soldiers ordered chicken curry.

Nazmul Islam watched as local Buddhists set about preparing food for the men he says raped and massacred scores of Rohingya Muslims from the village of Tula Toli in the north of Myanmar's Rakhine state.

By late afternoon it was quiet. The smell of burning hung over the village. An officer barked, "We need 100 plates of rice and chicken curry. Bring it to us."

The soldiers' savagery appalled but did not shock Islam, the 60-year-old assistant village chairman. He used to be one of them.

A former soldier and Buddhist who became a Muslim after falling in love with a Rohingya woman, Islam is an unusual sight in the sprawling Bangladeshi refugee camps now home to close to one million people.

While his wife and their five children fled Myanmar alongside their neighbours, Islam says he was detained for weeks in the Rakhine part of the village where officers tried to convert him back to Buddhism. Taken there before the violence, he says he witnessed the orchestration of a slaughter first reported last year by the Guardian.

“Uffft. I saw everything,” says Islam, who is thin with sinewy, tattooed arms. “I couldn’t do anything but sit and look.”

His story, corroborated by more than half a dozen Rohingya residents of Tula Toli interviewed separately, sheds new light on one of the worst episodes of what the UN and global leaders have called an ethnic cleansing campaign.

More than 650,000 Rohingya, members of a Muslim minority long persecuted in Myanmar, have fled to Bangladesh since August. They say Myanmar soldiers, police and Buddhist militias staged mass executions, gang-raped women and children, and burned hundreds of villages to the ground during “clearance operations” targeting militants.

Doctors Without Borders believes at least 6,700 were killed. A list drawn up by Rohingya puts the estimated death toll in Tula Toli at 1,179.

Last week the Associated Press reported it had found evidence of five mass graves in the village of Gu Dar Pyin. Two Reuters journalists who were investigating another grave are being tried under the Official Secrets Act.

The Myanmar army and its commander, Min Aung Hlaing, say the accusations are “fabrications” although it has admitted summarily executing 10 Rohingya men in another village and burying them in a mass grave. The army’s True News Information unit could not be reached for comment for this story.

Meanwhile Myanmar and Bangladesh have signed an agreement to send refugees back, but few want to return, saying they will face further persecution.

Islam, who spent more than a decade as a soldier, stationed mostly in Rakhine state, can understand that fear.

“In their mind, [the army] wants to wipe out the Muslim people,” Islam says.

After leaving the force in 1983, he settled in Rakhine, marrying a Buddhist woman from Tula Toli, a village also known as Min Gyi nestled in the bend of the Purma River in the northern part of Maungdaw township.

Rohingya lived down by the water’s edge; Rakhine Buddhists mostly on higher ground. But they often worked together, farming and fishing.

Islam began talking to a Rohingya woman in her twenties, Marbiyar Khatun, who worked in his home as a maid.

She was bold and funny, but Islam noticed the grinding oppression her people were facing. They had to get permission to marry or travel. Security forces took away their documents and harassed them for bribes. Despite the age difference, they grew close. “How can I define love? Sympathy is also a kind of love,” he says.

In 2008, he divorced his first wife, married Marbiyar and converted to Islam, a move he insists wasn’t solely for her sake.

They moved to the Rohingya part of the village and had four sons and a daughter. Educated and polite, Islam was widely respected and worked filling out forms in Burmese on behalf of Rohingya. Friends and neighbours describe him and Marbiyar as a bridge between the two communities.

In the early hours of August 25th 2017, Rohingya armed with guns, sticks and knives overran scores of police posts across northern Rakhine. The insurgents, from the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army [ARSA] provided the pretext for soldiers to respond with brutal force across the state.

Shortly after the attacks, according to several witnesses, a group of Rakhine villagers came to Islam and took him to their neighbourhood.

Residents say a village elder guaranteed their safety and told them to gather by the river if soldiers came. “Maybe they played games with the Rohingya villagers,” says Islam. The chairman could not be reached for comment.

Soldiers swept into Tula Toli on the morning of August 30th. Islam and other Rohingya from the village say they were from a division unit usually stationed in the northwest of the country but deployed to combat ARSA.



A satellite image of the village of Tula Toli showing many of the homes burnt and destroyed.

Photograph: Amnesty International/DigitalGlobe 2017, NextView License

“When I tell this story, I feel sick,” says Marbiyar, beating her hand against her head.

She and the children managed to escape across the river to a neighbouring village, but many Rohingya were trapped at the river’s edge, surrounded by soldiers and Buddhists with knives. Some scrambled into the water. Others ran and were shot at. The soldiers separated those who remained into groups: men on one side; women on the other.

According to survivors interviewed by the Guardian, the women were forced to stand in the shallows and watch as their husbands, sons and fathers were shot.

Some pretended to be dead. Some tried to hide their male relatives. Those who asked for water were cut with knives. So were children who cried.

Later, the women were taken into houses in small groups where they were raped and beaten. Then the houses were set alight.

“We have the order to kill everyone”

On the hill, detained in a military camp, Islam says he was aware of what was going on. “At first, I couldn’t see anything but I heard the sound of bullets and crying. I saw the fire and smoke,” he says.

At one point, a helicopter landed nearby, carrying some senior officers. “They gave bullets and guns. They ordered the military not to throw bodies into the water but to bury or burn them,” he says.

The task was delegated to the local Buddhists, he says. “If anyone disagreed, they would shoot,” he says. “I heard a corporal saying,... ‘We have the order to kill everyone and will kill everyone who disagrees.’”



Nazmul Islam now lives in the Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar. Photograph: Patrick Brown

The soldiers and villagers looted the homes that were still standing, taking rice, motorbikes and animals. He says he heard the locals talking about the dead “Bengalis” and raped women. “We couldn’t bear to be inside the village because of the smell from the burning bodies,” says Islam.

The soldiers beat and kicked him and tried to force him to denounce Islam, he says. They told him, “You’re our brother” and “This is our country. Kalars don’t live here anymore,” using a derogatory word for Muslims.

One night, he says he seized a chance to escape when the guards were drunk. He found his way into Bangladesh, where his wife and children were waiting.

“I fainted when I saw him first,” Marbiyar says, with a smile. “We thought he was dead.”

In Tula Toli, Islam and Marbiyar were well off. They had a good house. They owned cows, buffalo, and chickens. Now they live at the squalid edges of Kutupalong refugee camp. Flies buzz around

their tent.

Myanmar and Bangladesh have agreed to send the Rohingya back to Rakhine state but Islam is skeptical. Earlier this week Bangladesh said the plan had been delayed because, among other reasons, there were difficulties drawing up lists of Rohingya willing to go.

“They say now that they will call us back. I have no house - it was burned down,” says Islam. “Who will pay me for my house and all the things looted from me? Which court will do justice for us?”

As a former Buddhist, Islam has the documents required to live freely in Myanmar. But he has turned his back on that life, in favour of statelessness and exile with his family. He has no regrets.

“I had freedom in Myanmar. I could go and visit every corner,” he says. “But I don’t want that, because my wife and children are here. They are crying, and God won’t let me leave them.”

Annex 279

Wa Lone, Kyaw Soe Oo, Simon Lewis & Antoni Slodkowski, “Massacre in Myanmar: How Myanmar forces burned, looted and killed in a remote village”, *Reuters* (8 February 2018)

<https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-rakhine-events/>

By WA LONE, KYAW SOE OO, SIMON LEWIS and ANTONI SLODKOWSKI

🕒 25 min read

Massacre in Myanmar: One grave for 10 Rohingya men

INN DIN, Myanmar – Bound together, the 10 Rohingya Muslim captives watched their Buddhist neighbors dig a shallow grave. Soon afterwards, on the morning of Sept. 2, all 10 lay dead. At least two were hacked to death by Buddhist villagers. The rest were shot by Myanmar troops, two of the gravediggers said.

“One grave for 10 people,” said Soe Chay, 55, a retired soldier from Inn Din’s Rakhine Buddhist community who said he helped dig the pit and saw the killings. The soldiers shot each man two or three times, he said. “When they were being buried, some were still making noises. Others were already dead.”

The killings in the coastal village of Inn Din marked another bloody episode in the ethnic violence sweeping northern Rakhine state, on Myanmar’s western fringe.

Nearly 690,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled their villages and crossed the border into Bangladesh since August. None of Inn Din’s 6,000 Rohingya remained in the village as of October.

The Rohingya accuse the army of arson, rapes and killings aimed at rubbing them out of existence in this mainly Buddhist nation of 53 million. The United Nations has said the army may have committed genocide; the United States has called the action ethnic cleansing. Myanmar says its “clearance operation” is a legitimate response to attacks by Rohingya insurgents.

Rohingya trace their presence in Rakhine back centuries. But most Burmese consider them to be unwanted immigrants from Bangladesh; the army refers to the Rohingya as “Bengalis.” In recent years, sectarian tensions have risen and the government has confined more than 100,000 Rohingya in camps where they have limited access to food, medicine and education.

Reuters has pieced together what happened in Inn Din in the days leading up to the killing of the 10 Rohingya – eight men and two high school students in their late teens.

Until now, accounts of the violence against the Rohingya in Rakhine state have been provided only by its victims. The Reuters reconstruction draws for the first time on interviews with Buddhist villagers who confessed to torching Rohingya homes, burying bodies and killing Muslims.

This account also marks the first time soldiers and paramilitary police have been implicated by testimony from security personnel themselves. Members of the paramilitary police gave Reuters insider descriptions of the operation to drive out the Rohingya from Inn Din, confirming that the military played the lead role in the campaign.

The slain men’s families, now sheltering in Bangladesh refugee camps, identified the victims through photographs shown to them by Reuters. The dead men were fishermen, shopkeepers, the two teenage students and an Islamic teacher.

Three photographs, provided to Reuters by a Buddhist village elder, capture key moments in the massacre at Inn Din, from the Rohingya men’s detention by soldiers in the early evening of Sept. 1 to their execution shortly after 10 a.m. on Sept. 2. Two photos – one taken the first day, the other on the day of the killings – show the 10 captives lined up in a row, kneeling. The final photograph shows the men’s bloodied bodies piled in the shallow grave.

The Reuters investigation of the Inn Din massacre was what prompted Myanmar police authorities to arrest two of the news agency’s reporters. The reporters, Burmese citizens Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, were detained on Dec. 12 for allegedly obtaining confidential documents relating to Rakhine.

Then, on Jan. 10, the military issued a statement that confirmed portions of what Wa Lone, Kyaw Soe Oo and their colleagues were preparing to report, acknowledging that 10 Rohingya men were massacred in the village. It confirmed that Buddhist villagers attacked some of the men with swords and soldiers shot the others dead.

The statement coincided with an application to the court by prosecutors to charge Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo under Myanmar's Official Secrets Act, which dates back to the time of colonial British rule. The charges carry a maximum 14-year prison sentence.

But the military's version of events is contradicted in important respects by accounts given to Reuters by Rakhine Buddhist and Rohingya Muslim witnesses. The military said the 10 men belonged to a group of 200 "terrorists" that attacked security forces. Soldiers decided to kill the men, the army said, because intense fighting in the area made it impossible to transfer them to police custody. The army said it would take action against those involved.

Buddhist villagers interviewed for this article reported no attack by a large number of insurgents on security forces in Inn Din. And Rohingya witnesses told Reuters that soldiers plucked the 10 from among hundreds of men, women and children who had sought safety on a nearby beach.

Scores of interviews with Rakhine Buddhist villagers, soldiers, paramilitary police, Rohingya Muslims and local administrators further revealed:

- The military and paramilitary police organized Buddhist residents of Inn Din and at least two other villages to torch Rohingya homes, more than a dozen Buddhist villagers said. Eleven Buddhist villagers said Buddhists committed acts of violence, including killings. The government and army have repeatedly blamed Rohingya insurgents for burning villages and homes.
- An order to "clear" Inn Din's Rohingya hamlets was passed down the command chain from the military, said three paramilitary police officers speaking on condition of anonymity and a fourth police officer at an intelligence unit in the regional capital Sittwe. Security forces wore civilian clothes to avoid detection during raids, one of the paramilitary police officers said.

- Some members of the paramilitary police looted Rohingya property, including cows and motorcycles, in order to sell it, according to village administrator Maung Thein Chay and one of the paramilitary police officers.
- Operations in Inn Din were led by the army's 33rd Light Infantry Division, supported by the paramilitary 8th Security Police Battalion, according to four police officers, all of them members of the battalion.

The killings in Inn Din

Michael G. Karnavas, a U.S. lawyer based in The Hague who has worked on cases at international criminal tribunals, said evidence that the military had organized Buddhist civilians to commit violence against Rohingya “would be the closest thing to a smoking gun in establishing not just intent, but even specific genocidal intent, since the attacks seem designed to destroy the Rohingya or at least a significant part of them.”

Evidence of the execution of men in government custody also could be used to build a case of crimes against humanity against military commanders, Karnavas said, if it could be shown that it was part of a “widespread or systematic” campaign targeting the Rohingya population. Kevin Jon Heller, a University of London law professor who served as a legal associate for convicted war criminal and former Bosnian Serb leader Radovan Karadzic, said an order to clear villages by military command was “unequivocally the crime against humanity of forcible transfer.”

In December, the United States imposed sanctions on the army officer who had been in charge of Western Command troops in Rakhine, Major General Maung Maung Soe. So far, however, Myanmar has not faced international sanctions over the violence. Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, has disappointed many former supporters in the West by not speaking out against the army's actions. They had hoped the election of her National League for Democracy party in 2015 would bring democratic reform and an opening of the country. Instead, critics say, Suu Kyi is in thrall to the generals who freed her from house arrest in 2010.

Asked about the evidence Reuters has uncovered about the massacre, government spokesman Zaw Htay said, “We are not denying the allegations about violations of human rights. And we are not giving blanket denials.” If there was “strong and reliable primary evidence” of abuses, the government would investigate, he said. “And then if we found the evidence is true and the violations are there, we will take the necessary action according to our existing law.”

When told that paramilitary police officers had said they received orders to “clear” Inn Din’s Rohingya hamlets, he replied, “We have to verify. We have to ask the Ministry of Home Affairs and Myanmar police forces.” Asked about the allegations of looting by paramilitary police officers, he said the police would investigate.

He expressed surprise when told that Buddhist villagers had confessed to burning Rohingya homes, then added, “We recognize that many, many different allegations are there, but we need to verify who did it. It is very difficult in the current situation.”

Zaw Htay defended the military operation in Rakhine. “The international community needs to understand who did the first terrorist attacks. If that kind of terrorist attack took place in European countries, in the United States, in London, New York, Washington, what would the media say?”

NEIGHBOR TURNS ON NEIGHBOR

Inn Din lies between the Mayu mountain range and the Bay of Bengal, about 50 km (30 miles) north of Rakhine’s state capital Sittwe. The settlement is made up of a scattering of hamlets around a school, clinic and Buddhist monastery. Buddhist homes cluster in the northern part of the village. For many years there had been tensions between the Buddhists and their Muslim neighbors, who accounted for almost 90 percent of the roughly 7,000 people in the village. But the two communities had managed to co-exist, fishing the coastal waters and cultivating rice in the paddies.

In October 2016, Rohingya militants attacked three police posts in northern Rakhine – the beginning of a new insurgency. After the attacks, Rohingya in Inn Din said many Buddhists

stopped hiring them as farmhands and home help. The Buddhists said the Rohingya stopped showing up for work.

On Aug. 25 last year, the rebels struck again, hitting 30 police posts and an army base. The closest attack was just 4 km to the north. In Inn Din, several hundred fearful Buddhists took refuge in the monastery in the center of the village, more than a dozen of their number said. Inn Din's Buddhist night watchman San Thein, 36, said Buddhist villagers feared being "swallowed up" by their Muslim neighbors. A Buddhist elder said all Rohingya, "including children," were part of the insurgency and therefore "terrorists."

On Aug. 27, about 80 troops from Myanmar's 33rd Light Infantry Division arrived in Inn Din, nine Buddhist villagers said. Two paramilitary police officers and Soe Chay, the retired soldier, said the troops belonged to the 11th infantry regiment of this division. The army officer in charge told villagers they must cook for the soldiers and act as lookouts at night, Soe Chay said. The officer promised his troops would protect Buddhist villagers from their Rohingya neighbors. Five Buddhist villagers said the officer told them they could volunteer to join security operations. Young volunteers would need their parents' permission to join the troops, however.

The army found willing participants among Inn Din's Buddhist "security group," nine members of the organization and two other villagers said. This informal militia was formed after violence broke out in 2012 between Rakhine's Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, sparked by reports of the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman by three Muslim men. Myanmar media reported at the time that the three were sentenced to death by a district court.

Inn Din's security group built watch huts around the Buddhist part of the village, and its members took turns to stand guard. Its ranks included Buddhist firefighters, school teachers, students and unemployed young men. They were useful to the military because they knew the local geography, said Inn Din's Buddhist administrator, Maung Thein Chay.

Most of the group's 80 to 100 men armed themselves with machetes and sticks. They also had a handful of guns, according to one member. Some wore green fatigue-style clothing they called "militia suits."

In the days that followed the 33rd Light Infantry's arrival, soldiers, police and Buddhist villagers burned most of the homes of Inn Din's Rohingya Muslims, a dozen Buddhist residents said.

Two of the paramilitary police officers, both members of the 8th Security Police Battalion, said their battalion raided Rohingya hamlets with soldiers from the newly arrived 33rd Light Infantry. One of the police officers said he received verbal orders from his commander to "go and clear" areas where Rohingya lived, which he took to mean to burn them.

The second police officer described taking part in several raids on villages north of Inn Din. The raids involved at least 20 soldiers and between five and seven police, he said. A military captain or major led the soldiers, while a police captain oversaw the police team. The purpose of the raids was to deter the Rohingya from returning.

"If they have a place to live, if they have food to eat, they can carry out more attacks," he said. "That's why we burned their houses, mainly for security reasons."

“ ” “I want to be transparent on this case. I don't want it to happen like that in the future.”

Soldiers and paramilitary police wore civilian shirts and shorts to blend in with the villagers, according to the second police officer and Inn Din's Buddhist administrator, Maung Thein Chay. If the media identified the involvement of security personnel, the police officer explained, "we would have very big problems."

A police spokesman, Colonel Myo Thu Soe, said he knew of no instances of security forces torching villages or wearing civilian clothing. Nor was there any order to "go and clear" or "set fire" to villages. "This is very much impossible," he told Reuters. "If there are things like that, it should be reported officially, and it has to be investigated officially."

"As you've told me about these matters now, we will scrutinize and check back," he added. "What I want to say for now is that as for the security forces, there are orders and instructions and step-by-step management, and they have to follow them. So, I don't think these things happened."

The army did not respond to a request for comment.

A medical assistant at the Inn Din village clinic, Aung Myat Tun, 20, said he took part in several raids. “Muslim houses were easy to burn because of the thatched roofs. You just light the edge of the roof,” he said. “The village elders put monks’ robes on the end of sticks to make the torches and soaked them with kerosene. We couldn’t bring phones. The police said they will shoot and kill us if they see any of us taking photos.”

The night watchman San Thein, a leading member of the village security group, said troops first swept through the Muslim hamlets. Then, he said, the military sent in Buddhist villagers to burn the houses.

“We got the kerosene for free from the village market after the kalars ran away,” he said, using a Burmese slur for people from South Asia.

A Rakhine Buddhist youth said he thought he heard the sound of a child inside one Rohingya home that was burned. A second villager said he participated in burning a Rohingya home that was occupied.

Soe Chay, the retired soldier who was to dig the grave for the 10 Rohingya men, said he participated in one killing. He told Reuters that troops discovered three Rohingya men and a woman hiding beside a haystack in Inn Din on Aug. 28. One of the men had a smartphone that could be used to take incriminating pictures.

The soldiers told Soe Chay to “do whatever you want to them,” he said. They pointed out the man with the phone and told him to stand up. “I started hacking him with a sword, and a soldier shot him when he fell down.”

Similar violence was playing out across a large part of northern Rakhine, dozens of Buddhist and Rohingya residents said.

Data from the U.N. Operational Satellite Applications Programme shows scores of Rohingya villages in Rakhine state burned in an area stretching 110 km. New York-based Human Rights Watch says more than 350 villages were torched over the three months from Aug. 25, according to an analysis of satellite imagery.

In the village of Laungdon, some 65 km north of Inn Din, Thar Nge, 38, said he was asked by police and local officials to join a Buddhist security group. “The army invited us to burn the kalar village at Hpaw Ti Kaung,” he said, adding that four villagers and nearly 20 soldiers and police were involved in the operation. “Police shot inside the village so all the villagers fled and then we set fire to it. Their village was burned because police believed the villagers supported Rohingya militants – that’s why they cleaned it with fire.”

A Buddhist student from Ta Man Tha village, 15 km north of Laungdon, said he too participated in the burning of Rohingya homes. An army officer sought 30 volunteers to burn “kalar” villages, said the student. Nearly 50 volunteered and gathered fuel from motorbikes and from a market.

“They separated us into several groups. We were not allowed to enter the village directly. We had to surround it and approach the village that way. The army would shoot gunfire ahead of us and then the army asked us to enter,” he said.

” “Muslim houses were easy to burn because of the thatched roofs. You just light the edge of the roof.”

After the Rohingya had fled Inn Din, Buddhist villagers took their property, including chickens and goats, Buddhist residents told Reuters. But the most valuable goods, mostly motorcycles and cattle, were collected by members of the 8th Security Police Battalion and sold, said the first police officer and Inn Din village administrator Maung Thein Chay. Maung Thein Chay said the commander of the 8th Battalion, Thant Zin Oo, struck a deal with Buddhist businessmen from other parts of Rakhine state and sold them cattle. The police officer said he had stolen four cows from Rohingya villagers, only for Thant Zin Oo to snatch them away.

Reached by phone, Thant Zin Oo did not comment. Colonel Myo Thu Soe, the police spokesman, said the police would investigate the allegations of looting.

By Sept. 1, several hundred Rohingya from Inn Din were sheltering at a makeshift camp on a nearby beach. They erected tarpaulin shelters to shield themselves from heavy rain.

Among this group were the 10 Rohingya men who would be killed the next morning. Reuters has identified all of the 10 by speaking to witnesses among Inn Din’s Buddhist community

and Rohingya relatives and witnesses tracked down in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Five of the men, Dil Mohammed, 35, Nur Mohammed, 29, Shoket Ullah, 35, Habizu, 40, and Shaker Ahmed, 45, were fishermen or fish sellers. The wealthiest of the group, Abul Hashim, 25, ran a store selling nets and machine parts to fishermen and farmers. Abdul Majid, a 45-year-old father of eight, ran a small shop selling areca nut wrapped in betel leaves, commonly chewed like tobacco. Abulu, 17, and Rashid Ahmed, 18, were high school students. Abdul Malik, 30, was an Islamic teacher.

According to the statement released by the army on Jan. 10, security forces had gone to a coastal area where they “were attacked by about 200 Bengalis with sticks and swords.” The statement said that “as the security forces opened fire into the sky, the Bengalis dispersed and ran away. Ten of them were arrested.”

Three Buddhist and more than a dozen Rohingya witnesses contradict this version of events. Their accounts differ from one another in some details. The Buddhists spoke of a confrontation between a small group of Rohingya men and some soldiers near the beach. But there is unanimity on a crucial point: None said the military had come under a large-scale attack in Inn Din.

Government spokesman Zaw Htay referred Reuters to the army’s statement of Jan. 10 and declined to elaborate further. The army did not respond to a request for comment.

The Rohingya witnesses, who were on or near the beach, said Islamic teacher Abdul Malik had gone back to his hamlet with his sons to collect food and bamboo for shelter. When he returned, a group of at least seven soldiers and armed Buddhist villagers were following him, these witnesses said. Abdul Malik walked towards the watching Rohingya Muslims unsteadily, with blood dripping from his head. Some witnesses said they had seen one of the armed men strike the back of Abdul Malik’s head with a knife.

Then the military beckoned with their guns to the crowd of roughly 300 Rohingya to assemble in the paddies, these witnesses said. The soldiers and the Rohingya, hailing from different parts of Myanmar, spoke different languages. Educated villagers translated for their fellow Rohingya.

“I could not hear much, but they pointed toward my husband and some other men to get up and come forward,” said Rehana Khatun, 22, the wife of Nur Mohammed, one of the 10 who were later slain. “We heard they wanted the men for a meeting. The military asked the rest of us to return to the beach.”

Soldiers held and questioned the 10 men in a building at Inn Din’s school for a night, the military said. Rashid Ahmed and Abulu had studied there alongside Rakhine Buddhist students until the attacks by Rohingya rebels in October 2016. Schools were shut temporarily, disrupting the pair’s final year.

“I just remember him sitting there and studying, and it was always amazing to me because I am not educated,” said Rashid Ahmed’s father, farmer Abdu Shakur, 50. “I would look at him reading. He would be the first one in the family to be educated.”

A photograph, taken on the evening the men were detained, shows the two Rohingya students and the eight older men kneeling on a path beside the village clinic, most of them shirtless. They were stripped when first detained, a dozen Rohingya witnesses said. It isn’t clear why. That evening, Buddhist villagers said, the men were “treated” to a last meal of beef. They were provided with fresh clothing.

On Sept. 2, the men were taken to scrubland north of the village, near a graveyard for Buddhist residents, six Buddhist villagers said. The spot is backed by a hill crested with trees. There, on their knees, the 10 were photographed again and questioned by security personnel about the disappearance of a local Buddhist farmer named Maung Ni, according to a Rakhine elder who said he witnessed the interrogation.

Reuters was not able to establish what happened to Maung Ni. According to Buddhist neighbors, the farmer went missing after leaving home early on Aug. 25 to tend his cattle. Several Rakhine Buddhist and Rohingya villagers told Reuters they believed he had been killed, but they knew of no evidence connecting any of the 10 men to his disappearance. The army said in its Jan. 10 statement that “Bengali terrorists” had killed Maung Ni, but did not identify the perpetrators.

Two of the men pictured behind the Rohingya prisoners in the photograph taken on the morning of Sept. 2 belong to the 8th Security Police Battalion. Reuters confirmed the identities of the two men from their Facebook pages and by visiting them in person.

One of the two officers, Aung Min, a police recruit from Yangon, stands directly behind the captives. He looks at the camera as he holds a weapon. The other officer, police Captain Moe Yan Naing, is the figure on the top right. He walks with his rifle over his shoulder.

The day after the two Reuters reporters were arrested in December, Myanmar's government also announced that Moe Yan Naing had been arrested and was being investigated under the 1923 Official Secrets Act.

Aung Min, who is not facing legal action, declined to speak to Reuters.

Three Buddhist youths said they watched from a hut as the 10 Rohingya captives were led up a hill by soldiers towards the site of their deaths.

One of the gravediggers, retired soldier Soe Chay, said Maung Ni's sons were invited by the army officer in charge of the squad to strike the first blows.

The first son beheaded the Islamic teacher, Abdul Malik, according to Soe Chay. The second son hacked another of the men in the neck.

"After the brothers sliced them both with swords, the squad fired with guns. Two to three shots to one person," said Soe Chay. A second gravedigger, who declined to be identified, confirmed that soldiers had shot some of the men.

In its Jan. 10 statement, the military said the two brothers and a third villager had "cut the Bengali terrorists" with swords and then, in the chaos, four members of the security forces had shot the captives. "Action will be taken against the villagers who participated in the case and the members of security forces who broke the Rules of Engagement under the law," the statement said. It didn't spell out those rules.

Tun Aye, one of the sons of Maung Ni, has been detained on murder charges, his lawyer said on Jan. 13. Contacted by Reuters on Feb. 8, the lawyer declined to comment

further. Reuters was unable to reach the other brother.

In October, Inn Din locals pointed two Reuters reporters towards an area of brush behind the hill where they said the killings took place. The reporters discovered a newly cut trail leading to soft, recently disturbed earth littered with bones. Some of the bones were entangled with scraps of clothing and string that appeared to match the cord that is seen binding the captives' wrists in the photographs. The immediate area was marked by the smell of death.

Reuters showed photographs of the site to three forensic experts: Homer Venters, director of programs at Physicians for Human Rights; Derrick Pounder, a pathologist who has consulted for Amnesty International and the United Nations; and Luis Fondebrider, president of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, who investigated the graves of those killed under Argentina's military junta in the 1970s and 1980s. All observed human remains, including the thoracic part of a spinal column, ribs, scapula, femur and tibia. Pounder said he couldn't rule out the presence of animal bones as well.

The Rakhine Buddhist elder provided Reuters reporters with a photograph which shows the aftermath of the execution. In it, the 10 Rohingya men are wearing the same clothing as in the previous photo and are tied to each other with the same yellow cord, piled into a small hole in the earth, blood pooling around them. Abdul Malik, the Islamic teacher, appears to have been beheaded. Abulu, the student, has a gaping wound in his neck. Both injuries appear consistent with Soe Chay's account.

Fondebrider reviewed this picture. He said injuries visible on two of the bodies were consistent with "the action of a machete or something sharp that was applied on the throat."

Some family members did not know for sure that the men had been killed until Reuters returned to their shelters in Bangladesh in January.

"I can't explain what I feel inside. My husband is dead," said Rehana Khatun, wife of Nur Mohammed. "My husband is gone forever. I don't want anything else, but I want justice for his death."

In Inn Din, the Buddhist elder explained why he chose to share evidence of the killings with Reuters. "I want to be transparent on this case. I don't want it to happen like that in future."

Massacre in Myanmar

By Wa Lone, Kyaw Soe Oo, Simon Lewis and Antoni Slodkowski

Graphics: Jessica Wang, Simon Scarr and Matthew Weber

Photo editing: Thomas White

Video: Matthew Larotonda and Ryan Brooks

Design: Troy Dunkley

Edited by Janet McBride, Martin Howell and Alex Richardson

Annex 280

“Min Aung Hlaing Warns Against Anti-military Sentiment”, *DVB* (21 March 2018)



■ Military News Rohingya

Min Aung Hlaing warns against anti-military sentiment



Burma's Commander-in-Chief Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing meets with Tatmadaw officials, privates and their family members in Putao on 19 March 2018. (PHOTO: DVB)

By DVB

📅 21 March 2018 🖨️ Print ✉️ Email ↻

Burma's Commander-in-Chief Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing has admonished anyone who tries to incite others to stand against the military.

Addressing a military gathering in Putao, Kachin State, on Monday, Min Aung Hlaing, widely considered to be the most powerful person in the country, said, "There have been incidents of persons inciting hatred against the *Tatmadaw* [Burmese military] while the latter is committed to putting an end to the armed conflicts in the country and bringing about national peace. The Tatmadaw is continuously taking steps to ensure this country enjoys an eternal peace."

He added: "At a time when the country is moving forward to becoming a democratic state, problems cannot be resolved with arms."

The Burmese army chief rounded off his speech with an attack on the ethnic Rohingya community, whom he called Bengalis. At least half of Burma's 1.1 million Muslim Rohingyas have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh in recent months due to a brutal wave of army oppression.

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He said, "The Bengalis do not have any characteristics or culture in common with the



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ethnicities of Myanmar. The tensions [in Rakhine State] were fuelled because the Bengalis demanded citizenship.”

He added that the Tatmadaw has been subject to accusations from the international community who “lack knowledge about the real situation in Rakhine”. He said the military is “implementing measures related to the Bengalis in line with the law.”

Tags: [Min Aung Hlaing](#) [Rohingya militants](#) [Rohingya refugees](#) [tatmadaw](#)



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Mohamed Haroon

Here senior general Min Aung Hlaing :

1. admonishes anyone inciting others against the military

Annex 281

Ben Doherty, “Australia condemns Myanmar violence and says offenders ‘must be held to account’”, *The Guardian* (25 March 2018)

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Myanmar

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Australia condemns Myanmar violence and says offenders 'must be held to account'

Australia tells UN Human Rights Council observers needed to supervise Rohingyas' return

Ben Doherty

🐦 [@bendohertycorro](#)

Sun 25 Mar 2018 22.43 EDT





Australia has told Myanmar that international observers must be allowed into the isolated Rakhine state to monitor the situation of **Rohingya** still living there, and to supervise the return of any of those who have fled and wish to come back.

In its strongest statement yet against the quasi-military regime, Australia condemned Myanmar's violence at the United Nations Human Rights Council, saying anyone guilty of human rights abuses "must be held to account".

"Australia reiterates its deep concern about events in Rakhine state, including reports of widespread and systematic human rights violations and abuses by Myanmar security forces and local vigilantes," the charge d'affaires of Australia's mission to the UN, Lachlan Strahan, said in Geneva. "We also note with concern ongoing clashes between the Myanmar military and ethnic armed groups in north-eastern Myanmar and barriers to humanitarian access."



International observers must be allowed into the isolated state, Strahan said.

Malcolm Turnbull encourages Aung San Suu Kyi to resettle Rohingya

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"Australia reiterates its call for a thorough, credible and independent investigation, including through the fact-finding mission," he said. "We encourage Myanmar to grant the fact-finding mission access to affected areas. Perpetrators of human rights violations and abuses must be held to account."

The Rohingya ethnic and religious minority have faced decades of intense persecution in Myanmar, including statelessness through denationalisation, exclusion from healthcare and education, and violent oppression by the military.

But a law against the minority was passed in 2015 with the intention of August with

but violence against the minority reached a new zenith beginning last August, with a systematic pogrom against the Rohingya by the military, including the murder of civilian men, women and children - including by burning alive - the razing of villages and rape being used as a weapon of war.

The UN has said the persecution “bears all the hallmarks of genocide”.

More than 650,000 Rohingya, the majority of them children, have been forced to flee over Myanmar’s border into [Bangladesh](#), where they remain in squalid camps, at risk of flooding, landslides and disease outbreaks as monsoon season approaches.

But the [Myanmar](#) government has denied allegations of widespread abuses, insisting the military’s operation was in response to attacks by Rohingya militants.

Significant parts of Rakhine state remain off-limits to the UN, human rights organisations and journalists.

Australia said Bangladesh had been generous in its hosting of large numbers of Rohingya. The recent arrivals have swelled that number to nearly 1 million. Many of those in the camps have said they will not consider returning, unless it is under UN supervision.

“Displaced persons must be allowed to return to Myanmar in a safe, dignified, voluntary and sustainable manner, in accordance with international standards,” Strahan told the council. “In this regard, we welcome Myanmar’s invitation to the UNHCR and the UNDP to assist, respectively, in the repatriation and resettlement of displaced persons and the provisions of livelihoods and development of communities in northern Rakhine state.”

Chief executive of the Australian Council for International Development, Marc Purcell, welcomed Australia’s stronger intervention at the Human Rights Council, saying the international community needed to support the persecuted Rohingya.

“It is a good sign that after the meetings with Suu Kyi in Canberra the Turnbull Government is prepared to take a firmer stance, but there is a long way to go,” Purcell said.

“Reports from the region indicate that Myanmar has fortified its borders behind the refugees, bulldozed homes in Rakhine State and is looking at domestic legislation to clamp down on United Nations and international ngo activity in the country.

“... and full to Rakhine state

“we need full unimpeded humanitarian access to Rakhine state, safe and voluntary return for refugees under UN auspices and a prohibition on military hardware like land mines on the border.”

Myanmar’s de facto leader, state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, had a controversial trip to Sydney this month for the Asean-Australia summit. Her presence in Australia drew rallies, with demonstrators calling for her to stand down and to face prosecution.

Suu Kyi addressed rights abuses at the summit, after the Malaysian prime minister, Najib Razak, said the sustained displacement of the Rohingya would become a security issue for the entire region.



Aung San Suu Kyi asks Australia and Asean for help with Rohingya crisis

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While Suu Kyi was in Australia, a group of five human rights lawyers filed a personal prosecution application in Melbourne magistrates court, [seeking to prosecute her under the principle of universal jurisdiction for crimes against humanity](#).

A universal jurisdiction prosecution needs the consent of the attorney general, Christian Porter, to proceed in Australia. He told the Guardian that Suu Kyi had immunity by virtue of her position as foreign affairs minister.

The Australian military continues to support the Myanmar military but only in non-combat areas. It plans to spend nearly \$400,000 providing English lessons and training courses to Myanmar soldiers, and sponsoring joint training exercises with the Tatmadaw. Australia’s rationale for continuing to support the Myanmar military is that it can “expose the Tatmadaw to the ways of a modern, professional defence force and highlight the importance of adhering to international humanitarian law”.

America faces an epic choice ...

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Annex 282

“Highlights of Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing’s Armed Forces Day Speech”, *The Irrawaddy*
(28 March 2018)

Burma

Highlights of Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing's Armed Forces Day Speech



Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing inspected troops during the Myanmar Armed Forces Day parade in Naypyitaw on Tuesday. / Htet Naing Zaw / The Irrawaddy

By **THE IRRAWADDY** 28 March 2018

At this year's Armed Forces Day commemoration, Myanmar military chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing did not inspect the troops from the back of a moving military vehicle, opting to do so on foot.

In his speech, he said the country is lagging behind even its neighbors in the region.

In order to catch up, he urged people to work hard and show the "spirit of Myanmar"—interestingly, he also told the people of this Buddhist majority country to avoid racial and religious prejudice.

He reiterated his commitment to protecting the military-drafted 2008 Constitution. The military chief also urged all armed groups to sign the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement without making impossible demands.

"Instead of pointing to the past and finding fault," Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing said, "it's time to learn the lessons of the past and to work for the country's development."

Independence Struggle

In what has become something of a tradition for military leaders during Armed Forces Day speeches, Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing devoted the first part of his speech to the Tatmadaw's role in the independence struggle.

He mentioned Aung San, father of State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, who led the independence struggle, using the military training he had received from Japan to drive out the British colonizers. He and the rest of the legendary "Thirty Comrades" entered Myanmar through Thailand to liberate the country, which was then colonized by the British.

Min Aung Hlaing briefly touched on the Dawei and Mawlamyine columns that entered Myanmar from Thailand.

"Among the columns, the Dawei column was the core one and it was cordially welcomed by local residents of all kinds on its arrival in Dawei," he said.

It is well known that residents of Dawei (known as Tavoy in southern Myanmar) welcomed the Myanmar soldiers, then part of the Burma Independence Army (BIA), and that many in Dawei joined the army. Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing is himself from the town.

The army chief then went on to discuss the post-independence period, and highlighted two major issues: the invasion by the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) of eastern Myanmar, and the Mujahideen insurgency in the west.

In January 1950, KMT troops from China, backed by the American CIA, crossed the border from Yunnan and occupied northeastern Shan State, prompting the government under Prime Minister U Nu to formally complain to the UN. Myanmar forces, including the air force, bombed KMT troops and a series of fierce battles were fought.

In 1953, the UN passed a resolution calling on the US to work for the removal of the KMT troops from Myanmar.

Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing then touched on the Mujahideen insurgency in western Myanmar. In the Burmese language, he talked about the “bad, naughty kalar.” (A derogatory term for those of South Asian descent).

In northern Rakhine starting in 1950, separatist Bengalis who had migrated from what was then East Pakistan took up arms against the central government, he said. The military launched several operations including “Operation Mayu.” Mujahideen leaders fled or surrendered and the rebellion finally ended in 1961.

Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing related this story to demonstrate how the armed forces had played a role in protecting Myanmar’s sovereignty. He did not refer directly to the current crisis in Rakhine State, however.



Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing arrived at the parade grounds in Naypyitaw on Tuesday morning to attend the 73rd anniversary of Myanmar Armed Forces Day.
/ Myo Min Soe / The Irrawaddy

Modern Army and Military Professionalism

The Tatmadaw leader did not fail to mention the ongoing efforts to build a modern army and to “effectively utilize technology and military professionalism to collectively serve military affairs.”

Freedom of Speech

He also touched on freedom of speech.

“Today, our country is marching toward becoming a modern and developed democracy,” he said.

“Democracy is a negotiation of different views from multiple directions and it is a way to live cohesively with those attitudes. Whichever policies are pursued in the country, there shall be laws, rules and regulations promulgated.”

He added, "In democracy, there is freedom of speech in line with democratic norms, but these must also be in accordance with rules and regulations, as well as accountability... Baseless speech leads to animosity and degrades the prestige of our country, hindering nation building."

On Ethnicity and Religion

The commander-in-chief stated that more than 130 ethnic groups have existed in Myanmar for decades.

"Among these ethnic groups, some number in the hundreds of thousands, while others have a population of just a handful. However, population is not the main issue, and all ethnic groups have equal rights under the Constitution. Although the majority believes in Buddhism, there is also freedom of worship for other religions. Thus, speech spreading disinformation must be restrained in relation to religion." One wondered whether he was preaching "tolerance" as some army officers, well-funded thugs, vigilantes and extreme nationalists have been accused of involvement in attacking minorities and Muslims.

On Rules of Engagement

"Discipline is the backbone of the Tatmadaw," Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing said.

"Our Tatmadaw is strong because it stands on the firm ground of good military discipline and obedience. Each and every serviceman must strictly follow rules and regulations, orders and instructions."

He told military personnel to adhere to the military code of conduct.

He said, "Moreover, apart from following civil laws, military laws and laws related to war, we must also abide by rules of engagement [ROE]. ROE is a legal instruction as well as guidance for circumstances and restrictions to be followed by units and corps in the accomplishment of military objectives. I would like to say that legal action will be taken against anyone who violates the code of conduct, rules or regulations."

The comments appeared to be aimed at deflecting international criticism of the military crackdown on Muslim insurgents, terrorists and the self-identified Rohingya population of northern Rakhine State.

On the NCA

During peace talks, he said, it would be more practical to negotiate toward likely outcomes, in view of long-term benefits, instead of wasting time and setting impossible conditions.

In conclusion, Snr-Gen Min Aung Hlaing spoke about peace, prosperity, development of the nation and unity, and urged people not to dwell on the past.

He repeatedly mentioned multiparty democracy and federalism and urged people to avoid racial and religious prejudice.

He did not mention anything about government leadership changes, but his speech indicated that he was trying to put his house in order as well as to counter international condemnation, tougher sanctions and accusations of ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Topics: Military



The Irrawaddy

...

Annex 283

Min Aung Khine, “Rakhine Govt Undecided on How to Use Farmland Abandoned by Rohingya Refugees”, *The Irrawaddy* (31 May 2018)

Burma

Rakhine Govt Undecided on How to Use Farmland Abandoned by Rohingya Refugees



An aerial view of farmland in Maungdaw. / Min Aung Khaing / Irrawaddy

By **MIN AUNG KHINE** 31 May 2018

SITTWE, Rakhine State — The Rakhine State government has not yet made a decision regarding some 70,000 acres of abandoned farmland in Maungdaw Township left behind by Rohingya Muslims who fled to Bangladesh last year.

“We’re still waiting for the policy of the Union government. We’ll do as it says. We don’t have enough workers for 70,000 acres of farmland,” the Rakhine State minister for

agriculture, livestock, forestry and mining U Kyaw Lwin told The Irrawaddy.

Rice is grown twice a year in many parts of Myanmar, with rainwater in the monsoon season and irrigated water in the summer months. As monsoon season begins, farmers are preparing.

The Rakhine State government will allow Rohingya villagers who have not fled to continue working their original farms, said the minister.

Rakhine State lawmaker U Maung Ohn of Maungdaw Township said the abandoned farmlands should be leased out to local ethnic farmers and private rice-growing companies.

“It is not a good idea to leave those farmlands unattended. Local ethnic people and landless farmers should be allowed to farm there if they wish. It is also a good idea to lease it out to private companies that have agricultural machinery,” said U Maung Ohn.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock and Irrigation previously planned to use some 10,000 acres of the 70,000 acres of farmland. But it aborted the plan, as it is difficult to find the labor and to watch over the paddy fields, head of the Rakhine State Agriculture Department U Toe Wai told The Irrawaddy.

Minister U Kyaw Lwin denied media reports that those farmlands have been leased to private companies.

The government previously harvested those 70,000 acres of paddy fields left behind by Rohingya Muslims who fled into Bangladesh after a terror attack on police outposts in Maungdaw in August last year.

There are a total of 11 million acres of paddy fields in Rakhine with over 74,000 acres in Maungdaw, over 77,000 in Buthidaung, and over 88,000 acres in Rathedaung Township, according to the state agriculture department.

Translated from Burmese by Thet Ko Ko.

Topics: Land



Min Aung Khine
The Irrawaddy

Annex 284

Simon Lewis, Zeba Siddiqui, Clare Baldwin & Andrew R.C. Marshall, “Tip of the Spear”,
Reuters (26 June 2018)

Tip of the Spear

[reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-rohingya-battalions](https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-rohingya-battalions)

By SIMON LEWIS, ZEBA SIDDIQUI, CLARE BALDWIN and ANDREW R.C. MARSHALL



YANGON, Myanmar/COX'S BAZAR, Bangladesh – In early August last year, a young lieutenant named Kyi Nyan Lynn flew to Rakhine State, with hundreds of other Myanmar soldiers. They were about to launch a campaign that would drive hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims from their homes and leave the region in flames.

First, however, Lieutenant Kyi Nyan Lynn of the 33rd Light Infantry Division did what any young man might do: He wrote a Facebook post.

“In our plane, we got to eat cake,” read the Aug. 10 post.

“Are you going to eat Bengali meat?” commented a friend. Many Burmese refer to Rohingya as “Bengali” or use the pejorative term “kalar.”

“Whatever, man,” replied the lieutenant.

“Crush the kalar, buddy,” urged another friend.

“Will do,” he replied.

Kyi Nyan Lynn was part of what some Western military analysts refer to as Myanmar’s “tip of the spear:” hundreds of battle-hardened soldiers from two light infantry divisions – the 33rd and 99th – famed for their brutal counter-insurgency campaigns against this nation’s many ethnic minorities.

When Rohingya militants launched attacks across northern Rakhine State in August last year, the 33rd and 99th spearheaded the response. Their ensuing crackdown drove 700,000 Rohingya into neighboring Bangladesh. The United Nations has said the army may have committed genocide; the United States has called the action ethnic cleansing.

Myanmar denies the allegations.

It has been widely reported that Myanmar soldiers committed mass killings and burned down Rohingya villages. But a Reuters investigation is the first comprehensive account of the precise role played by Myanmar’s 33rd and 99th light infantry divisions, how they executed the assault across northern Rakhine State, and the longstanding ties between Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, the commander in chief, and the army’s elite troops.

Reuters spoke to scores of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and Buddhists in Rakhine State, and conducted rare interviews with members of the Myanmar security forces, to reconstruct the actions of these two elite divisions. Interviews with Rohingya, Rakhine witnesses and policemen implicate troops from the two light infantry divisions in arson and killing.

The military is so secretive that even its official spokesmen rarely speak to the media. But Facebook is hugely popular in Myanmar, and Reuters found accounts of soldiers who posted about military life, troop movements and the crackdown in Rakhine State. The Facebook accounts of two members of the elite infantry divisions reveal a raw ethnic hatred.

Kyi Nyan Lynn, the soldier from the 33rd division, told Reuters that the army's reaction was justified because soldiers were under attack from "Bengali terrorists."

"They terrorized us first," he said. "So we were given the duty to crack down on them. As we cracked down, whole villages fled." He said he wasn't involved in any killings or arson.



IN UNIFORM: Photos posted on Facebook by Lieutenant Kyi Nyan Lynn of the 33rd Light Infantry Division. A friend urged him to "crush" the Rohingya. He told Reuters he committed no abuses in the crackdown. Source: Facebook

The military and government did not respond to questions from Reuters. In the past, the government has denied allegations of ethnic cleansing in Rakhine and said the security forces mounted legitimate counter-insurgency operations against Rohingya militants. The Ministry of Home Affairs, which is responsible for the police, told Reuters it rejected allegations that policemen had been involved in torching Rohingya villages.

Rakhine State was already an ethnic tinderbox before the light infantry divisions arrived. Years of violence between its two main groups – Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists – had killed hundreds and left thousands homeless, most of them Rohingya. Attacks by Rohingya militants in 2016 had rattled Myanmar’s security forces, who blamed ordinary Rohingya for harboring “terrorists.”

The arrival of the light infantry divisions in early August 2017 marked a dramatic military build-up. Photos from that period show soldiers arriving at the airport in Sittwe, or crowded onto boats.

The government of Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi said in a statement at the time that the deployment would bring “peace, stability and security.” But the influx of heavily armed combat troops with a long history of alleged human rights abuses had the opposite effect: It stoked fear and tension across a volatile region, according to Rohingya villagers.

“They terrorized us first. So we were given the duty to crack down on them. As we cracked down, whole villages fled.”

Then, on Aug. 25, came attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The Rohingya militant group ambushed dozens of police posts and an army base in Rakhine. Already in place, the 33rd and 99th, along with other security forces, responded with a brutal campaign that effectively herded masses of Rohingya civilians north and west into Bangladesh.

Rohingya regard themselves as native to Rakhine State. But Myanmar has denied most of them citizenship, saying they are not an indigenous group, and the country’s Buddhist majority reviles them. Police and Rakhine Buddhist villagers told Reuters how they coordinated with troops from both divisions to burn down Rohingya villages, giving the residents no homes to return to.

The Reuters investigation of the light infantry divisions and their commanders comes at a time when global calls for accountability over the mass expulsion of the Rohingya are growing. The European Union and Canada on June 25 imposed sanctions on seven senior Myanmar military and police officers, including the commanders of the 33rd and 99th. The seven face asset freezes and are banned from traveling to EU countries. So far, the United States has sanctioned only one Myanmar general for abuses during the Rakhine campaign.

The new sanctions didn’t target the man with ultimate authority over the 33rd and 99th: Myanmar’s commander in chief, Min Aung Hlaing.

He is a diminutive figure who often wears round, rimless spectacles and looks more like an office clerk than the leader of one of the region’s largest standing armies. His rise through the ranks was intertwined with the bloody history of Myanmar’s light infantry divisions.



ULTIMATE AUTHORITY: Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar's commander in chief, was the public face of last year's military crackdown in Rakhine State. REUTERS/Sai Zaw/Pool

Thaung Wai Oo is a military historian who served as a colonel in the 33rd and held lesser ranks in two other light infantry divisions. When asked who had ultimate authority over the light infantry divisions, he said: "Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. That question is very easy." While he refused to discuss the army's operation in Rakhine, Thaung Wai Oo added that only the commander in chief can deploy the light infantry divisions in major assaults. "Final decisions come from Senior General Min Aung Hlaing."

Earlier in his career, Min Aung Hlaing led the 44th Light Infantry Division. In 2009, as a special operations commander, he oversaw the deployment of the 33rd in a campaign to drive armed rebels from an enclave of eastern Myanmar; some 37,000 people fled across the border into China. He became commander in chief in 2011.

Min Aung Hlaing was the public face of the crackdown in Rakhine State. Days before the 33rd and 99th were deployed, he held a widely publicized security meeting with ethnic Rakhine leaders. In the midst of the crackdown, on Sept. 1, he said: "The Bengali problem was a long-standing one which has become an unfinished job." And on Sept. 19 he visited Sittwe, the state capital, and – according to his Facebook page – he received a detailed briefing from senior officers on the progress of the military operation in Rakhine.

The military did not respond to Reuters request for comment from Min Aung Hlaing.

Past military offensives waged by the 33rd and 99th have gone largely unnoticed by the world. But the impact of their Rakhine crackdown has been far-reaching.

It created an ongoing refugee emergency that Bangladesh, one of the world's poorest countries, is ill-equipped to deal with. And it damaged Suu Kyi's global image as a democracy icon. Human rights activists accuse her of not standing up more forcibly for the long-persecuted Rohingya, then supporting the military's version of events. Her office had no comment.

In December, the international aid group Médecins Sans Frontières estimated that at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed in the first month of the crackdown alone.

The military had no comment on the death toll in Rakhine or on the specific allegations of abuses described in this article. In November, it said that 13 members of the security forces were killed in the conflict, and it recovered the bodies of 376 ARSA militants between Aug. 25 and Sept. 5, when the offensive officially ended.



BEFORE THE CRACKDOWN: Rohingya Muslims walk along a riverbank in Buthidaung, one of the three townships that make up northern Rakhine State. Rohingya regard themselves as native to the region. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

“If they’re Bengali, they’ll be killed”

Three photos distributed by Myanmar Pressphoto Agency show soldiers arriving at the airport in Sittwe on Aug. 10. Two of the photos also show military planes: a Chinese-made Shaanxi Y-8 capable of transporting more than 100 soldiers; and a smaller, French-made turboprop. In the third photo, at least 30 soldiers are lined up on the tarmac in front of a fleet of army trucks. One soldier’s shoulder clearly bears the badge of the 33rd.

Flying to Rakhine, although not necessarily on one of these planes, was Lieutenant Kyi Nyan Lynn of the 33rd Light Infantry Division. He identified himself on Facebook as Mai Naung Lynn. His homepage address, and a photo he posts of his wedding, name him as Kyi Nyan Lynn. He is 24.

On Aug. 11, he posted a smirking emoji on Facebook. “If they’re Bengali,” he assured his friends, “they’ll be killed.”

The soldiers in the photos taken at Sittwe airport are, by the standards of the Myanmar military, well-equipped and heavily armed. They wear helmets and flak jackets, and carry rifles and mortars.

ON PATROL: Myanmar soldiers march through the Rakhine village of Inn Din in October 2017, the month after 10 Rohingya men were massacred there. The 33rd led operations in the village.

Photos published in August 2017 on Facebook show troops and trucks packed into a navy landing craft. The use of aircraft and boats to transport the soldiers showed that a joint operation by Myanmar’s airforce, navy and army was underway, said three analysts who have studied the military’s command structure, and two experts in international criminal law.

A joint operation and the deployment of troops from outside the region “indicate central command at the highest levels,” said one of the experts, Tyler Giannini, co-director of the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School.

The navy craft landed in Rathedaung, one of the three townships that make up northern Rakhine State. From here, both light infantry divisions headed north, according to more than 40 Rohingya interviewees who described multiple sightings. The 33rd advanced mainly on the east side of the Mayu mountains, a jungle-clad range that roughly divides Rathedaung and Maungdaw townships. The 99th moved on the west side.

The interviews with Rohingya placed the 33rd or 99th in at least 22 village tracts in northern Rakhine State.

The deployments rattled the region. On Aug. 14, a Rohingya religious scholar named Abdul Zalil counted about 350 soldiers marching through his village in Tha Win Chaung. “They

walked along the main road and everyone saw them,” he said.



WITNESS: Abdul Zalil, a Rohingya religious teacher, watched hundreds of Myanmar soldiers march through his village in August 2017. “Everyone saw them,” he said. REUTERS/Mohammad Ponir Hossain

The 33rd and 99th also announced their arrival in a series of meetings that Rohingya attendees said left them anxious and fearful. Officers from the two divisions called at least 14 such meetings, according to Rohingya leaders who attended. They said leaders of the local Rakhine community sometimes came, too.

The meetings, held in venues such as schools and police stations, delivered similar messages. The officers said they had come to “clear” the area and root out “terrorists” and “criminals.” They accused Rohingya of harboring “bad people” and threatened to burn down villages and shoot anyone they deemed suspicious, according to Rohingya who were present.

Reuters interviewed three Rohingya who said they attended a meeting in mid-August called by a 99th commander in Taungpyoletwea, on Myanmar’s border with Bangladesh. Arif, a local elder who was present, said the commander was guarded by dozens of soldiers. “If we find any terrorists,” Arif recalled him saying, “we’ll burn your village to ashes. Your future generations won’t last.”

On the other side of the Mayu mountains, in Chut Pyin village, Abdul Baser and other Rohingya leaders attended a meeting called by a 33rd commander. He told them he had recently been fighting another ethnic war in northern Myanmar.

“Before we came here, we were on the Kachin State frontline,” the commander said, according to Abdul Baser. “We behaved very badly in Kachin – and they’re citizens. You’re not citizens, so you can only imagine how we’ll be.”

Many Rohingya interviewees referred to the troops of the 33rd and 99th as “new soldiers,” to differentiate them from those already garrisoned in the region. Over the decades, they said, Rohingya had bribed or negotiated with local military and police, thereby maintaining an edgy status quo. But Noor Alom, a Rohingya building contractor, said the “new soldiers” were different.



DEATH THREAT: Noor Alom, a Rohingya building contractor, said Myanmar soldiers warned that they had come to Rakhine State “to kill you Bengali people.” REUTERS/Mohammad Ponir Hossain

Alom was building a government school in Ah Htet Nan Yar, a village in Rathedaung. When hundreds of soldiers arrived on a rainy morning in mid-August, his workers fled. Alom, who had good relations with the local battalion, said he stood his ground.

Minutes later, he said, he was curled in a fetal position as soldiers from the 33rd kicked and beat him, and demanded the truth about the “terrorists” hiding in his village. Alom, who is now in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, said one soldier told him: “The central government sent us specially to kill you Bengali people.”

The assault on Noor Alom couldn’t be independently confirmed. But Thura San Lwin, chief of the paramilitary police in Rakhine at the time, told Reuters that the 33rd and 99th had been sent to villages including Ah Htet Nan Yar.



BURNED OUT: A car sits in what remains of a Rohingya village near Maungdaw town in Rakhine State during the military crackdown in August 2017. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

ARSA attacks, the crackdown begins

In the early hours of Aug. 25, groups of Rohingya, led or mobilized by the militant group ARSA, launched attacks on 30 police posts and an army base. The attacks killed 10 police, one soldier and one immigration officer, said Suu Kyi’s office in a statement the same day.

In Myin Hlut, a collection of villages on Maungdaw's coast, a Rohingya mob attacked a police post with sticks, stones, arrows and Molotov cocktails, said a police officer who repelled the attack with nine other officers. He asked Reuters to withhold his name.

Two police were killed and one injured while repelling the mob, said the officer. "When they tried to break the gate, we started shooting them," he said. "They dragged away the men who were hit."

ARSA claimed responsibility on its Twitter account on Aug. 25 for multiple attacks, without mentioning Myin Hlut. The Myanmar government and Amnesty International said ARSA was behind the killing of dozens of Hindu residents from another remote Rakhine village. ARSA denied this. The group did not respond to questions from Reuters.

Reading early reports of such attacks was Sai Sitt Thway Aung, a soldier with the 99th. At that time, his Facebook posts suggest, he was still at the 99th's hometown of Meiktila in central Myanmar.



Sai Sitt Thway Aung of the 99th Light Infantry Division posted many selfies on Facebook. Source: Facebook.

"Please send us quickly to Rakhine where the terrorists are," he wrote. "I want to fight, please. I cannot control my patriotic urge for revenge."

His wish was granted. He later posted a photo on his account that he said showed him en route to northern Rakhine.

“The debt of people’s blood I will collect with much interest,” he wrote on Aug. 27 in a warning to “Muslim dogs.” More than a thousand people “liked” the post. “Kill those fucking people,” commented one.

Sai Sitt Thway Aung told Reuters that “Muslim dogs” referred only to ARSA militants, and that he had “many Muslim friends.” He also said he hadn’t shot or killed anyone while in Rakhine State.

By this time, his counterpart in the 33rd, Kyi Nyan Lynn, was already in action, according to his Facebook posts. “I didn’t get to sleep again because I had to go and help surround a kalar village,” wrote the lieutenant on Aug. 26. “But when we reached there, the kalar were all gone.”

He then recounted a grueling hike through the mountains to the village of Inn Din, on Maungdaw’s coast. There, he ate well and called his wife. “Relaxing peacefully,” he wrote.

For the Rohingya residents of Inn Din, the village was now a war zone. They had already begun fleeing for nearby forests. Within days of the 33rd’s arrival, soldiers and police joined with local Rakhine Buddhists to burn down most Rohingya houses in Inn Din, Reuters reported in February.



DOOMED: Ten Rohingya men were detained on Sept. 1 at the village of Inn Din. The next day, Myanmar soldiers and Buddhist villagers shot or hacked them to death. The photo was obtained from a villager and authenticated by Reuters.

On Sept. 1, soldiers detained 10 Rohingya men and boys, Reuters reported in February. The next day, with the help of Rakhine villagers, they shot or hacked to death the Rohingya men, then dumped their bodies in a shallow grave.

Like Lieutenant Kyi Nyan Lynn, some of the soldiers in Inn Din hailed from the 11th battalion of the 33rd light infantry division, according to two policemen. “I wasn’t involved in the Inn Din killing,” Kyi Nyan Lynn told Reuters. “I absolutely haven’t committed any other killings, either.”

Two Reuters reporters were arrested in December after the police learned they had been reporting on the Inn Din massacre. The following month, the military admitted its soldiers had taken part in the killings, and said seven soldiers had been given 10-year jail sentences. The military didn’t identify their names, ranks or divisions.

The Reuters reporters, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, remain behind bars, accused of breaching the Official Secrets Act. If charged, they face jail sentences of up to 14 years.

On Aug. 30, in north Maungdaw, soldiers also tore through the village of Min Gyi, also known as Tula Toli, according to Rohingya residents who are now in the camps in Bangladesh. Investigators with Human Rights Watch say a massacre took place at Tula Toli. Soldiers shot fleeing Rohingya and rounded up hundreds of others, said Human

Rights Watch in a report. The soldiers then “systematically murdered the men over the course of several hours,” before killing and raping many Rohingya women and children, it said.



Replay map

Reuters interviews with two Rakhine villagers place the 99th in the village. Interviews with Rohingya survivors implicate the division’s soldiers in atrocities there.

The Rakhine population saw the 99th as saviors, Maung Hla Sein, a local resident, told Reuters. “If they hadn’t arrived, the kalars would have killed everyone,” he said. Maung Hla Sein said he heard gunfire and explosions coming from Tula Toli but didn’t see what happened there.

Aung Kyaw Thein, the ethnic Rakhine chairman of the village, said more than 100 soldiers from the 99th conducted a “clearance operation” in Tula Toli. “I don’t know exactly how many Muslims were killed because we didn’t dare leave our village,” he told Reuters in November. He also credited the 99th with protecting Rakhine villagers.

Reuters spoke to three Rohingya women who said Myanmar soldiers wearing 99th badges on their arms had raped them at Tula Toli.

A woman surnamed Begum was one of the three. She says soldiers took her to a house in Tula Toli with 11 other women and girls, including her little sister. She said six soldiers with 99th badges pushed her into a room full of bodies. Then one of the soldiers slit her sister’s throat. “I could not bear to see it so I turned my face away,” she said, sobbing and trembling as she spoke.



SURVIVOR: Begum said soldiers wearing 99th Light Infantry Division insignia raped her and cut her sister's throat. “I turned my face away,” she said. REUTERS/Mohammad Ponir Hossain

Begum said she was kicked and beaten till she blacked out. When she came to, it was dark.

Her back and legs were in flames and her head throbbed. Around 10 other women lay burning and unconscious around her as she crawled out.

Begum's account couldn't be independently confirmed. Her body bore burn marks when Reuters interviewed her. Rakhine residents told Reuters in November that soldiers from the 99th were still in Tula Toli, and that all the Rohingya homes had been razed.

"The kalar are quiet now," Sai Sitt Thway Aung, the 99th soldier, posted on his Facebook page on Sept. 5. "Kalar villages have burned." He told Reuters he was in northern Maungdaw at the time, but didn't commit arson. He said Rohingya burned their own homes and then blamed the military.

Sept. 5 was the day Myanmar's military campaign in Rakhine officially ended, Aung San Suu Kyi said in a speech two weeks later. Yet arson attacks on Rohingya villages continued for weeks, satellite images show. During that period Reuters reporters in Bangladesh saw smoke rising daily from the Myanmar side of the border.

According to one witness – the police officer who survived the attack on his base in Myin Hlut – the 33rd and 99th were among those responsible. After the attack, the police officer told Reuters, he was ordered to join soldiers from the 33rd and 99th on "clearance operations" in now-deserted Rohingya villages. Part of his account was reported by Reuters in February.

Each operation involved five to seven police and at least 20 soldiers, he said. Police surrounded the Rohingya houses while soldiers searched and then set them alight. The houses had leaf roofs and bamboo walls, and burned easily. "There was no need to use fuel," he said. The officer said the houses were burned "mainly for security reasons," to stop the Rohingya from returning and launching fresh attacks.

The military has denied burning houses in Rakhine and says Rohingya militants set the homes alight. The police officer described how the 33rd and 99th used arson routinely and systematically. "We'd go to a village and burn it down," he said. "The next day we'd go to another village. And in the evening we'd go to another village."



WARM WELCOME: The divisions that led the crackdown were greeted as heroes back home in central Myanmar. Photos posted on Facebook show Sai Sitt Thway Aung and other 99th soldiers returning to base in Meiktila in December; and a 33rd homecoming in Shwebo. Source: Facebook

A hero's welcome

The Myanmar government has banned journalists and other foreign observers, including U.N. investigators, from freely visiting most of northern Rakhine State.

What happened in Rakhine is an “internal issue,” Min Aung Hlaing told U.N. Security Council envoys who visited him in Naypyitaw in April, according to an account of the meeting published on his official Facebook page. “Bengalis will never say that they arrive there happily,” he said, referring to the mass exodus of Rohingya. “They will get sympathy and rights only if they say that they face a lot of hardships and persecution.”

Military observers note that some officers involved in the Rakhine crackdown were recently removed from active service.

One of them was Lieutenant General Aung Kyaw Zaw. As chief of the special operations bureau for western Myanmar, he would have coordinated the Rakhine operation from army headquarters in Naypyitaw, according to veteran observers of the Myanmar military. Aung Kyaw Zaw, who was a commander of the 33rd earlier in his career, was “given permission to resign” in May, according to the military.



SCORCHED EARTH: An aerial view of a burned Rohingya village in Rakhine State. Some soldiers from the 33rd and 99th used arson routinely and systematically, a police officer told Reuters. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

Major General Maung Maung Soe, who led the Western Command, was removed from the military on June 25, the army said. Maung Maung Soe was sanctioned in December by the United States. The military didn't respond to a Reuters request for comment from Aung Kyaw Zaw and Maung Maung Soe.

Brigadier General Than Oo, commander of the 99th, and Brigadier General Aung Aung, commander of the 33rd, were both named on the sanctions lists released June 25 by the EU and Canada.

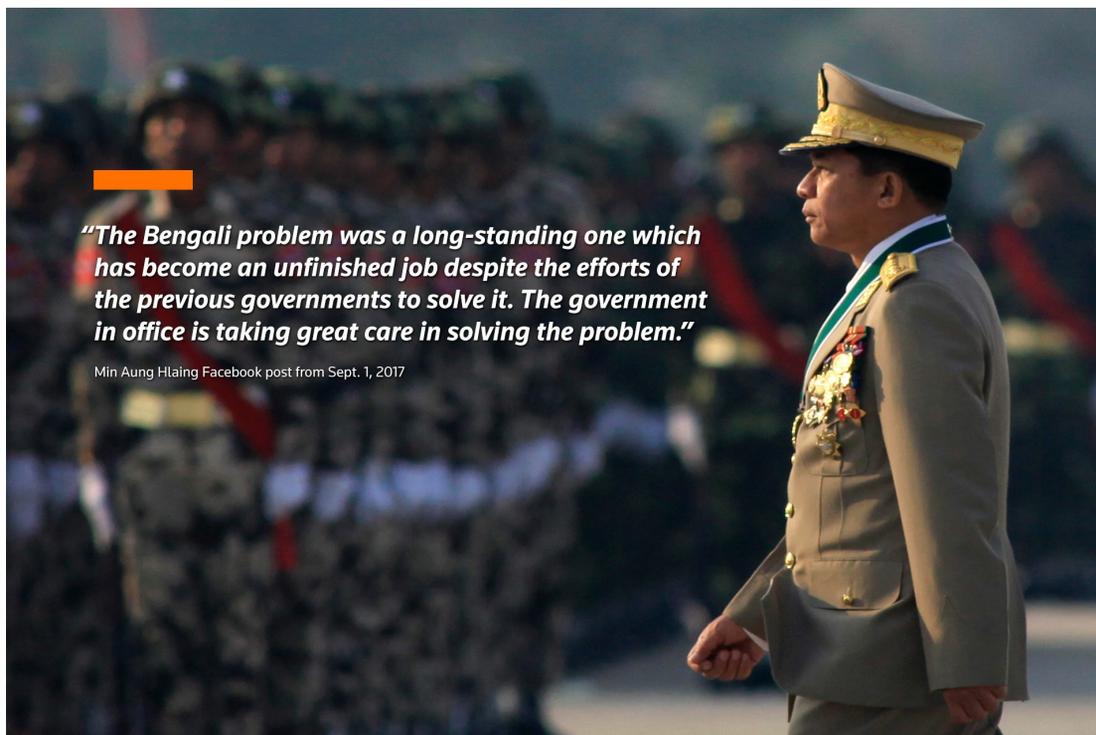
Myanmar's soldiers have received a warm welcome in the towns of the Bamar heartland where most of the light infantry divisions are based.

Photos of military homecomings can be found on many Facebook accounts. These show soldiers from the 33rd and 99th marching through garrison towns, where people give them flowers or laurel leaves – symbols of victory and good luck.

On Dec. 6, Sai Sitt Thway Aung posts photos of himself and other 99th soldiers marching through homecoming crowds in Meiktila. He is garlanded with flowers and smiling.

That same day, he also posts a selfie, in uniform. A friend weighs in with a comment: “I’m proud of you for kicking out the kalar dogs.”

Additional reporting by Ryan McNeill in London.



“The Bengali problem was a long-standing one which has become an unfinished job despite the efforts of the previous governments to solve it. The government in office is taking great care in solving the problem.”

Min Aung Hlaing Facebook post from Sept. 1, 2017

THE GENERAL: Min Aung Hlaing inspects his troops at a parade in the capital of Naypyitaw in 2012, a year after he became commander in chief. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

A history of alleged abuses

Myanmar’s generals have long relied on light infantry divisions, both to fight ethnic insurgents along the country’s rugged borders and to crush dissent in its largest city, Yangon.

The first of the divisions, including the 99th, were created in the 1960s after the military overthrew Myanmar’s elected government, according to “Building the Tatmadaw,” a book on the country’s military. During the nearly half-century of dictatorship that followed, the divisions built a ferocious reputation – especially among the civilians caught in their path.

Myanmar's 10 light infantry divisions have palindromic numbers – 11, 22, 33 (above), and so on – and distinctive insignia: stylized white Burmese numerals on a blue circle inside a red shield. It is worn on the left shoulder of the uniform. When posting photos of themselves on Facebook, Myanmar soldiers often obscure their insignia with smiley faces or other designs, presumably to conceal their units. Some people on Facebook



expressed support for the troops by using the 33rd or 99th insignia as their profile pictures.

In 1988, troops from two light infantry divisions were dispatched to Yangon to help crush a pro-democracy uprising led by Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. Three divisions were again deployed to Yangon in 2007 during democracy protests led by Buddhist monks. Troops from the 77th plowed through protesters in a truck, then opened fire on them, witnesses told Human Rights Watch.

In their wars against ethnic rebels, the divisions spearheaded campaigns that employed strikingly similar tactics to those recorded in Rakhine State last year. A report by the International Human Rights Clinic at Harvard Law School alleged the 66th committed war crimes during an offensive against ethnic rebels in southeastern Myanmar that began in 2005.

The military's main tactical objective, said the report, was to drive civilians into government-controlled areas, or across the border into Thailand, where it was harder for people to support the rebels. To achieve this, the report alleged, soldiers shot fleeing civilians, torched their villages and displaced about 42,000 people.

Min Aung Hlaing became commander in chief in 2011, the same year Myanmar began its transition to democracy. The ruling junta launched reforms and installed a quasi-civilian government. But the country's border wars intensified, and Min Aung Hlaing has repeatedly turned to the light infantry divisions.

There are now 10 such divisions, most based in central Myanmar – the country's Buddhist heartland and home to its majority Bamar people.



DESTITUTE: A boy sits amid the wreckage of shelters destroyed by a fire at a camp for displaced Rohingya near Sittwe, the Rakhine capital, in May 2016. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

Hating the Rohingya

Before hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims fled Myanmar in August 2017, more than one million lived in western Rakhine State. Almost all were born there and worked as farmers, fishermen and traders.

Many in majority Buddhist Myanmar see them as unwanted immigrants. They say Rohingya is a fake ethnicity invented by “Bengalis,” originally from Bangladesh, who want to claim the benefits of being native to Myanmar. Animosity runs deep, and the Rohingya

are subjected to “dehumanizing ethnic slurs,” U.N. human rights investigators said in December.

A 1982 law restricts citizenship for those – including the Rohingya – not considered members of one of Myanmar’s “national races.” Rohingya were excluded from Myanmar’s last nationwide census in 2014, and many have had their identity documents stripped from them or nullified, blocking them from voting in the landmark 2015 elections.

More than 100,000 Rohingya remain confined to camps inside Myanmar after they were displaced in an earlier bout of communal violence in 2012. Amnesty International said last year the situation for Rohingya constituted apartheid.

Tip of the Spear

By Simon Lewis, Zeba Siddiqui, Clare Baldwin and Andrew R.C. Marshall

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Tom Lasseter, “Dangerous News: How two young reporters shook Myanmar”, *Reuters*
(8 August 2018)

How two young reporters shook Myanmar

Dangerous News

A REUTERS SPECIAL REPORT

SHACKLED: Reuters reporter Wa Lone is escorted by police during a break in court proceedings in Yangon in February. He and fellow Reuters reporter Kyaw Soe Oo are being tried on charges of violating the Official Secrets Act. REUTERS/Jorge Silva

Two Reuters reporters uncovered a mass killing in Myanmar. Their journey has put them at odds with their own people.

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo embraced the heady freedoms of post-junta Myanmar. Then they exposed a massacre of Muslims by soldiers and civilians. The government's prosecution of them over their reporting is seen by many as a test of the country's nascent democracy.

By TOM LASSETER | Filed Aug. 8, 2018, noon GMT

YANGON, Myanmar – Late in the afternoon of Dec. 12 last year, Wa Lone's cell phone rang. It was a man named Naing Lin, a lance corporal in Myanmar's 8th Security Police Battalion.

The policeman urged Wa Lone, a 31-year-old reporter with Reuters, to meet him immediately at the battalion's barracks on the outskirts of Yangon. Night was falling around the golden spires of the pagodas in this former capital city.

"He told me that if I don't come now," Wa Lone would later recall in a Myanmar courtroom, "I might not be able to meet him because he is about to transfer to another region."

Wa Lone, whose large eyeglasses rest on chubby cheeks, had spent weeks looking into Battalion 8. He was working on a story about the murder of 10 members of the country's Rohingya Muslim minority during a military operation in western Rakhine State. And he'd gotten his hands on explosive material: photographs of the 10 men before and after they were killed.

One picture showed the men's bodies, hacked and shot to death, in a shallow grave. Another, taken while they were still alive, showed them on their knees. In the background, milling around with assault rifles, were members of Battalion 8.

Before going to meet the lance corporal, Wa Lone checked in with the Reuters bureau chief, Antoni Slodkowski, who told him to take another reporter along. That man, 27-year-old Kyaw Soe Oo, was visiting from Rakhine State and had recently been hired by the news agency.

Setting out at about 6 p.m., the bureau's white Nissan SUV crossed an overpass that overlooks Inya Lake, ringed by homes of Myanmar's elite, including the nation's de facto leader, Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi. It was a world beyond the reach of Wa Lone, the son of a rice farmer from a village of a few hundred people.

About halfway to the Battalion 8 compound, the SUV was stuck in traffic. Wa Lone later remembered feeling uneasy: Why had the policeman insisted on him coming right away? The reporters discussed turning around. But they decided to push on.

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo made it to the entrance of Battalion 8 around 8 p.m. After meeting Lance Corporal Naing Lin and a second policeman, the reporters said in court, they went with the cops down the street to an open-air beer garden. The men ordered beer and fish crackers. They talked about Rakhine State, Naing Lin recalled in court testimony. He told the reporters about coming under attack by Rohingya insurgents on Aug. 25 last year, as the militants launched a series of assaults on police stations.

FATEFUL MEETING: The beer garden (left) on the outskirts of Yangon where Wa Lone said he was set up by Lance Corporal Naing Lin on December 12. The entrance (right) to the compound for the 8th Security Police Battalion. REUTERS/Tom Lasseter

When it was time to go, Wa Lone later said in court, Naing Lin handed him a copy of the Myanmar *Alin*, a state-run newspaper, rolled up with some documents inside. As the two reporters left the restaurant, they were surrounded by men in civilian clothes. "These are secret documents!" Wa Lone recalled one man shouting. A pair of handcuffs was slapped on Wa Lone's wrists, and another on Kyaw Soe Oo's. They were then pulled into two parked cars.

Naing Lin recalls the encounter differently. He testified in court that Wa Lone called him on Dec. 12 to request a meeting, and that when he met the two reporters at the beer garden, he came alone. He also denied giving Wa Lone any documents.

With their arrest, the two reporters were thrust into the murky confluence of military and civilian rule in this ethnically fractured nation of some 50 million people. To dignitaries in Western capitals, from Pope Francis to former U.S. President Bill Clinton, their incarceration would become a test of press freedom in Myanmar, and how far the country has traveled toward a more open society. On July 9, a judge charged the two under the Official Secrets Act, a law that carries a maximum sentence of 14 years.

At the beginning of this decade, Myanmar was a focus of hopes for democratic progress in Southeast Asia, a neighborhood long marked by strongman regimes. Aung San Suu Kyi was released in 2010 after about 15 years of house arrest under a military government. In 2015, her party swept general elections.

For the youth of Myanmar, like Wa Lone, that sharp turn of events brought a sudden, historically improbable expectation of freedom after decades of brutal military rule. But the army never fully relinquished power: In 2008, it put in place a constitution granting itself broad powers and control of key ministries.

And peace has not come to Myanmar. Deadly ethnic conflicts, obscure to most of the world but bloody at home, have continued to rumble.

Last year, widespread enmity for the country's best-known ethnic minority, the Rohingya Muslims, fed a savage military campaign that forced some 700,000 people to flee their homes for Bangladesh. Now, the Myanmar army stands accused by United Nations officials of having committed widespread killings, mass rape and ethnic cleansing. In the face of this condemnation, Suu Kyi has not uttered a word of public criticism of the armed forces. 

A spokesman for Aung San Suu Kyi, Zaw Htay, and an Army spokesman did not respond to requests for comment for this article. Zaw Htay has said that Myanmar's courts are independent and the reporters are receiving a fair trial. The military has denied its troops took part in ethnic cleansing in Rakhine State last year.

NOTES ON A MASSACRE: Wa Lone (left) and Kyaw Soe Oo typing up notes in the Reuters office in downtown Yangon on December 11, one day before their arrest. REUTERS/Antoni Slodkowski

Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo's reporting on the massacre of the 10 Rohingya men was published by Reuters in February. The article placed them at odds with their country's Buddhist majority, to which the reporters, Aung San Suu Kyi and top military leaders all belong. Much of that majority despises the Rohingya, viewing them as foreign interlopers from South Asia. It was groundbreaking investigative journalism in Myanmar. But to their own people, the reporters' quest for truth was an act of betrayal.

The pair have been behind bars for almost eight months, most of that time at Yangon's Insein Prison, a hulking edifice of 19th century British colonial architecture that has held thousands of political prisoners, including Aung San Suu Kyi herself for a brief period. And they have been appearing in court since January, sitting through more than 30 hearings. A verdict in their trial could

be handed down in the coming weeks.

The story of the two reporters and their roles in Myanmar's experiment with press freedom is pieced together from their testimony and that of police at their trial. It also draws on other accounts given by Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo and interviews with their colleagues, their relatives and their friends.

The day after their arrest, an order was issued from the office of the nation's then-president authorizing police to pursue charges against the two reporters. Then, for two weeks, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo disappeared without a trace into the hands of the police.

HIGH HOPES: Aung San Suu Kyi, shown in 2010 with supporters, was once jailed in the same prison where the two Reuters reporters are now held. Her release and subsequent rise to power inspired a generation in Myanmar. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

The making of a non-conformist

Wa Lone's collision with the state was, in many ways, a long time coming.

He grew up in a traditional wood clapboard house, built by his grandfather in the small village of Kin Pyit, with a population of less than 500. Reached by a skinny dirt road, the village is an island among outstretched rice paddies.

When Wa Lone was a boy, his father, a rice farmer named Tin Myint, needed to borrow money before planting. At harvest season, he was forced to sell a quota of his rice below market price to the local military administration. "It was not enough, we had to take out loans to plant the next crop," said Wa Lone's younger brother, Thura Aung.

Money was tight. Meals were usually rice with vegetables, rarely with the added expense of meat, said Thura Aung.

FARMER'S SON: Wa Lone's childhood home (left). The entrance to Kin Pyit (right), where Wa Lone grew up, a village of some 100 households near Mandalay. REUTERS/Antoni Slodkowski

Wa Lone was unwilling to accept such frustrations, Tin Myint said. "He was really impatient. He always said, 'Where is the improvement? How are we going to improve our lives if we keep going like this?'" he said.

Wa Lone travelled to Yangon in 2004, the country's former capital and still its main city, and got a job in a welding shop. The pay was bad and he didn't know much about welding. "They treated us like – I wouldn't say slaves, but something like that," is how Wa Lone describes the experience.

A few months later, he moved to Mawlamyine, a smaller city about a six-hour drive from Yangon. It sits near the shores of the Andaman Sea, and he had an uncle who lived at a neighborhood monastery there.

His mother died of breast cancer at the end of 2005, but Wa Lone didn't receive word until two months after her death, when a monk from his village visited the monastery and passed on the news. The first job he got in Mawlamyine was unloading vegetables at a night market. He was still a teenager.

While living in the city, Wa Lone and four friends began hanging out after work at a large monastery down the street from his uncle. It had a reading room, a project funded by the British Embassy and British Council to stock libraries with English books in cities across Myanmar. The group took an English language class for a while, but mostly they read books and talked.

In 2007, Wa Lone and his friends followed news reports as protests gripped the nation. Known as the Saffron Revolution, the uprising included long processions of Buddhist monks taking to the streets in defiance of the military junta. The junta cracked down, reportedly killing at least 31 people and arresting thousands.

SAFFRON POWER: Monks protesting against the military government in 2007. Buddhist clergy played a leading role in the push for democracy in this majority Buddhist nation. Today, the majority's enmity for the Muslim minority is fueling widespread violence. REUTERS/Adrees Latif

In 2009, Wa Lone heard about other young people from Myanmar meeting in Thailand to discuss democracy. He spent more than two months there with them, talking about political theory and reading books such as George Orwell’s “Animal Farm.” Wa Lone watched documentaries about protest movements – the Orange Revolution in Ukraine, the American Civil Rights movement, the struggle against apartheid in South Africa.

Wa Lone said he returned to Mawlamyine inspired to do more for the people of his country. He didn’t want to get arrested or confront the authorities – both, he reasoned, would be bad for his family. He continued with volunteer work and charity drives to fund monastery schools.

Around him, the nation’s politics were changing. Aung San Suu Kyi was released in 2010. The military junta installed a quasi-civilian regime led by ex-generals the next year. The decision by Suu Kyi’s party, the National League for Democracy, to contest by-elections in 2012 was thrilling, said Kyaw Naing Oo, one of the circle of friends in Mawlamyine. Now in his mid-thirties, he runs a charity school.

“At the time of the election we really hoped for more freedom because it was a democratic party,” said Kyaw Naing Oo, “and Aung San Suu Kyi is a democratic icon.”

In a monastery where Wa Lone stayed in Mawlamyine, a small house at the end of an alley, another member of his family recently received visitors. Aww Bar Sa, who is a monk and Wa Lone’s second cousin, gestured for the reporters to follow him upstairs. A golden Buddha sat in a shrine, with flashing red, blue and green LED lights all around.

As boys of the same age, Wa Lone and Aww Bar Sa grew up together in Kin Pyit village. “Since he was young he would argue about whether the world is round or flat, or whether the world is moving or standing still,” Aww Bar Sa said, laughing at the memories of Wa Lone. “He would argue about such things. Many in the village did not understand these topics.”



MANY SUPERSTITIONS: Aww Bar Sa, Wa Lone’s second cousin, at the small monastery in the city of Mawlamyine where Wa Lone once lived. REUTERS/Ann Wang

“If you don’t write from the side of your own religion, they think of you as a traitor.”

Aww Bar Sa, Wa Lone’s second cousin

Asked about Wa Lone’s journalism, Aww Bar Sa grew more solemn.

“The country’s development is still slow. People don’t have much knowledge yet. There are still many superstitions,” said Aww Bar Sa. “So, if you don’t write from the side of your own religion, they think of you as a traitor.”

That sentiment is evident in the comments posted on a Facebook page set up by Reuters – “Free Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo” – after the arrests. The page has photographs of Kyaw Soe Oo, in handcuffs, hugging his two-year-old daughter. There’s Wa Lone beside his pregnant wife, and his wife without him, crying. Below, visitors posted a string of slurs and threats.

“They are traitors”

“They are disgusting”

“They should be given the death sentence”

The Rohingya aren’t afforded citizenship. Their very ethnicity is not recognized by Myanmar officialdom. Many of the Rohingya still in the country live in isolated colonies that are a cross between shanty towns and internment camps. They are, according to Human Rights Watch, “one of the largest stateless populations in the world.”

“I don’t use the word ‘Rohingya,’” says Aye Chan, a nationalist activist from Rakhine State who is now promoting the settlement of Buddhists in the areas where the Rohingya lived before they fled. “They are Bengalis. They’re from Bangladesh.”

Aye Chan socialized with Aung San Suu Kyi when both were studying in Japan in the 1980s, and he himself was jailed for seven years for supporting democratic reform during the junta era. Seated in the lobby of Yangon’s Lotte Hotel, with a view of Inya Lake outside, he spelled out his take on the current crisis.

He visited abandoned Muslim villages days after the Rohingya fled, which he said put him in a position to dispel allegations of mass rape and other atrocities by Myanmar soldiers. As evidence, he cited meeting with an officer in the area. “I asked one of the border police, an officer, ‘There are accusations about you of raping these women?’ He laughed. And he said: ‘These women don’t bath even once in a week. How can we sleep with them?’”

In Aung San Suu Kyi’s speeches, she avoids the term “Rohingya” in favor of “Muslims,” a word that denotes religion but not homeland.

Sitting down at a hotel restaurant in the capital city of Naypyitaw, an aide to Aung San Suu Kyi spoke in support of her.

The situation inside Myanmar, behind closed doors, is more nuanced than it might appear to outsiders who urge Aung San Suu Kyi to speak out on behalf of the Rohingya, said Sean Turnell, an Australian academic who serves as her special economic consultant.

“‘Nobel Prize winner overseeing genocide’ is a damn good headline, I get it,” he said.

But under the 2008 constitution, the military is “completely beyond the control of the civilian government,” said Turnell. The civilian government “has no de jure supervision and no de facto supervision. At all. Zero.”

More than that, Myanmar’s constitution provides that if a state of emergency is declared, the commander-in-chief can be granted total control of the country under circumstances including “disintegration of national solidarity.”

POLITICAL PRISONERS: A wall of photographs of political prisoners, past and present, at the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners museum in Yangon. Images of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo are positioned next to a portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi. Above the museum's entrance is a plaque with a quote attributed to Aung San Suu Kyi while she was under house arrest: "Please Use Your Liberty to Promote Ours." REUTERS/Ann Wang

Testing the limits of press freedom

Slodkowski, the Reuters bureau chief, first met Wa Lone in 2016.

Wa Lone didn't speak English as well as another candidate Slodkowski was interviewing: "I had trouble understanding everything he said." But Wa Lone struck him as both curious and driven.

That was important to Slodkowski, who had been coming to Myanmar since 2009. Slodkowski's father was an underground journalist in Poland who was arrested in 1982 and spent a year and a half in prison under an authoritarian communist regime.

Wa Lone soon landed a job at Reuters. He'd been in Yangon for about six years at that point, doing charity work, taking English classes and working his way through a series of local newspapers.

He met the woman who became his wife, Pan Ei Mon, at one of them, the Myanmar Times. The first time they went for coffee, in 2013, Wa Lone asked Pan Ei Mon whether she had a boyfriend. She said that she did. "He said, 'Okay, why don't you choose between him and me,'" she recalled, smiling at the memory.

Before joining Reuters, he'd built a reputation for reporting about the country's internal armed conflicts. At the Myanmar Times, where he worked for about three years, Wa Lone was one of the first reporters to reach an embattled border region in Shan State after a bout of fighting in 2015 between the military and an armed ethnic militia.

Such violence has a long history in Myanmar. Civil warfare began almost immediately after independence in 1948. Ethnic divisions that erupted in fighting back then have endured. More than 20 armed groups pose a central challenge for Aung San Suu Kyi and her government, who are pursuing national peace talks. To the north of Shan State, for example, among jade, amber and gold mines, it is the Kachin Independence Army trading fire with government troops.

After arriving at Reuters, Wa Lone soon began reporting about Rakhine State and the Rohingya Muslims. A story in October 2016 detailed allegations that Myanmar soldiers raped eight Rohingya women at gunpoint after coordinated Rohingya insurgent attacks on border posts. With Wa Lone's name atop, the story quoted a Rohingya woman saying of a group of soldiers: "Two men

held me, one holding each arm, and another one held me by my hair from the back and they raped me.” Government spokesman Zaw Htay denied the allegations when the story was published.

Wa Lone covered attacks by Rohingya Muslim militants as well. In August of 2017, he reported on official accounts of coordinated assaults by the militants on 30 police posts and an army base, killing 12 members of the country’s security forces. Those attacks would spark the military’s crackdown in Rakhine State.

The reporting traced a pattern in Rakhine in which insurgent strikes on security forces were met with overwhelming force that drove increasing numbers of Rohingya Muslims to flee the area.



SOLITARY PRAYER: Pan Ei Mon, the wife of Wa Lone, at home in Yangon. REUTERS/Ann Wang

Wa Lone pursued his job while facing difficulties making ends meet. His wife, Pan Ei Mon, said Wa Lone made the equivalent of \$1,000 a month at Reuters, and she earned about \$380 working in the advertising department of a local newspaper. Wa Lone’s annual income alone was about 10 times the country’s per capita gross national income. But living in the center of Yangon, Pan Ei Mon said, “It was never enough.”

They lived in a small apartment, a space subdivided from their landlady’s house. With Reuters headquarters often slow to reimburse their expenses in the far-off Yangon bureau, reporters there said they sometimes ran out of money after long trips before the next check. Both Pan Ei Mon and Wa Lone pawned their wedding rings. They used an older friend at the Myanmar Times to take the jewelry to avoid embarrassment, said Pan Ei Mon. On one occasion, Wa Lone used the cash to help pay for a reporting trip to Rakhine State.

Asked about its slowness to pay expenses in Yangon, Reuters said its global system for reimbursing reporters depends on using a credit card that isn’t widely accepted in Myanmar. In recent months, the news agency said in a written statement, it has made it possible for staff there to be reimbursed more frequently. On the pawning of the wedding rings, Reuters said: “We were not aware of this personal sacrifice and it is not something we would ever ask or expect of staff.”

In investigating the massacre, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were on dangerous ground, said Myat Swe, co-founder of the Myanmar Times. He was arrested in 2004 by the military junta after his father, an intelligence officer, was purged. He spent about nine years behind bars for allegedly violating censorship laws. “What they did was they threw me in the prison first and then they looked for the case,” said Myat Swe, now chief executive at Frontier Myanmar magazine.

The military, he said, retains vast power, which Aung San Suu Kyi is unable to check. “You can clearly see that she doesn’t have any influence whatsoever on the military,” said Myat Swe, sitting in a second-floor office where production notes for his magazine were scribbled on glass walls.

That made Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo’s reporting “quite risky,” he said, especially in Rakhine State, where the government is aware of reporters’ movements and locals don’t like journalists, domestic or foreign.

Under the junta, which lasted half a century, Myanmar had what was regarded as one of the world’s strictest systems of censorship. After the junta installed a quasi-civilian government, the country announced in 2012 that it was ending pre-publication censorship of news reports. Later that year, it said that private daily newspapers, shut down since 1964, could be

published.

“You can clearly see that she doesn’t have any influence whatsoever on the military.”

Frontier Myanmar chief executive, Myat Swe

A fitful loosening and tightening followed – 10 journalists and media executives were imprisoned in 2014, for example. As Aung San Suu Kyi’s party took power in 2016, expectations rose that she would introduce an era of greater press freedom.

But journalists continue to be incarcerated. In June last year, the military arrested three Myanmar reporters in Shan State for covering a drug-burning event by an ethnic militia. They were charged under the Unlawful Associations Act, a colonial-era law that broadly prohibits contact with banned groups. The charges were dropped in September.

Former Reuters journalist Aung Hla Tun knows what it is like to cover the military. Ushering visitors into his office in Naypyitaw, he pointed to an internal Reuters reporting award on a shelf which he won for covering the Saffron Revolution protests in 2007. “I got a chance to do my bit for democracy, for freedom of press for Myanmar,” he said.

That year, he produced a series of reports from the streets as protesters defied the junta. In an internal Reuters note circulated in October of 2007, Aung Hla Tun was praised for displaying “enormous courage, resourcefulness and journalistic integrity in putting us consistently ahead on the major breaks and turns in the story.”

He is no longer a reporter. Aung Hla Tun left Reuters at the end of 2016 and was named Myanmar’s deputy information minister in January 2018. He said he chose to serve in the government out of loyalty to Aung San Suu Kyi.

Sitting on a sofa, dressed like a typical Myanmar official in a traditional sarong-like garment called a longyi, with neatly combed hair, glasses and placid expression, he recounted the stories of his own family members arrested by the former military regime.

OFFICIAL WORD: Aung Hla Tun, a former Reuters reporter, is now deputy information minister. Reuters, he says, should apologize over its coverage of the Rohingya crisis in Rakhine State. Source: Facebook

He also talked about Wa Lone.

Aung Hla Tun worked with Wa Lone briefly in the Reuters bureau and knew him before that as a member of the reporting community in Yangon. While at the Myanmar Times, Wa Lone said he attended sessions that Aung Hla Tun hosted for journalists looking to brush up their English and improve their time management.

They considered each other friends. Aung Hla Tun attended Wa Lone’s wedding in 2016. A snapshot from the day shows him on stage, a place of honor, with the beaming couple.

But Wa Lone said he and Aung Hla Tun disagreed over coverage of events in Rakhine State. At one point, Aung Hla Tun said, he gave Wa Lone advice: “be careful.”

The prior Reuters bureau chief in Yangon, Paul Mooney, said Aung Hla Tun referred to Rohingya Muslims as “Bengalis,” a term implying they are foreigners that’s commonly used in Myanmar. When Buddhists attacked Muslims during riots in the city of Mandalay in 2014, Mooney said, Aung Hla Tun only wanted to relay official comment from the capital. “If there was anything negative that might kind of make the Burmese army look bad, he didn’t want to be involved with it,” Mooney said.

Aung Hla Tun disputed Mooney’s descriptions of him. Mooney, he said, tried to paint him as “anti-Muslim.” However, he said, “I have many Muslim friends.”

Aung Hla Tun said he had asked officials in the government about Wa Lone's case. But, Aung Hla Tun said, he discovered that it was inadvisable to lobby for Wa Lone's release: "Some close friends warned me, 'You should stop or you will be in danger.'" He did not explain further.

"I have done my best, he was my friend," he said.

His voice strained as he spoke about the news agency's coverage of Rakhine State. "Reuters should have apologized to the government. Apologize!"

PHOTOGRAPHIC EVIDENCE: The 10 Rohingya Muslim men pictured here were massacred soon after this photograph was taken last September. The photo, obtained from a local Buddhist elder, was a crucial piece of evidence for Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo as they reported the role of Myanmar security forces in the massacre.

A mass grave is discovered

In late October, Wa Lone flew to Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine. He was with a colleague, reporter Simon Lewis; the two met up with Kyaw Soe Oo after landing.

Where Wa Lone's face is full and his eyes animated above a mustache, Kyaw Soe Oo has high cheekbones, his shoulders square on a leaner frame. As a kid in Sittwe, he helped out local shops arranging and dusting books, and in return was allowed to read them. As an adult, he stacked bookshelves from floor to ceiling in his home. He read the translated works of names like Kafka, Camus, Sartre.

His family owned boats and buses used to transport goods. When Kyaw Soe Oo told them he was going to marry a woman who worked as a household employee for his grandmother, they disapproved. He married her anyway.

His wife, Chit Su Win, complained about all the books he was buying, and Kyaw Soe Oo agreed not to add any more. "But then I bought more and lied to her, saying that I got those from my friends," he said.

In 2012, riots exploded between Muslims and Buddhists in Rakhine State. Growing up in Sittwe, the state capital, Kyaw Soe Oo was a Buddhist living among Muslims his whole life. A family helper who prepared his school lunches was Muslim. In the aftermath of the 2012 unrest, he'd watched in dismay as Rakhine Buddhists "bullied" Muslims.

Kyaw Soe Oo said he felt compelled to report about the issue. “To be frank, I would rather be a property agent than a reporter,” he said. “But if we don’t solve this problem during my time, my daughter will suffer the consequences.”



WAITING: Jailed journalist Kyaw Soe Oo's daughter, Moe Thin Wai Zan, stands outside the court during a May hearing in Yangon. REUTERS/Ann Wang

“To be frank, I would rather be a property agent than a reporter. But if we don’t solve this problem during my time, my daughter will suffer the consequences.”

Reuters reporter Kyaw Soe Oo on the Rohingya crisis

After his arrest, his wife, Chit Su Win, moved to Yangon from Rakhine State. She says she’s now concerned it is unsafe to return. Many in the Buddhist majority back home in Sittwe were furious that Kyaw Soe Oo had helped a reporting effort about crimes against Muslims. He and Wa Lone have received a torrent of death threats on social media since their arrest.

“Because of the story, people in Rakhine really do not like my husband now,” she said of the massacre article.

While Lewis conducted interviews in Sittwe last October, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo took a ferry and got motorbike taxis to head further into the state’s interior. On the way, Kyaw Soe Oo’s driver mentioned that 10 Muslim men had been killed in the area. He and Wa Lone switched rides so that Wa Lone could hear the details. As they cut past rice paddies, the wind whipping in their faces, the driver leaned back and shouted answers. There’d been 10 men killed by soldiers and a group of villagers with swords, he said.

The news was related in a matter-of-fact way. “He doesn’t like Muslims,” Wa Lone later explained. “I don’t think he thought this is a big crime – an issue of morality or something.”

They arrived at the village, called Inn Din, and others there repeated the story.

Lewis remembers Wa Lone calling him and saying: “These guys are telling us there is a grave and they are offering to show us. I’m not sure if we should do that.” Lewis added: “He was scared.”

The grave was hard to find. The reporters walked through bushes and noticed newly cut branches marking a path on the side of a hill. There were barely buried bones on the ground, said Wa Lone. There were other bones scattered nearby. Wa Lone thought to himself that a dog may have been gnawing on them.

During his trip, a villager gave Wa Lone a photograph of 10 Rohingya men kneeling with more than a dozen men behind them, many holding assault rifles. The 10 had been detained by security forces.

After returning to Yangon, Wa Lone obtained another picture. This one showed the bodies of the 10 Rohingya men in a shallow grave. It was the same men, in the same t-shirts, but now some were face down in the dirt, limbs splayed, others with mouths agape toward the heavens, and blood everywhere.

In the photograph of the men kneeling, there's a man at the back left corner of the frame with a ball cap on backwards and holding a gun with what looked like the number eight written in Burmese on the stock. It was a clue: At least some of the men in the image belonged to Myanmar's police battalion 8 – the same battalion as that of Lance Corporal Naing Lin, the man Wa Lone would later meet on the evening of Dec. 12.



CONFLICTING TESTIMONY: Lance Corporal Naing Lin (left), who met the two Reuters reporters on the night of their arrest, testified that he never planted documents on Wa Lone. Police captain Moe Yan Naing (right), testified that the two reporters were set up. REUTERS/Ann Wang

Wa Lone, said Slodkowski, grew “obsessed” with identifying the policemen in the photograph. At the time, the United Nations was alleging widespread abuses by the military in Rakhine State; the government responded by saying it would look into any evidence presented to it.

“Let’s give them evidence then,” Slodkowski recalls Wa Lone saying.

Wa Lone devised ways to meet Battalion 8 police members so he could ask for phone numbers of other officers. He plugged those numbers into the search bar of Facebook, which is wildly popular in Myanmar, said Slodkowski. He looked for faces that matched those in the background of the photograph of the 10 Rohingya men.

Wa Lone also printed an enlargement of at least one face from among the armed men standing behind the kneeling Rohingya, said Slodkowski. Wa Lone took the image to other officers of Battalion 8 and asked whether they recognized their comrade.

His pursuit of the members of Battalion 8 would ultimately land him in jail, according to testimony in his trial.

A Battalion 8 captain named Moe Yan Naing testified that the police planned to “entrap” Wa Lone. He said he was present when a police brigadier general told Naing Lin to call Wa Lone, arrange the meeting and plant documents on the reporter before arresting him.

The brigadier general, he testified, issued a blunt threat to the cops: “If you don’t get Wa Lone, you will go to jail.”

After saying so in court, Moe Yan Naing was sentenced to a year in prison for violating police discipline, a development that police said was unrelated to his testimony.

The prosecution also presented police witnesses who backed the official version of events: They said the two reporters were detained, already in possession of the documents, during a random search at a police checkpoint.

BRIEF REUNION: Kyaw Soe Oo greets his family as he is escorted by police while arriving at a court hearing in early June. REUTERS/Ann Wang

‘Shut your mouth’

On the night of their arrests, Kyaw Soe Oo said, he didn’t realize the men in plainclothes who surrounded Wa Lone were police. He was going to help Wa Lone but then was grabbed from behind. “I thought they were pickpockets,” Kyaw Soe Oo later testified.

At the police station, Wa Lone testified, the two reporters were confronted by more than a dozen men in uniform and plainclothes. One asked Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo if they were spies. When Wa Lone said he didn’t know what was in the documents Naing Lin had handed him, a cop replied: “Shut your mouth.”

Next, both reporters later testified, they were taken to a building not far from downtown Yangon. It was the Aung Tha Pyay interrogation center, a nondescript building where special branch police officers do their work.

Wa Lone said the police pulled a fabric sack over his head on the way there. He was then picked up by his armpits and carried up a set of stairs. When the sack was pulled off, there were officers sitting behind a table in front of him.

Wa Lone has been making brief but impassioned remarks to the media outside the courtroom during his case. In this video, he speaks after the July 9 decision to charge him and Kyaw Soe Oo under the Official Secrets Act. Source: Reuters Video News

The interrogators, Wa Lone told the court, already had a list of the policemen he’d spoken to. They demanded he answer the same questions, over and over, in two-hour sessions, for almost three days straight: What did the policemen of Battalion 8 tell him? What was he reporting on?

In those sleepless days of interrogation, Wa Lone told the court, the police pressured him to share his cell phone password. He resisted. The phone, he knew, contained something that would grab the attention of the police: the photographs of the 10 Muslim men. But he was tired “from hours of continuous interrogations,” he testified. And he was scared things could get worse if he didn’t relent. So he gave up the code. Before that moment, Wa Lone said, “We did not talk about the killings in Inn Din.”

One officer, he told the court, offered “possible negotiations” if Reuters would agree not to publish the story. Wa Lone said he rejected the overture.

His interrogators also berated him for having looked into the killings.

“They said, ‘You are both Buddhists. Why are you writing about ‘kalars’ at a time like this?’” Wa Lone testified, quoting a derogatory Burmese term many use to describe people of South Asian descent, especially Muslims.

Kyaw Soe Oo described coming under similar pressure. At one point, he testified, an interrogator burst into his cell to ask about the photographs of the 10 doomed men from Inn Din: “Why haven’t you told us about this?” the interrogator said. Kyaw Soe Oo said he was then made to kneel on the floor for at least three hours as punishment.

Another time, Kyaw Soe Oo testified, a military intelligence officer brought print-outs of the photos and asked whether he had “sent the photos from my phone to human rights organizations from foreign countries.”

Captain Myint Lwin, the officer in charge of the Yangon police station that conducted the preliminary inquiry after the reporters’ arrests, denied in court that Kyaw Soe Oo was made to kneel during his questioning. He also said that neither reporter was transferred to Aung Tha Pyay interrogation center. Calls to a police spokesman seeking comment about the reporters’ testimony went unanswered.

When Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were arrested, their story about the massacre had yet to be completed. Their colleagues Lewis and Slodkowski finished the piece over the following two months. Wa Lone’s wife, Pan Ei Mon, whose pregnancy was advancing while her husband sat in prison, said in an interview that she was against running it. Pan Ei Mon had been speaking with a Myanmar government official who told her he was concerned Wa Lone “would be made an example of.”

The story established that soldiers were among those who killed the Rohingya in Inn Din village, and Pan Ei Mon thought that publishing would shut off any sympathetic channels in the government.

Wa Lone took a different view. He told a Reuters lawyer he wanted the story to run. It appeared in early February.

“After that story was released, I decided not to visit Wa Lone anymore,” Pan Ei Mon said. “I thought all he cared about was his ego – not me or the baby inside me.” The next day, she relented and went to see him.

Wa Lone received other visitors after the story ran. Several senior police officers met him in a room at the prison and videotaped the interview, he testified at his trial. Among the officers, he said, was the brigadier general who, according to earlier court testimony by Capt. Moe Yan Naing, gave the order to set up and arrest the Reuters reporters. The brigadier general asked Wa Lone to reveal the sources for the Inn Din story. Wa Lone said he refused to give up any names.

 SHORT CELEBRATION: A cake for Wa Lone's 32nd birthday sits on a chair outside the Yangon courtroom on April 11. REUTERS/Ann Wang

He and Kyaw Soe Oo have been in jail for 240 days. On April 11 they had yet another court appearance. It was Wa Lone's 32nd birthday. The day before, the military announced that seven soldiers were sentenced to 10 years in prison with hard labor for participating in the Inn Din massacre. With that, Myanmar's generals appeared to be acknowledging the truth of Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo's reporting about the killings in Inn Din.

The tailgate of a police truck opened to let out the police officers guarding Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo. Pan Ei Mon was waiting, brushing her hair back from her face with a wide smile. She was about five months pregnant.

In the passageway where she stood, there was a birthday cake on a chair. The group of more than half a dozen policemen let Wa Lone pause to blow out the candles. He walked into the courtroom grinning.

Inside, the judge declined a motion by the defense to dismiss the case against the reporters. Wa Lone's wife wept. Kyaw Soe Oo's wife wept.

On his way out of the courtroom, Wa Lone paused and shouted at the cameras pointing at him. “The culprits who committed the massacre were sentenced to 10 years in prison. However, the ones who reported on it – us – are accused under a law that can get us imprisoned for 14 years,” he said. “So, I'd like to ask the government: Where is the truth? Where is the truth and justice? Where is democracy and freedom?”

The police then led him and Kyaw Soe Oo into the back of the truck. Its tailgate clanged shut. And they were gone.

Additional reporting by Shoon Naing, Sam Aung Moon and Thu Thu Aung in Yangon.

Annex 286

Jason Motlagh, “The Survivors of the Rohingya Genocide: An investigation into Myanmar’s state-orchestrated murder of thousands of Rohingya Muslims—and the second tragedy unfolding in the refugee camps”, *Rolling Stone* (9 August 2018)

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The Survivors of the Rohingya Genocide

An investigation into Myanmar's state-orchestrated murder of thousands of Rohingya Muslims — and the second tragedy unfolding in the refugee camps

By **JASON MOTLAGH**

AUGUST 9, 2018



Rajuma Begum heard the first gunshots at eight in the morning. She was hauling furniture out of her family home in Tula Toli village, a small community of mostly Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State, on the western coast of Myanmar. She knew Rohingya had been burned out of three nearby villages in the preceding days, and Rajuma, a slight 20-year-old with somber eyes and a gold nose piercing, had been tracking the smoke plumes from her window, sleepless and on edge. She and her neighbors feared defenseless Tula Toli would be attacked next.

- ≡ After five decades of military rule nominally came to an end in Myanmar in 2011, ethnic tensions intensified across Rakhine, one of the country's poorest states and the heartland of the Rohingya, a minority long oppressed by the country's Buddhist majority. A ruthless military crackdown had left scores dead in October 2016, and forced 87,000 Rohingya to seek refuge in neighboring Bangladesh. Tula Toli, a sleepy farming community nestled in a fertile river bend, had been spared much of the bloodshed, until late last summer. Openly hostile Rakhine villagers had begun stealing Rohingya crops and livestock at will, while security forces came to loot Muslim homes and tear down farm fences. The Rohingya could not walk to the nearest market without paying bribes to Rakhine officials, and if found congregating in groups or outside after curfew, Rohingya were beaten up. "We couldn't eat because of the tension," Rajuma says.

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Rajuma had spent her entire life in the village. Working in the rice-paddy fields, she caught the eye of Rafiq, a shy neighbor with a boyish grin. They flirted with each other in passing, until one day Rafiq told his parents he wanted to marry Rajuma. His parents arranged the marriage on their son's behalf, offering five grams of gold to seal the deal. The wedding was low-key, given the prohibition against large Rohingya gatherings. Rajuma was soon pregnant with their first son, Sadiq, and the young family moved in with her parents.

She now found herself trying to save what heirlooms she could as she prepared to flee her home. Five days earlier, on August

≡

25th, 2017, small groups of Rohingya militants had stormed police outposts, killing 12 officers. The army was all too ready. A massive, scorched-earth military operation backed by helicopters and civilian death squads razed dozens of Rohingya -hamlets. As panic swept Tula Toli, the village chairman, an ethnic Rakhine Buddhist, called an emergency meeting to assure Rohingya elders there was no need to flee if the army came. "Nothing will happen to you," he pledged. A peace agreement was signed for good measure.



Rajuma (center) holding her infant son, Sadiq, five months before the attack on Tula Toli last August. Photo: Courtesy of Mohammad Rafiq

But then the attack on Tula Toli began. Sheets of incoming bullets smacked the thatch homes "like raindrops," Rajuma recalls. They were followed by rocket-propelled-grenade blasts that set the houses ablaze. Rajuma and other eyewitnesses say soldiers emerged from the tree line, firing scattershot at fleeing villagers. They were trailed by Rakhine and other non-Muslim conscripts armed with homemade muskets,

machetes and farm tools. Rajuma scooped up Sadiq and ran with her mother and younger brother down to the riverbank, where scores of other Rohingya had gathered. As the attackers closed in, Rajuma and the others found themselves trapped.

Desperate Rohingya dived into the fast-running current. Some managed to swim across hanging onto banana-tree branches, but many families were gunned down where they stood. Eyewitnesses say stray children caught by the attackers were beheaded and tossed into the river. Rajuma says she and about 200 other women and children were forced to kneel in the shallows while uniformed soldiers carried out systematic murder. Over the next three hours, the survivors say, males were lined up and shot, two or three times apiece. The militia then combed over the bodies and finished them off with blades.



Rajuma scanned the beach for her husband. She had not seen him since dawn, and worried that he might be dead. Her mother suddenly broke down; she knew they would die next. Fearing the soldiers would notice them, Rajuma tried to quiet her, but then Rajuma's 10-year-old brother, Musa Ali, began to cry and ask for forgiveness. Terrified, the boy made a run for it. He took several steps before he was cut down by gunshots.

“At that moment I felt like I was already dead,” Rajuma recalls. “I think I’m only alive to tell the world about what I saw.”

Since last August, Rajuma and some 700,000 Rohingya have flooded across the border into Bangladesh with harrowingly consistent stories of murder and rape. Authorities in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, barred investigators and journalists from entering northern Rakhine to independently verify refugees' accounts, but when I arrived in the Bangladesh camps last September, just weeks after the Tula Toli massacre, the physical evidence of genocide against civilians was overwhelming: gaping gunshot wounds, women with shredded limbs, a newborn with a bullet graze on his head, and countless orphans, dazed and hungry from breathless journeys and the raw terror of what they had seen. From the edge of the camps, I could see smoke curdling on the horizon as Burmese soldiers razed more villages to the ground. It was the most rapid human exodus since the Rwandan genocide of 1994.

≡ “The pages of my notebook are stained with my own tears,” says Peter Bouckaert, Human Rights Watch’s hard-boiled emergencies director. A veteran of the Balkans and Iraq, he had just finished interviewing a Tula Toli survivor who says her six children were murdered in front of her before she was gang-raped and left for dead in a burning home. “We’re not talking about an ordinary war,” he says. “These are unarmed villagers who are being attacked by an army that is murdering them.” For a moment, he chokes up. “We are faced with an entire people being forced out of Burma.”

In late 2010, the ruling Myanmar military began enacting a series of democratic reforms after decades as a pariah state with only China for an ally. President Obama responded by later scrapping economic sanctions, calling it “the right thing to do in order to ensure that the people of Burma see the rewards from a new way of doing business, and a new government.” But behind the smokescreen of civilian rule, the military retains enormous power, controlling security forces, police and key Cabinet positions. Despite damning evidence of atrocities, military officials maintain they were carrying out “clearance operations” against “extremist terrorists” fighting for an Islamic state in Rakhine. Denying all responsibility, they claim “Bengali invaders” – official-speak for all Rohingya Muslims – were burning down their own villages to gain international sympathy.

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Such nonsense could be expected from a hermetic military that crushed dissent and vilified ethnic and religious minorities over a half-century of brutal dictatorship. More shocking was how their bigoted doctrine was parroted by Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning human-rights icon and de facto leader of Myanmar, known to her admirers as “The Lady.” When she finally broke her silence, on Facebook, nearly two weeks after the 2017 attacks began, it was in cold defense of the same military that kept her under house arrest for 15 years when she was the country’s leading dissident. Suu Kyi blamed “terrorists” for promoting a “huge iceberg of misinformation” about the violence engulfing Rakhine. She made no mention of the Rohingya exodus.

In the wake of the violence and refugee crisis in 2016, the U.N. floated the “very likely” possibility of crimes against humanity. Yet nearly every Western diplomatic mission, including the U.N. leadership in Myanmar, opposed an investigation. Off the record, many diplomats expressed disgust over the military’s crimes, but publicly they played with words. “The government wants the world to believe [the army’s] ‘clearance

≡ operations' were a spontaneous response to a terrorist attack," says Matthew Smith, chief executive officer of the Bangkok-based human-rights group Fortify Rights. "The reality is the authorities were preparing for months to destroy Rohingya – or for years, some would argue."

The Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya have been called the "world's most persecuted minority." An estimated 1.1 million lived in Myanmar before the crisis, the descendants of Muslim traders who settled in the region more than 1,000 years ago. Though many Rohingya families have documentation going back generations, they are denied citizenship and basic rights. "The idea of the malevolent Rohingya has become such a staple of the public imagination in Myanmar," says Francis Wade, author of *Myanmar's Enemy Within: Buddhist Violence and the Making of a Muslim "Other."* Rohingya face onerous marriage restrictions, cannot vote or pursue higher education, and their movement is limited under apartheid-like conditions. Two months after the country's first modern elections, in June 2012, anti-Muslim pogroms broke out in Rakhine following the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman; 140,000 Rohingya were forced into open-air concentration camps. Squeezed between barbed wire and the sea, tens of thousands fled by boats to Thailand and Malaysia, only to become ensnared by traffickers and tortured for ransom. In May 2015, the crisis made global headlines when boats packed with starving Rohingya were stranded at sea. For weeks, no country would accept them. "That's the unique burden stateless



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That same year, a report by Yale Law School found “strong evidence” the Rohingya were facing genocide. Established in the wake of the Holocaust, the Genocide Convention created a legal definition of genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group.”

Intent to destroy, however, is hard to prove, says James Silk, the law professor who supervised the Yale study. “You’re rarely going to have the situation of Nazi Germany where they leave behind documents and plans,” he says. But based on the regime’s long-standing policies to restrict and weaken the group, a pattern of anti-Rohingya rhetoric from government officials and Buddhist leaders, and collaboration between state security forces and anti-Muslim vigilantes, the report concluded it was “difficult to avoid inferring an intent to destroy Rohingya.”

At the Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh, Rolling Stone conducted interviews with dozens of Rohingya, including 15 survivors from Tula Toli, all of whom testify to a deliberate campaign of eradication. Among them: a former Myanmar army officer whose extraordinary eyewitness account gives more proof the massacre was preplanned.

Further, a July report by Fortify Rights reveals that wide-ranging preparations were made by Myanmar authorities months in advance of the August 2017 crackdown, indicating it was not a spontaneous response to an attack but part of a premeditated plan to wipe out the Rohingya. In late 2016, the military began arming and training the civilian death squads that would carry out mass killings; systematically confiscating sharp and blunt objects from Rohingya households that could be used for self-defense; blocking food aid in order to weaken the Rohingya population; and increasing troop levels in areas where the worst atrocities would take place.



Rajuma at a refugee camp in Bangladesh. "I think I'm only alive to tell the world about what I saw," she says. Photo: Patrick Brown/Panos Pictures/UNICEF

- ≡ “When we connect the dots, it paints a sinister picture,” says Smith of Fortify Rights. “This is probably the strongest indication yet of an intent to destroy Rohingya.”

By 11 a.m., the shooting in Tula Toli had ceased. All the Rohingya men were either dead or running for their lives. Out of the monsoon clouds, a red military helicopter landed on a small plateau at the edge of the village. Nearby, Nazmul Islam was being held prisoner by border police in a guard post overlooking the village. He had watched and listened throughout the morning as soldiers and vigilantes slaughtered his friends and neighbors.

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In calmer times, Islam, 69, was regarded as a curiosity by both Rakhine and Rohingya residents of Tula Toli. An ethnic Bamar with Asiatic features, wiry limbs and a faded tattoo of a fighting peacock on his wrist, he had retired to the village with his Rakhine wife after 19 years in the Myanmar army. With a six-acre plot of land, water buffaloes and cows, he was comfortable. Yet he began to sympathize with his Rohingya neighbors. After years of studying the Koran, he converted and changed his name. His wife demanded a divorce and took him to court. He lost all his property and custody of the children.

Islam, a military veteran and card-carrying citizen of Myanmar, was forced to move to the Rohingya side of Tula Toli. He slept on the floor of a madrassa and supported himself by teaching Burmese to Rohingya students. Then he met Marbiyar, a spunky Rohingya woman who cleaned the premises. Her husband had abandoned her with an infant child, and she was less than half Islam’s age, but he was smitten. “In true love,” he says, flashing a smile, “there is no age difference.” The couple got married, even though state authorities refused to grant them permission.

Islam’s easygoing nature won him both Muslim and Buddhist friends. More important, he was literate, and his side hustle translating government documents made him useful to both communities.

On the afternoon of August 27th, three days before the military attacked Tula Toli, Islam had been summoned to a police outpost on the Rakhine side of the village at the behest of Aung Ko Sing, the Rak-hine chairman. As Islam approached, two armed officers seized him and told him not to ask questions.

- ≡ “Don’t try to escape, or we will kill you,” he recalls a Rakhine village elder warning him. “No one will feel sorry for you; we will just think a *kalar* got killed,” a racial slur used to describe darker-skinned Muslims. Islam was stunned; the man, whom he’d known for years, had never acted so hostile before. Looking back, Islam believes he had been extracted from the Rohingya village to save his life before the town was exterminated.



The physical evidence of atrocities is overwhelming among survivors in the refugee camps. Momtaz Begum (left) was treated for burns to her face and body. Seven year old Mohammad Shohail was shot in the chest. Photos: Patrick Brown/Panos Pictures/UNICEF

From the guard post, Islam saw a senior army officer step out of the helicopter to confer with another officer. Their shoulders bore the crimson logo “99,” a battle-hardened division redeployed to the area on the pretext of fighting insurgents. Islam heard the junior officer tell Rakhine leaders that 20 volunteers were needed to help dig graves for the Rohingya bodies and to “burn them all.” A police officer ordered his men to stay away from the riverbank: “The military will do their work.”

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Down on the beach, soldiers and non-Muslim militia began digging three large pits. Multiple witnesses tell Rolling Stone the dozens of corpses scattered on the flats were collected and heaved inside on the army soldiers’ orders. Rohingya men were forced to help, and then shot and dumped on top. The bodies were doused with fuel and set alight.

≡ “The smell of roasting meat, worse than that,” says Islam, recalling the foul smoke that drifted across the village. (The military’s communications unit, the True News Information Team, did not respond to Rolling Stone’s requests for comment.) As the men’s bodies burned, the soldiers turned on the women.

Waiting at the edge of the river with baby Sadiq in her lap, Rajuma watched groups of eight to 10 soldiers round up women and young teens and take them into a row of homes, where screams fell into silence. The men walked out alone, and the next group came for Rajuma. Along with four other women, she was pushed toward one of the huts by a pair of soldiers. She says one of them grabbed Sadiq and threw him into a fire pit. Two more infant girls were snatched from the other women and tossed in with him. Rajuma could hear Sadiq’s cries as the door slammed behind them. “I couldn’t do anything to save him,” she says.

Another 10 soldiers entered the room. They ordered Rajuma to give up her gold jewelry and money stashed in her bra. She refused, and a rifle butt to the head knocked her unconscious. “They raped us any way they pleased, with the intention of killing us after,” she says. “If they don’t feel shame to do these crimes, then why should we be shy to tell the whole world?”

Hours later, as the sun set, Rajuma, bloody and in shock, woke to a burning sensation: The house was on fire. Her head, ribs and groin throbbed in pain, and the women lying beside her were dead. Rajuma threw herself into the door, but it was locked. Crouching down, she says, she punched and kicked her way through a bamboo wall and slipped out the back.

By nightfall, the killers who laid waste to Tula Toli gathered near the guardhouse overlooking the village. Two-thirds of the homes were burned down, and the soldiers were in a loose, festive mood. Islam, who was detained within earshot, says they bragged about burning children alive in front of their mothers, “laughing out loud and telling each other how they took the jewelry and money off the women they raped,” Islam says. For dinner they slaughtered a cow and several goats. Then the drinking started.

- ≡ Islam stayed awake. “I was afraid they’d kill me if I slept,” he says. A hard rain fell through the night and put the smoldering fires out. In the morning, he saw corpses drifting in the river bend. The soldiers and militiamen shook off their hangovers and set the last tracts of homes ablaze. Not even dogs were spared.



Mohammad Faysal (right) spent a month hiding in the jungle after losing his arm in an attack on his village. “The scale of this crisis is unimaginable,” one aid worker says. Photo: Patrick Brown/Panos Pictures/UNICEF

When the job was done, their wrath turned on Islam. “You know that kalars can’t live in our country,” one soldier said. “If you come back to Buddhism, we will take care of you.” Islam explained he had chosen Allah after many years of deep reflection and would rather die than renounce his faith. “Motherfucker, you talk too much,” another soldier shouted, slapping him in the face. He ripped off Islam’s prayer cap and stepped on it.

Meanwhile, Rajuma spent the night wandering in the dark until she ran into some women from the village. No one knew which way to flee, where they might cross paths with keyed-up soldiers or Rak-hine vigilantes and meet their end. So they looked for small clues to guide them out – grains of rice, chilies, scarves that people dropped in flight.

For three days and nights the women pushed through paddy fields and mud-slick hills sluiced with rain. “I couldn’t feel any pain or even notice the blood flowing out of my

body,” Rajuma says. Eventually, they fell in with a stream of Rohingya walking toward the Naf River, the western border with Bangladesh. The banks were thronged with frantic people negotiating passage with smugglers. On Saturday morning, as Muslims worldwide celebrated the start of the Eid festival, Rajuma and seven others made the boat crossing and became refugees.

Bangladesh, one of the poorest, most densely populated countries in the world, rallied to handle a humanitarian crisis of epic proportions. On the fringes of Kutupalong, a sprawling supercamp already home to some 400,000 Rohingya refugees displaced by previous waves of violence, the latest arrivals were busy clear-cutting hillsides to make new camps. Shacks of bamboo and tarpaulin tumbled down into ravines choked with waste. In the alleys, loudspeakers crackled with the names of children who were missing parents; on the roadsides, soldiers beat back crowds jostling for aid packages of rice and oil. Several people were trampled to death in the chaos.

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Relief workers invariably described the dismal conditions as a public-health “time bomb.” Access to food and clean water was strained by the endless stream of new arrivals; early outbreaks of measles and diphtheria warned of the devastating potential for a cholera epidemic, as NGOs rushed to vaccinate settlements that swelled by the day. “The scale of this crisis is unimaginable,” a Dutch doctor tells me. “We have babies being born in our clinics today, and I’m worried that when I come back 20 years from now they’ll still be living in this camp.”



Rohingya fleeing across the Naf River to Bangladesh. The crisis made global headlines in 2015 when boats packed with starving Rohingya were stranded at sea. For weeks, no country would accept them. Photo: Patrick Brown/Panos Pictures/UNICEF

While receiving care at a Doctors Without Borders clinic, Rajuma had an unexpected visitor: her husband, Rafiq. “Rajuma, Rajuma,” he repeated, but she couldn’t answer. Her mouth was bloody, teeth askew. Gashes carved her skull, and her torso was covered with bruises and cuts that had to be stitched up. His firstborn son, Sadiq, was gone.

When army troops had advanced on Tula Toli in a hail of gunfire, Rafiq had dived into the river and thrashed across as rounds snapped over his head. Climbing up a tree for cover, he saw men being executed and groups of women taken inside homes. He was unable to make out their faces, but assumed Rajuma was among them. “After seeing that, I realized no one would be spared,” he says. Rafiq reached Kutupalong in three days and was panhandling by the road when a relative recognized him and directed him to the clinic where he found his wife.

In the overcrowded camp, Rafiq found a small dirt tract on a rise near the main road and gathered some bamboo and plastic sheeting to build a home where he and Rajuma could live when she was discharged. At least 10 neighbors are Tula Toli transplants, including

III Nazmul Islam. After he endured regular beatings over a month in captivity, the army soldiers had issued him an ultimatum: Convert or die. Islam was prepared to die, but his guards had left him unbound, figuring he was too weak to escape. Two days later, while they were busy cooking a meal, he made his move. “The old man is running,” someone shouted as he dashed away. Five gunshots missed. Islam tore through the bush and ran to the next village, then the next, finally making his way to Bangladesh. In the camps, he reunited with his wife and their five children, who had fled Tula Toli after Islam’s arrest.

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Now, Islam is sick with fever and bears the scars of daily abuse. He worries his kids will grow up fatherless and depressed in exile. “We don’t have any light in our life,” he says. “Everything is dark.” Five times a day he trudges uphill to a makeshift mosque to say his prayers and collect alms for his medicine. Most of the time, though, he sits in the doorway of his shack, haunted by visions he can’t shake.

“I saw limitless cruelty,” says Islam. “We can cure the wounds on our skin, but we can’t cure the injuries in our minds.”

Noor Kabir, Tula Toli’s village representative, lives in a camp down the road. He shows me a notebook filled with names, ages and village quarters of Rohingya residents he has confirmed killed or missing. “There are 410 people here,” he says, drawing a finger down the list. “At least 700 are still missing.” He recites names aloud “. . . Lal Mia – one year, Ahmed Hussain – 85 . . .” and riffs memories of the ones he knew well. He keeps adding names to the book. “Now we are stuck here under these plastic roofs,” he says. “What can we say about justice?”

III





Illustration: Meghan Kelly, The University of Wisconsin Cartography Lab.

Nearly a year on, Rohingya are still fleeing Rakhine. I returned to Bangladesh in mid-March, the day after a group of several hundred crossed over. They tell me they'd spent months evading authorities and scrounging for food. Several had seen bulldozers razing villages firsthand. Satellite imagery confirms more than 350 hamlets have been destroyed so far across the state. Entire crime scenes, and the remnants of Rohingya culture, are being erased, leaving no chance of a credible autopsy.

But details of hidden crimes keep trickling out. Two Burmese reporters working for Reuters, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, were arrested in December on bogus charges while investigating the murder of 10 Rohingya men and boys in the village of Inn Din. A Myanmar police officer has since testified that Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were "set up" by police higher-ups, but the pair are still in jail. The whistle-blowing officer is now locked up too.

Doctors Without Borders has estimated that 6,700 Rohingya were killed in the first month of the military's crackdown in Rakhine last fall, including at least 730 children under the age of five. Jarring as this number is, it was a conservative figure extrapolated from a limited sample of refugees in just one area of Bangladesh. It does not include Rohingya in other settlements, or those still mired in Myanmar. (There are reportedly at least 120,000 Rohingya confined to internment camps in Rakhine State.) Humanitarian groups say the best indications that the actual death toll is far higher are the nearly 40,000 unaccompanied children Bangladesh has counted in its refugee camps.

- ≡ Beyond harsh words, the U.S. has done almost nothing to penalize the perpetrators. Before he was fired by President Trump, then-Secretary of State Rex Tillerson said the Burmese military should be held responsible for “crimes against humanity,” but he made no effort to actually ensure any criminal accountability. Punishment has so far amounted to pulling military aid from a few units involved in the violence and sanctioning a single officer, Maj. Gen. Maung Maung Soe, the chief of the army’s western command, which encompasses Rakhine State.



Four-year-old refugee Sami Alter suffers from acute malnutrition. Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, is struggling to handle a public-health “time bomb.” Photo: Patrick Brown/Panos Pictures/UNICEF

In late June, the European Union and Canada imposed sanctions on seven senior military officers, notably Maj. Gen. Soe and Lt. Gen. Aung Kyaw Zaw, the chief of the Special Operations Bureau for western Myanmar. He commanded Divisions 33 and 99 in Northern Rakhine during the massacre in Tula Toli. To date, no punitive steps have been taken against the army’s commander in chief, Gen. Min Aung Hlaing. Getting away with what amounted to a slap on the wrist has emboldened the military to ramp up long-running anti-minority campaigns elsewhere in the country, where a bounty of jade, timber and hydropower riches are up for grabs and civilians are in the crosshairs.

≡ Predictably, the U.N. has buried its head in the business of humanitarian relief while offering impotent condemnations. In March, its top human-rights investigator in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, said she was “increasingly of the opinion that the events bear the hallmarks of genocide,” the harshest words we’re likely to hear from a diplomat. (Lee has been banned from the country.) In September, a U.N. fact-finding mission is due to report on a yearlong inquiry. Damning evidence of crimes against humanity and genocide are sure to emerge, adding to the overwhelming body of evidence gathered by journalists and human-rights monitors. But then what?

The U.N. Security Council will not refer the matter to the International Criminal Court. China, which sits on the council and remains Myanmar’s unflinching ally and biggest trade partner, has made multibillion-dollar investments all over the country, including in Rakhine, with a new industrial park, oil-and-gas terminal and a deep-water port. A Myanmar state security official put it bluntly back in September: “China is our friend, and we have a similar friendly relationship with Russia, so it will not be possible for that issue to go forward.”

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Meanwhile, after years of conflict, as much as 90 percent of the Rohingya population – more than 850,000 people – has been hunted out of Rakhine. Familiar warning signs went ignored, a slow-motion genocide turned fast and furious, and Western powers still can’t agree on a name, much less a penalty. “The U.N. and policymakers around the globe are fully aware that the persecution of the Rohingya will eventually be classified legally as a genocide,” says Azeem Ibrahim, a senior fellow at the Center for Global Policy in Washington and author of *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar’s Hidden Genocide*. “Just like Rwanda, the international community will hem and haw until the removal of the Rohingya from Myanmar has been completed and action is no longer necessary. We are then likely to see some low-level military commanders carted off to The Hague as scapegoats to be tried for the crimes against humanity of an entire society.”

In a cynical PR stunt, Myanmar officials have dangled the prospect of allowing Rohingya to return, on condition that qualifying refugees agree to renounce all claims on citizenship. Out of an initial batch of 8,032 refugees’ documents handed over by Bangladesh, only 374 were accepted. The U.N. has since played into this farce by signing a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar to pursue the repatriation of Rohingya

≡ refugees – without obligating protections for them or accountability for the genocidal campaign.



A mass grave for a group of Rohingya who drowned while trying to escape Myanmar. Photo: Patrick Brown/Panos Pictures/UNICEF

“I would rather drink poison than go back to Burma,” says Rajuma, who in addition to her son and brother, lost her parents and two sisters in the attack. Like most Rohingya, she says returning is not an option until their rights and safety can be guaranteed. She grapples with thoughts of suicide. The sight of Bangladeshi soldiers patrolling the road outside sends her into panic.

On a scorching-hot morning, Rajuma swaddles herself in a black nylon burka that has only a slit for her eyes. Trailing Rafiq with a low gaze, she walks past Nazmul Islam’s house to a food-distribution point. For months, the couple have had to subsist on rice and vegetable handouts. But having waited more than an hour, they go home empty-handed.



Back in their airless shack, swatting mosquitoes, Rafiq shares the good news that Rajuma's loose clothing hides: She is four months pregnant. But he's worried. "Rajuma is sick five out of 10 days," he says, adding that she needs better nutrition to deliver a healthy child in a filthy, overcrowded camp where sickness thrives. "She wants meat and fish, but I cannot feed her anything."

The couple's woes are poised to get worse during the summer monsoon season, which coincides with her due date, and severe flooding threatens to wash out vast swaths of the camp. Rafiq, Rajuma and their next-born may have to move again.

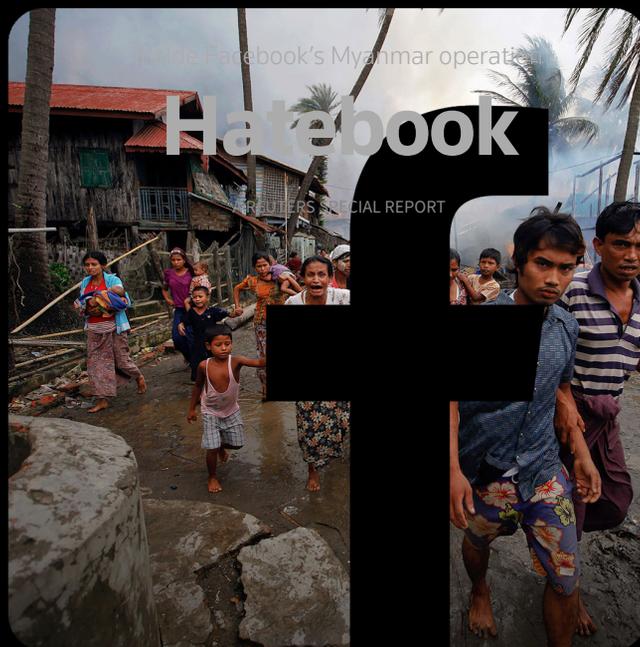
"It's all because we're Rohingya," Rajuma says. "For us, there is no place to stand."

Jason Motlagh has written for "The Washington Post" and "Time." This report was supported with a grant from the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting, where Motlagh is a Fellow

In This Article: RSX

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Steve Stecklow, “Hatebook: Why Facebook is losing the war on hate speech in Myanmar”,
Reuters (15 August 2018)



ETHNIC VIOLENCE: There have been repeated outbreaks of communal violence in Myanmar. In March, a United Nations investigator said Facebook had been used to incite hatred against the Rohingya. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

Why Facebook is losing the war on hate speech in Myanmar

Reuters found more than 1,000 examples of posts, comments and pornographic images attacking the Rohingya and other Muslims on Facebook. A secretive operation set up by the social media giant to combat the hate speech is failing to end the problem.

By STEVE STECKLOW Filed Aug. 15, 2018, 3 p.m. GMT

YANGON, Myanmar – In April, Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg told U.S. senators that the social media site was hiring dozens more Burmese speakers to review hate speech posted in Myanmar. The situation was dire.

Some 700,000 members of the Rohingya community had recently fled the country amid a military crackdown and ethnic violence. In March, a United Nations investigator said Facebook was used to incite violence and hatred against the Muslim minority group. The platform, she said, had “turned into a beast.”

Four months after Zuckerberg’s pledge to act, here is a sampling of posts from Myanmar that were viewable this month on Facebook:

One user posted a restaurant advertisement featuring Rohingya-style food. “We must fight them the way Hitler did the Jews, damn kalars!” the person wrote, using a pejorative for the Rohingya. That post went up in December 2013.

Another post showed a news article from an army-controlled publication about attacks on police stations by Rohingya militants. “These non-human kalar dogs, the Bengalis, are killing and destroying our land, our water and our ethnic people,” the user wrote. “We need to destroy their race.” That post went up last September, as the violence against the Rohingya peaked.

A third user shared a blog item that pictures a boatload of Rohingya refugees landing in Indonesia. “Pour fuel and set fire so that they can meet Allah faster,” a commenter wrote. The post appeared 11 days after Zuckerberg’s Senate testimony.

The remarks are among more than 1,000 examples Reuters found of posts, comments, images and videos attacking the Rohingya or other Myanmar Muslims that were on Facebook as of last week. Almost all are in the main local language, Burmese. The anti-Rohingya and anti-Muslim invective analyzed for this article – which was collected by Reuters and the Human Rights Center at UC Berkeley School of Law – includes material that’s been up on Facebook for as long as six years.

The poisonous posts call the Rohingya or other Muslims dogs, maggots and rapists, suggest they be fed to pigs, and urge they be shot or exterminated. The material also includes crudely pornographic anti-Muslim images. The company’s rules specifically prohibit attacking ethnic groups with “violent or dehumanising speech” or comparing them to animals. Facebook also has long had a strict policy against pornographic content.

The use of Facebook to spread hate speech against the Rohingya in the Buddhist-majority country has been widely reported by the U.N. and others. Now, a Reuters investigation gives an inside look at why the company has failed to stop the problem.

For years, Facebook – which reported net income of \$15.9 billion in 2017 – devoted scant resources to combat hate speech in Myanmar, a market it dominates and in which there have been regular outbreaks of ethnic violence. In early 2015, there were only two people at Facebook who could speak Burmese reviewing problematic posts. Before that, most of the people reviewing Burmese content spoke English.

Hate speech against the Rohingya on Facebook

Here are a few of the more than 1,000 examples Reuters recently found of posts, comments, images and videos attacking the Rohingya or other Muslims on Facebook. Some of the poisonous content on the social media platform described them as dogs, maggots and rapists, and suggested they be fed to pigs.



August 27, 2017 · 🌐

Follow

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“May the terrorist dog kalars fall fast and die horrible deaths”

Some examples that included the words “dog kalars,” “damn kalars” and “Bengali whore” that were posted between 2012 and 2018:

Source: Facebook

To this day, the company continues to rely heavily on users reporting hate speech in part because its systems struggle to interpret Burmese text.

Even now, Facebook doesn't have a single employee in the country of some 50 million people. Instead, it monitors hate speech from abroad. This is mainly done through a secretive operation in Kuala Lumpur that's outsourced to Accenture, the professional services firm, and codenamed “Project Honey Badger.”

According to people familiar with the matter, the project, which handles many Asian countries, hired its first two Burmese speakers, who were based in Manila, just three years ago. As of June, Honey Badger had about 60 people reviewing reports of hate speech and other content posted by Myanmar's 18 million active Facebook users. Facebook itself in April had three full-time Burmese speakers at a separate monitoring operation at its international headquarters in Dublin, according to a former employee.

Honey Badger employees typically sign one-year renewable contracts and agree not to divulge that the client is Facebook. Reuters interviewed more than a half-dozen former monitors who reviewed Southeast Asian content.

A Facebook official said outsourcing its content monitoring is more efficient because the companies it uses are specialists in ramping up such operations. He declined to disclose how many Burmese speakers the company has on the job worldwide, saying it was “impossible to know, to be definitive on that.”

“It's not enough,” he added.

For many people in this emerging economy, Facebook is the internet: It's so dominant, it's the only site they use online. Yet, the company ignored repeated warnings as far back as 2013 that it faced trouble.

Researchers and human rights activists say they cautioned Facebook for years that its platform was being used in Myanmar to promote racism and hatred of Muslims, in particular the Rohingya.

"They were warned so many times," said David Madden, a tech entrepreneur who worked in Myanmar. He said he told Facebook officials in 2015 that its platform was being exploited to foment hatred in a talk he gave at its headquarters in Menlo Park, California. About a dozen Facebook people attended the meeting in person, including Mia Garlick, now the company's director of Asia Pacific policy, he said. Others joined via video. "It couldn't have been presented to them more clearly, and they didn't take the necessary steps," Madden said.

In a statement, Garlick told Reuters: "We were too slow to respond to the concerns raised by civil society, academics and other groups in Myanmar. We don't want Facebook to be used to spread hatred and incite violence. This is true around the world, but it is especially true in Myanmar where our services can be used to amplify hate or exacerbate harm against the Rohingya."

She added that Facebook is focused on addressing challenges that are unique to Myanmar "through a combination of people, technology, policies and programs." The company also said it has banned several "hate figures and organizations" on Facebook in Myanmar.

Facebook's struggles in Myanmar are among much broader problems it faces. Zuckerberg's congressional testimony in April primarily focused on the company's mishandling of user data, whether it censors conservative views and Russia's exploitation of Facebook to meddle in the 2016 U.S. presidential election.



HATE MONITORS: Facebook reviews hate speech in Myanmar from an outsourced operation run by Accenture and codenamed Project Honey Badger. The poster refers to employees as "silent heroes." Source: Via Facebook

"Cut off those necks of the sons of the dog and kick them into the water"

April 2018

"Stuff pig's fat inside the damn kalar's mouth"

September 2017

"Pour fuel and set fire so that they can meet Allah faster"

April 2018

Of all of Facebook's travails, though, Myanmar may be the bloodiest. The Myanmar military stands accused by the U.N. of having conducted a brutal campaign of killings, mass rape, arson and ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya. The government denies the allegations.

The social media giant doesn't make public its data on hate speech in Myanmar. It says it has 2.2 billion global users and each week receives millions of user reports from around the world about problematic content.

In compiling examples of hate speech for this article, Reuters found some that Facebook subsequently removed. But the vast majority remained online as of early August.

After Reuters alerted Facebook to some of the derogatory posts included in this story, the company said it removed them. "All of it violated our policies," it said.

Reuters itself sometimes flags to Facebook threats posted on the platform against its reporters. These include the Burmese journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who are on trial in Myanmar on charges of violating a state secrets law. The two were arrested in December while reporting on the massacre of 10 Rohingya men and have received a deluge of death threats on social media over their story. Facebook has removed such content several times at the news agency's request.

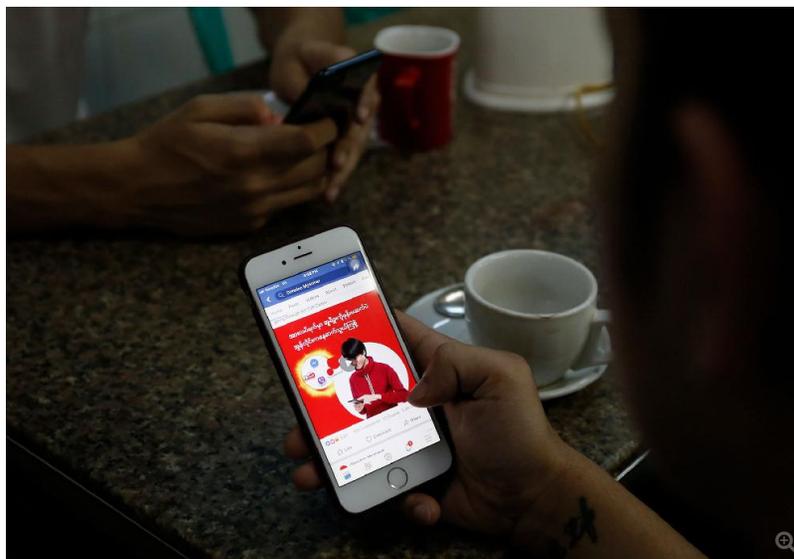
'Sending flowers'

Myanmar emerged from decades of military rule in 2011, but religious violence has marred its transition to democracy. In 2012, clashes in Rakhine State between ethnic Rakhine, who are Buddhists, and the Rohingya killed scores of people and left 140,000 displaced – mostly Muslims.

Facebook's extraordinary dominance in Myanmar began taking root around the same time. But not by design.

As recently as six years ago, Myanmar was one of the least connected countries on earth. In 2012, only 1.1 percent of the population used the internet and few people had telephones, according to the International Telecommunication Union, a U.N. agency. The junta that had ruled the country for decades kept citizens isolated.

That all changed in 2013, when a quasi-civilian government oversaw the deregulation of telecommunications. The state-owned phone company suddenly faced competition from two foreign mobile-phone entrants from Norway and Qatar.



UBIQUITOUS: A cellphone user looks at a Facebook page in a shop in downtown Yangon in early August. For many in Myanmar, Facebook is the internet. REUTERS/Ann Wang

The price of SIM cards dropped from more than \$200 to as little as \$2 and people purchased them in droves. By 2016, nearly half the population had mobile phone subscriptions, according to GSMA Intelligence, the research arm of the industry's trade association. Most purchased smartphones with internet access.

One app went viral: Facebook. Many saw it as an all-in-one solution – offering a messaging system, news, and videos and other entertainment. It also became a status symbol, said Chris Tun, a former Deloitte consultant who advised the government. “If you don’t use Facebook, you’re behind,” he said. “Even grandmas, everyone was on Facebook.”

To capture customers, Myanmar’s mobile phone operators began offering a sweet deal: use Facebook without paying any data charges.

“Facebook should be sending flowers to me, because we have been an accelerator for bringing the penetration,” said Lars Erik Tellmann, who until July was chief executive of Telenor Myanmar, part of Norway’s Telenor Group. “This was an initiative we took fully on our own. And this was extremely popular.”

In Myanmar today, the government itself uses Facebook to make major announcements, including the resignation of the president in March.

2014: 1.2m

2015: 7.3m

2016: 11m

2017: 15m

2018: 18m

(Facebook users in Myanmar in millions)

Sources: We Are Social, Hootsuite, Kepios and Facebook

‘Genocide all of the Muslims’

In the fall of 2013, Aela Callan, an Australian documentary filmmaker studying at Stanford University, began a project on hate speech and false reports that had spread online during conflicts between Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims the prior year. In June 2012, at least 80 people had died in riots and thousands of Rohingya were moved into squalid internment camps. Anti-Rohingya diatribes appeared on Facebook. One Buddhist nationalist group set up a page called the “Kalar Beheading Gang.”

In November 2013, she met at Facebook’s California headquarters with Elliott Schrage, vice president of communications and public policy. “I was trying to alert him to the problems,” she said.

Emails between the two show that Schrage put Callan in touch with internet.org, a Facebook initiative to bring the internet to developing countries, and with two Facebook officials, including one who worked with civil-society organizations to assist the company in coping with hate speech.

“He didn’t connect me to anyone inside Facebook who could deal with the actual problem,” she said.

Asked for comment, Schrage referred Reuters to a press person at Facebook. The company didn’t comment on the meeting.

Matt Schissler, a doctoral student at the University of Michigan, said that between March and December 2014, he held discussions with Facebook officials in a series of calls and online communications. He told them how the platform was being used to spread hate speech and false rumors in Myanmar, he said, including via fake accounts. He and other activists provided the company with specific examples, including a Facebook page in Burmese that was called, “We will genocide all of the Muslims and feed them to the dogs.” The page was removed.



ARMY CRACKDOWN: A car stands next to a house that was burned down in Maungdaw in Rakhine State last year during a military campaign that the United States has denounced as ethnic cleansing. Human rights activists and researchers say they warned Facebook for years that its platform was being used to spread hate speech against Muslims in Myanmar. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

Schissler belonged to a private Facebook group that was set up so that Myanmar human rights activists, researchers and company employees such as Asia Pacific policy chief Garlick could discuss how to cope with hate speech and other issues. The activists brought up numerous problems with Facebook's multi-step reporting system for problematic content. As one example, they cited a photograph of an aid worker in Rakhine State in a post that called him "a traitor to the nation." It had been shared 229 times, according to messages reviewed by Reuters.

One of the private group's members had reported it to Facebook as harassment of an individual but later received a message back: "We reviewed the photo you reported for containing hate speech or symbols and found it doesn't violate our Community Standards." After multiple complaints by activists over six weeks, a Facebook employee finally explained to the activists that the takedown request was rejected because the photo had been reported, but not the comment above it. It eventually was taken down.

In March 2015, Schissler gave a talk at Facebook's California headquarters about new media, particularly Facebook, and anti-Muslim violence in Myanmar. More than a dozen Facebook employees attended, he said.

Two months later, Madden, the tech entrepreneur, gave a talk at Facebook headquarters about tensions and violence between Buddhists and Muslims. He said he showed a doctored picture that had spread on Facebook of the country's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who is Buddhist, wearing a Muslim head scarf. The image, Madden said, was meant to imply she was sympathetic to Muslims – a "very negative message" in Myanmar.

"The whole point of this presentation was really just to sound the alarm, to show very vividly the context in which Facebook was operating, and already the evidence of how it was being misused," he said. He left the meeting thinking his audience took the talk seriously and would take action.

"May the Rakhine people ... and all Myanmar citizens be free from the dangers of sons of a dog, grandchildren of a pig kalar, and rapists"

September 2013

“Just feed them to the pigs”

October 2016

“If it’s kalar, get rid of the whole race”

October 2016

Madden had founded a technology hub and start-up accelerator in Yangon called Phandeeяр. He said he and others involved with the venture interacted with Facebook “many dozens” of times over the next several years, including via email, in the private Facebook group and in person, showing how the network’s systems for detecting and removing dangerous content were ineffective. He isn’t sure what steps the company took in response. “The central problem is that the mechanisms that they have to pull down hate speech in a timely way, before it does real world harm, they don’t work,” he said.

Madden and Jes Kaliebe Petersen, Phandeeяр’s chief executive, said Facebook was still relying too much on their group and other volunteers to report dangerous posts. “It shouldn’t be incumbent on an organization like ours or people who happen to be well-connected with folks inside Facebook to report these things,” Petersen said.

In April, shortly before Zuckerberg’s Senate testimony, Phandeeяр and five other Myanmar groups blasted him for claiming in an interview with Vox that Facebook’s systems had detected and removed incendiary messages in September last year. “We believe your system, in this case, was us,” they wrote. Zuckerberg apologized.

Back in 2014, tech organizations and researchers weren’t the only ones sounding alarms with Facebook. So was the Myanmar government.

In July of that year, riots broke out in the central city of Mandalay after false rumors spread online, on Facebook and elsewhere, that a Muslim man had raped a Buddhist woman. A Buddhist man and a Muslim man were killed in the fighting.

The Myanmar government asked Tun, then a Deloitte consultant, to contact the company. He said he didn’t succeed at first, and the government briefly blocked Facebook.

Tun said he eventually helped to arrange meetings between the government and Facebook. “What they promised to do was, when you spot fake news, you could contact them via email,” Tun said of Facebook. “And they would take action – they were willing to take down pages after their own verification process.”

The government began reporting cases to Facebook, but Tun said he quickly realized the company couldn’t deal with Burmese text. “Honestly, Facebook had no clue about Burmese content. They were totally unprepared,” he said. “We had to translate it into English for them.”

‘I don’t know the language’

In August 2013, Zuckerberg announced a plan to make the internet available for the first time to billions of people in developing countries.

“Everything Facebook has done has been about giving all people around the world the power to connect,” he said. The company would now work, he added, to make “internet access available to those who cannot currently afford it.”

But in Myanmar, the language barrier would cause trouble. Most people here don’t speak English. Although Myanmar users at the time could post on Facebook in Burmese, the platform’s interface – including its system for reporting problematic posts – was in English.

Making matters worse, the company's operation for monitoring content in Burmese was meagre.

In 2014, the social media behemoth had just one content reviewer who spoke Burmese: a local contractor in Dublin, according to messages sent by Facebook employees in the private Facebook chat group. A second Burmese speaker began working in early 2015, the messages show.

In Manila – the original site of the outsourced Project Honey Badger – there were no content reviewers who spoke Burmese. People who reviewed Myanmar content there spoke English.

“In cases like hate speech where we didn't understand the language, we would say, 'I don't know the language,’” said a person who worked there. “So the client had to solve that,” the person said, referring to Facebook.

By 2015, Facebook had around four Burmese speakers reviewing Myanmar content in Manila and Dublin. They were stretched thin: that year Facebook had 7.3 million active users in Myanmar.

Accenture slowly began to hire more Burmese speakers. With the help of volunteer translators, Facebook also introduced a Burmese-language interface.

By 2016, the Honey Badger project had moved to Kuala Lumpur after Accenture convinced Facebook it would be easier to recruit Burmese and others to work in Malaysia's capital than in further-off Manila, according to a person familiar with the matter.

In an office tower in Kuala Lumpur, teams of content monitors are assigned to handle different Asian countries, not just Myanmar. They are paid around \$850 to \$1000 a month and are often employed by temporary staffing agencies, according to ex-employees and online recruitment ads.

Facebook said in a statement: “We've chosen to work only with highly reputable, global partners that take care of their employees, pay them well and provide robust benefits - this includes Accenture in Asia Pacific.”

A spokesperson for Accenture confirmed it partners with Facebook. “The characterization of our operations as ‘secretive’ is misleading and confidentiality is in place primarily to protect the privacy and security of our people and the clients we serve,” the spokesperson said.



FACING SCRUTINY: Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg, seen testifying here on Capitol Hill in April, was quizzed over Facebook's failure to stem hate speech on its platform in Myanmar. For years, the social media giant invested scant resources in combating hate speech in the country. REUTERS/Leah Millis

The communications man

Former content monitors said they often each had to make judgments on 1,000 or more potentially problematic content items a day, although the number is now understood to be less. Facebook's complete rules about what is and isn't allowed on its platform are spelled out in its internal community standards enforcement guidelines, which the company made public for the first time in April. It defines hate speech as “violent or dehumanising speech, statements of inferiority, or calls for exclusion or segregation” against people based on their race, ethnicity, religious affiliation and other characteristics.

In response, Facebook said: “Content reviewers aren't required to evaluate any set number of posts ... We encourage reviewers to take the time they need.”

A Facebook official also told Reuters the community standards policy is global, “but there are local nuances,” such as slurs, that content reviewers who are native speakers can consider when making decisions. But former content monitors told Reuters the rules were inconsistent; sometimes they could make exceptions and sometimes they couldn't.

Former content monitors also said they were trained to err on the side of keeping content on Facebook. “Most of the time, you try to give the user the benefit of the doubt,” said one former Facebook employee.

The ex-monitors said they sometimes had as little as a few seconds to decide if a post constituted hate speech or violated Facebook's community standards in some other way. They said they didn't actually search for hate speech themselves; instead, they reviewed a giant queue of posts mostly reported by Facebook users.



MARKET PENETRATION: The sun rises behind the entrance sign to the Facebook headquarters in Menlo Park, California, in 2012, a time when only 1.1 percent of people in Myanmar used the internet. Six years on, the company has 18 million users in the country, about a third of the population. REUTERS/Beck Diefenbach/File Photo

Many of the millions of items flagged globally each week – including violent diatribes and lurid sexual imagery – are detected by automated systems, Facebook says. But a company official acknowledged to Reuters that its systems have difficulty interpreting Burmese script because of the way the fonts are often rendered on computer screens, making it difficult to identify racial slurs and other hate speech.

Facebook’s troubles are evident in a new feature that allows users to translate Burmese content into English. Consider a post Reuters found from August of last year.

In Burmese, the post says: “Kill all the kalars that you see in Myanmar; none of them should be left alive.”

Facebook’s translation into English: “I shouldn’t have a rainbow in Myanmar.”

In response, Facebook said: “Our translations team is actively working on new ways to ensure that translations are accurate.” The company said it uses a different system to detect hate speech.

Guy Rosen, vice president of product management, wrote in a blog post on Facebook in May about the problems the company faced in identifying hate speech. “Our technology still doesn’t work that well and so it needs to be checked by our review teams,” he wrote.

Facebook officials say they have no immediate plans to hire any employees in Myanmar itself. But the company does contract with local agencies for tasks unrelated to content monitoring. One is Echo Myanmar, a communications firm whose managing director is Anthony Larmon, an American.

Larmon has expressed strong opinions on the Rohingya. Toward the end of 2016, the Myanmar army launched an onslaught across some 10 villages after Rohingya militants attacked border posts. At the time, a U.N. official accused the government of seeking “ethnic cleansing” of the Rohingya.

In November 2016, Larmon wrote that an article about the U.N. allegation was “misleading.” He cited what he said were claims by multiple “local journalists” that the ethnic minority “purposely exaggerate (lie about)” their situation to “get more foreign aid and attention.”

He also wrote: “No, they aren’t facing ethnic cleansing or anything remotely close to what that incendiary term suggests.” He said he later removed the post.

A Facebook spokesperson said that Larmon’s post “does not represent Facebook’s view.”

Larmon told Reuters: “It was overly-emotional, under-informed commentary on a highly nuanced subject that I do regret. My view on the Rohingya, same today as then, is that they should be safely repatriated and protected.”

The platform on which he aired his views about the Rohingya? Facebook.

Additional reporting by Tin Htet Paing, Simon Lewis, Shoon Naing and Aye Min Thant in Yangon.



FLEEING: Rohingya refugees who fled an army crackdown in western Myanmar last year are seen here after crossing the border into Bangladesh in October. REUTERS/Jorge Silva

Facebook isn't alone

By STEVE STECKLOW

Facebook isn't the only social-media platform that contains hate speech against Rohingya Muslims. It also has proliferated on Twitter.

In Myanmar, Twitter is far less popular than Facebook. But after Rohingya insurgents attacked police stations in August 2017, sparking an army crackdown that forced 700,000 people to abandon their homes, hundreds of new Twitter accounts suddenly sprang up in Myanmar.

Many of the tweets on these accounts appeared to be attempts to counter sympathetic portrayals of the Rohingya by the Western news media and human rights activists. They portray the ethnic minority as illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh, or "Bengalis." Members of the ethnic group regard themselves as native to Rakhine State in western Myanmar, but the country has denied most of them citizenship.

Some tweets on these accounts were in broken English:

"There is no Rohingya in Myanmar they are only illegal immigrant and terrorists."

"They are Originally Bangalis, Illegally migrants and Land Robbers"

These and similar tweets could still be found online this month. Twitter's "Hateful conduct policy" forbids attacking groups of people on the basis of race, ethnicity or national origin, or engaging in "behavior that incites fear about a protected group."

Twitter removed a number of tweets flagged to it by Reuters.

Matthew Smith, co-founder of Fortify Rights, a Southeast Asia-based human rights group, said that after the attacks by Rohingya insurgents in August last year he noticed "suspicious" accounts suddenly following him on Twitter.

Reuters analyzed Smith's new Twitter followers in the aftermath of the attacks with assistance from two Twitter analytics services, ExportTweet.com and Mentionmapp Analytics.

The analysis showed that more than 1,200 of the new Twitter accounts following Smith were created between August 27 and August 31, at the height of the military crackdown against the Rohingya in western Rakhine state. A review of 564 of those accounts found that 349, or 62 percent, were anti-Rohingya, according to John Gray, Mentionmapp's co-founder. Mentionmapp did not analyze the viewpoints of the other accounts.

A report by Mentionmapp found that the emergence of these accounts probably wasn't automated - meaning they weren't bots - but appeared to be mainly a short-lived, "orchestrated" anti-Rohingya campaign designed to resemble a grassroots movement. Thirty-one percent of the 1,239 new accounts stopped tweeting by the end of September and became dormant.

Gray said he couldn't "confirm or determine there's a central organization/operator behind all of the behavior." Mentionmapp's report also stated: "It's fair to say Facebook wasn't the only home to 'hate speech' directed at the Rohingya."

Hatebook

By Steve Stecklow

Photo editing: Dharmasari Haroun

Design: Troy Dunkley

Visual editor: Sarah Slobin

Edited by Peter Hirschberg

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“Myanmar ditches Surakiart’s Rohingya probe”, *The Nation Thailand* (17 August 2018)

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Myanmar ditches Surakiart's Rohingya probe

Editor's Picks

Aug 17, 2018



Surakiart Sathirathai, chairman of Rakhine Advisory Board, talks to media about the Rakhine Advisory Board final report during the press conference in Naypyitaw, Myanmar, 16 August 2018. EPA-EFE/HEIN HTET



By The Nation

Myanmar says the advisory board headed by former Thai foreign minister Surakiart Sathirathai has submitted its final report on the Rohingya crisis, suggesting the probe has been axed.

When it was formed at the end of last year, it was announced that the advisory board of five international and five Burmese members would have a term of one year, with the possibility of a renewal.

The other international members were Lord Ara Darzi of the United Kingdom, Urban Ahlin of Sweden and Roelf Meyer of South Africa. Another member, Bill Richardson of the United States, resigned after the first meeting of the board in protest against State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's handling of the Rohingya humanitarian crisis.

Some members of the advisory board will remain engaged, including in inter-communal dialogue, the pilot project for a model township and assistance to the health sector in Rakhine State, the statement said.

When the board held its third meeting in Nay Pyi Taw in mid-July, it was expected to submit a half-term report.

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The report was not finalised for submission, due primarily to the resignation a few days earlier of its main drafter, former Thai ambassador Kobsak Chutikul.

Questions are being asked about what the report contained, amid suggestions that much work was needed in the repatriation and resettlement of Rohingya Muslims.

Some commentators said the report will validate the charge of "whitewash" directed at the board from Richardson, a former US energy secretary.

Another question concerns what is to be the status of the 88 recommendations contained in the Kofi Annan Commission report submitted in August 2017.

The Surakiart board was tasked to advise on the implementation of the recommendations.

The Burmese implementation committee headed by Social Welfare Minister Win Myat Aye declared that 80 out of the 88 recommendations has been implemented, with the remainder dealing with issues like citizenship requiring more time.

The international community has consistently called for the "full implementation" of the recommendations.

The UN Security Council is scheduled on August 28 to debate the issues and hear a report from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Also present in Nay Pyi Taw is the new body established a couple of weeks ago, the Commission of Enquiry, headed by former Philippine undersecretary for foreign affairs, Rosario Manalo.

It was apparently engaged in working out terms of reference, funding and secretarial support structure.

Kobsak said the decision of Nay Pyi Taw to wind down the advisory board was understandable. Having too many bodies could pose administrative burdens and any overlapping mandates would be unhelpful and counterproductive, he said.

The Richardson Centre in Washington tweeted that after just seven months with no improvement in Rakhine State, the advisory board has been wrapped up.

It said Richardson stands by his original resignation letter in January in which he expressed alarm at the lack of sincerity by Nay Pyi Taw on the "critical issue" of citizenship and the "cheerleading squad" nature of the advisory board.

Richardson blamed the board chairman, Surakiart, whom he accused of "not genuinely committed to implementing" the Annan recommendations, and of "a general desire to avoid real issues."

One outstanding matter appears to be whether the funds transferred by Nay Pyi Taw to the advisory board secretariat in Bangkok will be returned.

Sources say that some Bt3 million remains unspent and no requirement for accounting was made by Burmese officials.

It is thought that the transferred funds came from donations meant for Rohingya assistance.

Myanmar	Rakhine	Rohingya	Surakiart	Myanmar ditches Surakiart	Thai
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Tags:

Annex 289

“Rakhine Advisory Board submits Final Report”, *The Global New Light of Myanmar*
(17 August 2018)



[Home](#) » [Rakhine Advisory Board Submits Final Report](#)

Rakhine Advisory Board submits Final Report

🕒 August 17, 2018 🇲🇲 Myanmar News Agency 👁 800



State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi accepts the Final Report of the Advisory Board to Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State from Chairman of the Advisory Board

Dr. Surakiart in Nay Pyi Taw yesterday. Photo: Myanmar News Agency

State Counsellor receives Advisory Board to Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State

State Counsellor and Union Minister for Foreign Affairs Daw Aung San Suu Kyi received H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Chairman of the Advisory Board for the Committee for Implementation of the Recommendations on Rakhine State and its members at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Nay Pyi Taw at 1400 hrs on 16 August 2018. H.E. Dr. Surakiart Sathirathai was accompanied by five members of the Advisory Board.

During the meeting, the Chairman of the Advisory Board explained about the final report of the Advisory Board which has been submitted to the Committee for implementation as the Recommendations on Rakhine State today. This was the fourth and last meeting between the State Counsellor and the Advisory Board since its inception. Dr. Surakiart has also presented the Final Report of the Advisory Board to the State Counsellor.

Also present at the meeting were Union Minister for the Office of the State Counsellor U Kyaw Tint Swe, Union Minister for the Office of the Union Government U Thaug Tun, Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye and Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin and officials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

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Comments

Annex 290

Shibani Mahtani & Wai Moe, “A year after the assault on the Rohingya, Myanmar’s generals are unapologetic”, *The Washington Post* (21 August 2018)

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

A year after the assault on the Rohingya, Myanmar's generals are unapologetic

By **Shibani Mahtani** and **Wai Moe**

August 21, 2018 at 1:57 p.m. GMT+1

SINGAPORE — A year ago, the Myanmar military embarked on a sweeping crackdown in restive Rakhine state — driving out almost a million Rohingya to Bangladesh and creating one of the world's largest refugee camps while allegedly raping women, killing children and beheading men in the process.

Today, even as sanctions mount and the U.S. State Department and the United Nations ready reports that are likely to detail premeditated efforts by the military to effectively rid the state of Rohingya Muslims, generals remain defiant. They believe they essentially eliminated a threat that was “growing bigger and bigger,” according to one account of conversations top Myanmar military leaders have had with counterparts from Southeast Asia.

“There was a sense that their problem in Rakhine had been solved, that this was their solution,” said a person familiar with the conversations, who spoke on the condition of anonymity because of the sensitivity of the issue. Militants, the military alleged, had embedded in villages and towns, and they had to be stopped.

“They stand by their actions,” the person added.

Interviews with a half-dozen former Myanmar generals and those familiar with their thinking indicate they have also grown irritated by de facto civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi's efforts to quell international outrage — believing she defends them in public while working to undermine them by driving sanctions in private.

“Our relationship with the army is not that bad,” Suu Kyi said Tuesday in a rare address here defending her government's handling of the crisis. The generals in her cabinet, she added, are “quite sweet.”

Yet Suu Kyi has watched her relationship with the generals deteriorate while she grows internationally isolated, dragging her heels and fumbling in response to the crackdown. Her preferred tactic of outsourcing the Rohingya issue to commissions with international representation — including one that was led by former U.N. secretary general Kofi Annan — has been widely criticized, while Rohingya languish in Bangladesh and those left in Myanmar find their access to humanitarian aid, food and resources waning.

“We are still hopeless,” Kyaw Hla Aung, a Rohingya lawyer living in a camp outside Sittwe, Rakhine state's capital, said in a phone interview. He and other Rohingya say security forces have arrived in droves ahead of the conflict's one-year mark, while doctors and aid workers have not been seen for weeks.

This was not the reality Suu Kyi envisioned in May 2016, her second month as the de facto leader of Myanmar's civilian government, when she approached Annan to lead a commission looking into the root of the Rakhine conflict. The commission was to come up with recommendations into how peace would be achieved in Rakhine state, where communal violence had erupted in 2012, driving 140,000 Rohingya Muslims into squalid camps. Members of the minority group say they are native to Myanmar, also known as Burma, but were excluded from a junta-era citizenship law, denied rights and freedom of movement, and rendered vulnerable as targets of extreme discrimination and violence.

Annan, commission members said, negotiated for months with Myanmar's government to ensure he had a strong mandate — the ability to raise funds independently, travel unencumbered around Rakhine state and Myanmar, and have staff within the country.

“We traveled widely, all the way from Maungdaw in the north to Ngapali in the south,” said Laetitia van den Assum, a member of the commission and a former Dutch ambassador to Thailand. “Annan wrote to the government to ensure the commission was not just a useful shield for them. We wanted to be taken seriously.”

In her address Tuesday, Suu Kyi paid tribute to Annan, who died last week, for his commitment to the issue. He “abided by his decision to help us, even after events in Rakhine brought down severe criticism on Myanmar,” she said, noting Annan made time to speak to her over the phone periodically on the challenges her government was facing.

On Aug. 24 last year, after more than 150 consultations and meetings, the commission presented its final report at a news conference in Yangon, Myanmar. It included 88 recommendations on issues including citizenship for the Rohingya and freedom of movement and education, and it spelled out how these should be implemented.

“There is no time to lose. The situation in Rakhine state is becoming more precarious,” Annan said at the time.

Just eight hours after he spoke, Rohingya militants staged 30 attacks on Myanmar police posts in northern Rakhine state, according to the Myanmar military, prompting it to embark on a “clearance operation,” sometimes with the help of armed Rakhine villagers. Hundreds of Muslim villages were torched, and thousands were killed, and an estimated 800,000 others gathered their possessions and trekked across the border to Bangladesh.

The Myanmar military and Suu Kyi's government were quick to deny allegations of ethnic cleansing. On Tuesday, she repeated that “terrorist activities” were the initial cause of the events that led to the crisis in Rakhine state and that the threat of terrorism remained.

Diplomats and aid workers in Myanmar, however, said they had seen what looked like preparations for a large-scale operation in the weeks leading up to the campaign. Security forces were limiting the quantity of food available to Rohingya families, according to an internal report shared with The Washington Post. Troops entering the area confiscated kitchen knives and sticks from households.

Suu Kyi, aware of international pressure in the wake of the violence, asked a new advisory board to implement the Annan commission's recommendations. It would be led by Surakiart Sathirathai, a veteran Thai politician.

Among those asked to join was Bill Richardson, a former U.S. ambassador to the United Nations and governor of New Mexico, who was an old friend of Suu Kyi's.

“She told me that this would be a small group of internationally acclaimed people who would help implement the Annan commission’s report,” Richardson said in an interview.

Richardson agreed, stressing that he was to have a free hand, but he said he was concerned by the change in tone he detected in the Nobel Peace laureate.

“I told her the [commission’s report] doesn’t make her look good, and she started launching into it. She said, ‘Everybody is against me, Bill, the human rights groups, your country,’” he recounted.

Giving the board a free rein was never her intention, said Richard Horsey, a longtime Yangon-based political analyst. Within weeks of the board’s first meeting in Naypyidaw, Myanmar’s capital, this January, Richardson quit.

“She’s in denial, and she’s not serious about dealing with this issue,” he said of Suu Kyi. “Anything that involves taking on the military, she won’t do. She’ll just do some PR moves like these commissions.”

Other members found their hands similarly tied. Kobsak Chutikul, a retired Thai lawmaker and diplomat who quit the board in July, said he often spent his own money to travel around the country, refusing to wait for a green light from the capital.

“It was a bit haphazard because the Annan commission had their own funding, and we didn’t,” Kobsak said.

Later, government officials in Naypyidaw started making monthly financial transfers of approximately \$15,000 to Bangkok to support the board’s work, including renting an office space, but none has been rented for at least half a year. There has been no request yet for accounting or a return of the money, a board member said.

Myanmar government officials overseeing the board and its funding did not respond to requests for comment.

On Thursday, Surakiart was summoned to Naypyidaw. He submitted the advisory board’s final report, and the panel was dissolved, making way for yet another body, a commission of inquiry into the wrongdoings in Rakhine state. In a news conference last week, its chairman, a Philippine diplomat named Rosario Manalo, said there will be “no blaming of anybody,” though the commission was ostensibly set up to pursue accountability.

“This just goes on and on. Next year, it will be another commission, another board,” Kobsak said. “It is all for show – there is nothing real. It is a hoax.”

The commissions were formed “to find a solution to the Rakhine crisis which will be acceptable at home and abroad,” said Zaw Htay, a spokesman for the Myanmar government. Suu Kyi in her address made a point of highlighting the work of the commission of inquiry, which she said will start work next week.

Still, the Myanmar military has rebuffed even Suu Kyi’s small efforts to look into its conduct in Rakhine state. Any punishments for wrongdoing, said a former high-ranking general, speaking on the condition of anonymity because he is not authorized to speak to the media, are to be handled by the military without civilian interference.

The Myanmar government has promised to resettle the hundreds of thousands of refugees now in Bangladesh and to close the existing camps in Rakhine state, as an indication to those in Bangladesh that it is safe to return.

But access to humanitarian assistance remains dire for the Rohingya, and aid agencies have been unable to freely access communities in northern Rakhine state. The United Nations' refugee agency and its development program submitted requests on June 14 for travel authorizations to visit conflict-hit areas; they are still waiting for responses. Large teams on the ground are languishing in hotels and field offices, unable to do their jobs.

Aung Tun Thet, who coordinates the Myanmar government's humanitarian and development work in Rakhine state, said that the authorizations are in the process of being issued but that the local situation "remains fluid" and "risky."

"The Myanmar government isn't trustworthy. They never do what they promise about Rohingya people. They have been cheating us for decades," said Muhammad Saeed, a Rohingya community leader in Sittwe. "Rohingya from Myanmar [have a] message for their friends and family who fled to Bangladesh," he said. "It would be like stepping into hell if you came back to Myanmar."

Wai Moe reported from Yangon.

[Sign in to join the conversation](#)

Annex 291

Antoni Slodkowski, “Facebook bans Myanmar army chief, others in unprecedented move”,
Reuters (27 August 2018)

[www.reuters.com /article/us-myanmar-facebook/facebook-bans-myanmar-army-chief-others-in-unprecedented-move-idU...](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-facebook/facebook-bans-myanmar-army-chief-others-in-unprecedented-move-idU...)

Facebook bans Myanmar army chief, others in unprecedented move

Antoni Slodkowski

5-7 minutes

YANGON (Reuters) - Facebook [FB.O](#) said on Monday it was removing several Myanmar military officials from the social media website and an Instagram account to prevent the spread of "hate and misinformation" after reviewing the content.

FILE PHOTO : Myanmar military commander-in-chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, attends a military exercise at Ayeyarwaddy delta region in Myanmar, February 3, 2018.
REUTERS/Lynn Bo Bo/Pool/File Photo

It was the first time Facebook banned a country's military or political leaders, according to Facebook spokeswoman Ruchika Budhraj. She said the bans could not be appealed.

Facebook also said it removed dozens of accounts for engaging in a campaign that "used seemingly independent news and opinion pages to covertly push the messages of the Myanmar military."

Facebook's action came hours after United Nations investigators said the army carried out mass killings and gang rapes of Muslim Rohingya with "genocidal intent." Their report said the commander-in-chief of Myanmar's armed forces and five general should be prosecuted for orchestrating the gravest crimes under the law.

Facebook's Budhraj said the United Nations findings as well as media reports and advocacy groups such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch informed the company's decision. Facebook declined to make executives available for comment on the bans.

Facebook's action means an essential blackout of the military's main channel of public communication, with pages followed by millions of people no longer available to a population that sees the social media app as virtually synonymous with the internet.

Government spokesman Zaw Htay was not available for comment. He was quoted by local media as saying Myanmar had asked Facebook for further details on the reasons for the ban.

"Specifically, we are banning 20 Burmese individuals and organizations from Facebook — including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and the military's Myawady television network," Facebook said in a blog post.

"We're removing a total of 18 Facebook accounts, one Instagram account and 52 Facebook Pages, followed by almost 12 million people," the Menlo Park, California-based company added.
bit.ly/2PHwRZy

The UN report said Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of Myanmar's armed forces, and five generals should be prosecuted for orchestrating the gravest crimes under law.

A preview of Min Aung Hlaing's Facebook page was still accessible immediately after the announcement and showed it had been "liked" by 1.3 million people. When Reuters attempted to return to it later it had been removed.

The U.N. investigators highlighted the role of social media in Myanmar in Monday's report. "Facebook has been a useful instrument for those seeking to spread hate, in a context where for most users Facebook is the Internet," said the report.

HATE SPEECH

Earlier this month, Reuters published an investigative report about how Facebook had failed to combat a campaign of hate speech against the Rohingya and other Muslims.

The piece, which found more than 1,000 posts, comments and images attacking Muslims on the platform, demonstrated that Facebook, despite repeated warnings, had devoted scant resources to controlling the problem in Myanmar, where it is the dominant social media force. (For the Reuters investigation on 'Why Facebook is losing the war on hate speech in Myanmar' click, [here](#))

Facebook said a day after publication of the investigation that it had been “too slow” to address hate speech in Myanmar and it was acting to remedy the problem by hiring more Burmese speakers and investing in technology to identify problematic content.

Colonel Zaw Min Tun, an official in the military’s public information unit, told Reuters he was not aware the pages had been removed. He declined to comment further.

Some of the military’s Facebook posts from last year included detailed accounts of clashes with Rohingya militants, often accompanied by pictures.

A year ago, government troops led a crackdown in Myanmar’s Rakhine State in response to attacks by Rohingya insurgents on 30 police posts and a military base.

As a result, some 700,000 Rohingya fled to neighboring Bangladesh, according to U.N. agencies, bringing stories of rape, arson and arbitrary killings.

Myanmar has denied allegations made by refugees, saying its troops engaged in lawful counterinsurgency operations against Muslim militants.

Last week, Facebook, along with Twitter Inc [TWTR.N](#) and Google's Alphabet Inc [GOOGL.O](#), removed hundreds of accounts tied to an alleged Iranian propaganda operation. Facebook also said it had removed pages that the U.S. government had previously named as Russian military intelligence services.

Russia and Iran rejected Facebook’s accusations.

“This is part of our effort to identify and disable networks of accounts that mislead others about who they are. We ban this kind of behavior because we want people to be able to trust the connections they make on Facebook,” Facebook spokeswoman Clare Wareing said.

Reporting by Mekhla Raina in Bengaluru, Simon Lewis, Aye Min Thant and Antoni Slodkowski in Yangon, Pares Dave in San Francisco; Editing by Gopakumar Warriar, Robert Birsell, Alex Richardson, Toni Reinhold

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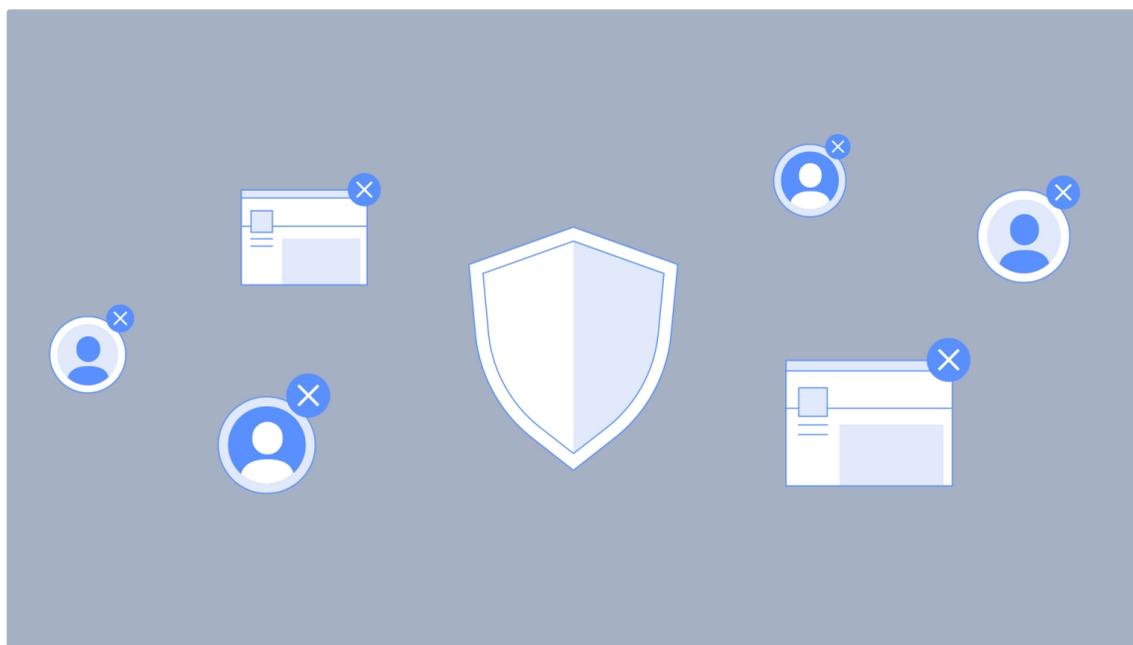
“Removing Myanmar Military Officials From Facebook”, *Facebook* (28 August 2018)

[Back to Newsroom](#)

Facebook

Removing Myanmar Military Officials From Facebook

August 28, 2018



Update added on December 18, 2018 at 5:00PM PT to include additional takedowns:

Taking Down More Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior in Myanmar

Today, we removed 425 Facebook Pages, 17 Facebook Groups, 135 Facebook accounts and 15 Instagram accounts in Myanmar for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior on Facebook. As part of our ongoing investigations into this type of behavior in Myanmar, we discovered that these seemingly independent news, entertainment, beauty and lifestyle Pages were linked to the Myanmar military, and to the Pages we removed for coordinated inauthentic behavior in Myanmar in August. This kind of behavior is not allowed on Facebook under our misrepresentation policy because we don't want people or organizations creating networks of accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing.

- Presence on Facebook and Instagram: 425 Facebook Pages, 17 Facebook Groups, 135 Facebook accounts and 15 Instagram accounts.
- Followers:
 - Approximately 2.5 million people followed at least one of these Facebook Pages
 - Approximately 6,400 people belonged to at least one of these Facebook Groups
 - Approximately 1,300 people followed at least one these Instagram accounts
- Some of the most followed Facebook Pages were:
 - Down for Anything ဘာလာလာဝုန်း
 - Let's Laugh Casually ဝေပါပေါ့ပါးပါးရယ်ကမယ့်
 - We Love Myanmar
 - Knowledge
 - All About Myanmar ဂျပန်အခြေစိုက်သတင်းစုံ

Our decision to remove these Pages was based on the behavior of these actors rather than on the type of content they were posting. Our investigations in Myanmar are ongoing and we will continue to provide updates on abuse we find and remove.

Update added on October 15, 2018 at 8:37 AM PST to include additional takedowns:

Today, we removed 13 Pages and 10 accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior on Facebook in Myanmar. As part of our ongoing investigations into this type of behavior in Myanmar we discovered that these seemingly independent entertainment, beauty and informational Pages were linked to the Myanmar military.

This kind of behavior is not allowed on Facebook under our [misrepresentation policy](#) because we don't want people or organizations creating networks of accounts to mislead others about who they are, or what they're doing.

- Presence on Facebook: 13 Pages, 10 accounts
- Followers: About 1.35 million unique people followed at least one of these 13 Pages
- Some of the most followed Pages were Beauty and Classic, ဆရာမလေးများ (Young Female Teachers), စစ်သား ဓါတ်ပုံများ စုစည်းမှု (Collection of Soldier's Photos), မိုးနတ်မင်း (Lord of Heaven)

We are grateful to The New York Times for sharing what they learned about the use of celebrity and entertainment accounts to push military propaganda, which aided our investigation and this take-down.

The work we are doing to identify and remove bad content, bad behavior and bad actors on Facebook in Myanmar is some of the most important work being done at the company. We want to make it more difficult for people to manipulate our platform in Myanmar and will continue to investigate and take action on this behavior.

Original post published on August 28, 2018

The ethnic violence in Myanmar has been truly horrific. Earlier this month, we shared an [update](#) on the steps we're taking to prevent the spread of hate and misinformation on Facebook. While we were too slow to act, we're now making progress – with better technology to identify hate speech, improved reporting tools, and more people to review content.

Today, we are taking more action in Myanmar, removing a total of 18 Facebook accounts, one Instagram account and 52 Facebook Pages, followed by almost 12 million people. We are preserving data, including content, on the accounts and Pages we have removed.

Specifically, we are banning 20 individuals and organizations from Facebook in Myanmar — including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the armed forces, and the military's Myawady television network. International experts, most recently in a report by the UN Human Rights Council-authorized Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, have found evidence that many of these individuals and organizations committed or enabled serious human rights abuses in the country. And

we want to prevent them from using our service to further inflame ethnic and religious tensions. This has led us to remove six Pages and six accounts from Facebook — and one account from Instagram — which are connected to these individuals and organizations. We have not found a presence on Facebook or Instagram for all 20 individuals and organizations we are banning.

We have also removed 46 Pages and 12 accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior on Facebook. During a recent investigation, we discovered that they used seemingly independent news and opinion Pages to covertly push the messages of the Myanmar military. This type of behavior is banned under our [misrepresentation policy](#) because we want people to be able to trust the connections they make.

We continue to work to prevent the misuse of Facebook in Myanmar — including through the independent human rights impact assessment we commissioned earlier in the year. This is a huge responsibility given so many people there rely on Facebook for information — more so than in almost any other country given the nascent state of the news media and the recent rapid adoption of mobile phones. It's why we're so determined to do better in the future.

A sample of the content from these Pages and accounts is included below. These Pages and accounts were removed for coordinated inauthentic behavior, not content violations.



Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

UN's stand needs the trust of small countries including Myanmar; all assistance should be constructive

Nay Pyi Taw June 14

Myanmar is a UN member state and its foreign policy is to maintain friendly relations with all countries. Myanmar always stands on the correct point in the prevailing international situation and is cooperating with the UN. The UN's stand needs the trust of small countries including Myanmar. All assistance should be constructive, said Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services Senior General Min Aung Hlaing at his meeting with Special Envoy on Myanmar of the UN Secretary General Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener at the parlour of Bayintnaung Villa here this morning.

Also present at the meeting together with the Senior General were Chief of the General Staff (Army, Navy and Air) General Mya Tun Oo and senior military officers of the Office of the Commander-in-Chief (Army). Ms. Christine Schraner Burgener was accompanied by Team Leader of South and Southeast Asia of the Asia-Pacific Division Mr. Shin Umezu and officials.

The Special Envoy said her visit is to know the true situation of Myanmar and to submit it to the UN and asked the opinion and attitude of the Senior General. The Senior General said the Tatmadaw has the responsibility to fully protect the State and the lives and property of the ethnic people. The Tatmadaw is a part of the nation, and it was founded at the time when the country regained independence.

The Tatmadaw members are serving their duties under the discipline, laws, orders and directives. The Tatmadaw had played an important role throughout the successive periods of Myanmar history. It has led the country towards the democracy path. In the issue of Rakhine State, the Tatmadaw was just serving its duty of restoring regional peace and stability and protecting the lives and property of the ethnic people. It has never done any acts that may harm the other country, other organizations and the human society.

As a member of the United Nations, Myanmar is actively cooperating under the UN leadership. The Tatmadaw's aims and objectives are to work together with the government to achieve eternal peace by signing the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement-NCA with all ethnic armed organizations, to enable all the people to enjoy full rights of democracy by firmly pursuing multi-party democracy, to cooperate with the international community, to have good relations with the neighbouring countries and to ensure peace and stability. These stages are still ongoing, and there has been some misunderstanding of the Tatmadaw over its involvement in these efforts before reaching the goals. The UN cooperation will lead to progress in Myanmar's situations. There is difficulty with local ethnic people accepting the UN-led organizations carrying out their activities in Rakhine State.

However, one thing needs to be considered is that the activities of UN agencies are welcomed in other regions. When conflicts arise, it is necessary to distinguish between the act of individuals and that of the Tatmadaw. Myanmar is still weak in democracy experience, wisdom and other sectors such as education and health. In its effort to build up a Standard Army, the Tatmadaw is trying to work in cooperation with the international community. However, bias and restrictions of the UN as well as some countries cannot be assumed as constructive attitude, the Senior General commented. He continued to say that the expressions of a leader containing unfounded information and false news are sheer negative actions and that will lead to hatred, misunderstanding and unwillingness to cooperate.

There are two Myanmar sayings that go by "Let the amicable relations last long and let the hatred shorten" and "Try to make a big case small and a small case disappear." However, going against these sayings, acts of trying to prolong hatred and make the small case larger can be found. In a meeting with representatives of the permanent UN Security Council member countries, some countries showed constructive attitude while some acted with misunderstanding.

It is therefore necessary for the UN to bring effective, constructive relations, the Senior General urged. With regard to Bengalis, the Senior General explained those who came to live in Rakhine State were accepted as Bengalis. The usage Rohingya was a word they fabricated. Myanmar citizens do not at all accept the usage Rohingya.

So, he called for avoiding the usage which may cause problem for Myanmar citizens. Bengalis mean those who come from Bengal. As they were brought from Bengal region in the colonial era, they are called Bengalis. According to the documents on 1872 census of Myanmar, they were named as Shiite, Pahtan and Muslim, not Rohingya.

With regard to accepting Bengalis, the deserved ones of them will be accepted. They will be scrutinized to accept under the 1982 Citizenship Law. The international community needs to help Myanmar for solving the problem instead of imposing pressure.

Then, they cordially discussed the matters related to removing Myanmar from the country list of using child soldiers, holding the roundtable discussion on Rakhine issue with the Fact-Finding Mission, and enhancement of cooperation with the United Nations in the future. The UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Myanmar pledged she will convey the full clarification to the United Nations.

After the meeting, the Senior General and the UN Secretary General's Special Envoy on Myanmar exchanged commemorative gifts and posed for a documentary photo together with those present.

<https://twitter.com/SMinAungHlaing>

<https://www.seniorgeneralminawunghlaing.com.mm>





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Mines, aid of international organizations found in movement area of extremist Bengali terrorists

Nay Pyi Taw August 29

While conducting area clearance operation in Maungtau Township, Rakhine State, security troops seized three home-made mines made of 12 inches long and four inches diameter iron pipe, three mines installed with remote sensors, seven .303 bullets, three packages of about 100 feet long wires, six remote control devices, three dry cells, one bag of rice with label...



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ဖွက်ဆီးခဲ့ကြတယ်

အဲဒီကဗျာမှာ

ပိုလ်စုန်ကိုအကြောင်းပြောလို့
တိုင်းပြည်ဆုပုဒ်အောင် လုပ်ခဲ့ကြတယ်

အဲဒီကဗျာမှာ

ကလေးကရွေလူတစ်စုနဲ့ ရှောင်းသားအမည်ခံလူတစ်စု
ပိုက်စာတစ်စုလို့ တိုင်းပြည် ကမောက်ကမဖြစ်ခဲ့ကြတယ်

အဲဒီကဗျာမှာ

ရန်ကုန်မြို့နယ်စုံ ပြည်သူ့ခေါင်းတွေ ခြိတ်ဆွဲခံခဲ့
ရတယ်

အဲဒီကဗျာမှာ

စီးပွားရေးတွေနဲ့ ပစ်ခတ်ပြီး
ပြည်သူ့စိတ်က တန်ဖိုးရှိအရာတွေ လုယုခံခဲ့ရတယ်

အဲဒီကဗျာမှာ.....

အဲဒီကဗျာမှာ.....

မပေးနိုင်စရာတွေက
တစ်နေ့မနေ့ကလိုပါပဲ

အဲဒီကဗျာထဲမှာ

ကလေးကရွေရှောင်းသားတစ်စုကြောင့်
အဖြူအစိမ်းကလေးငယ်တွေ တောနီခဲ့ပြီး မိဘနဲ့
ဝေးကာ သေကြေခဲ့ရတယ်။

အဲဒီသမိုင်းမှာ

၈၈၈ ဆိုပြီး ခေါင်းစဉ်တပ်တဲ့ကောင်တွေက ကောင်းစားပြီး
ခံခဲ့ရတဲ့ ပြည်သူတွေက ခုထိ တပ်မတော်သားတွေကြောင့်ဆိုပြီး
နာကျင်နေတုန်းပဲ ၊

အကြောင်း ..

အဲဒီကဗျာကို

ရင်နာနာနဲ့ ခေါင်းစဉ်တပ်ပေးကြပါလားဗျာ ၊

စစ်(ဘဝတက္ကသိုလ်)

- (၈၈၈ ပထမတန်း)

-သမိုင်းလိပ်စာနဲ့ကောင်တွေအတွက်ရေးသည်-

Credit-Ko Kyaw



This collage of photos depicts the 8888 uprising. This post asks the question, who started the 8888 Uprising and who is to blame, asking those who are to blame not to lie.

The following pieces of content violate our Community Standards and were removed from Facebook.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

တပ်မတော်(ကြည်းရေးလေ) မိသားစုများက မန္တလေးမြို့ မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ် မဟာနာယက၊ နာယက၊ စာချူ စာသင်သံဃာတော် (၂၉၉၂)ပါးအား လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် နေအိမ်ဆောက်ကပ် စာအောင်ဆု(ထာဝရ) ငွေပဒေသာပေးအပ် လှူဒါန်း

နေပြည်တော်၊ ဇေ - ၃၀

တပ်မတော်(ကြည်းရေးလေ) မိသားစုများက မန္တလေးမြို့ မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ် မဟာနာယက၊ နာယက၊ စာချူ စာသင်သံဃာတော် (၂၉၉၂)ပါးအား လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် နေအိမ်ဆောက်ကပ် စာအောင်ဆု(ထာဝရ) ငွေပဒေသာပေးအပ် လှူဒါန်းသည့် အခမ်းအနားအား ယနေ့နံနက်ပိုင်းတွင် အဆိုပါကျောင်းတိုက်၌ ကျင်းပ ပြုလုပ်သည်။

အဆိုပါအခမ်းအနားသို့ မစိုရိမ်ကျောင်းတိုက် အာဇာနည်ပူဇော်သောကျောင်းဆရာတော် တိပိဋကဋ္ဌါဝေါ၊ စေံယ အာမဟာပဏ္ဍိတ ဘက္ခန္တိညောယျာ တိပိဋကဋ္ဌါဝေါ သံဃာတော်များတက်ရောက်ချီးမြှင့်တော်မူကြပြီး တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ် ဗိုလ်ချုပ်မှူးကြီး မင်းအောင်လှိုင်၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(ရေ) ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး တင်အောင်စန်း၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(လေ) ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်ကျော်၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်ရုံးမှ တပ်မတော်အရာရှိကြီးများ၊ အလယ်ပိုင်းတိုင်းစစ်ဌာနချုပ်တိုင်းမှူးနှင့် အရာရှိ၊ စစ်သည်၊ သိမ်းဆွဲရမှုများ တက်ရောက်ကြသည်။

ဦးစွာတပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့် အခမ်းအနားတက်ရောက်လာကြသူများသည် မစိုရိမ်ကျောင်း တိုက် အာဇာနည်ပူဇော်သောကျောင်းဆရာတော်ထံမှ ငါးပါးသီလမံယုဆောက်တည်ကြပြီး သံဃာတော်အရင် သျှမြတ်များထံမှ ဖန်တီးစား ခေတ်များယူကြသည်။

ယင်းနောက် တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်က မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ် မဟာနာယကအာဇာနည် သန္တန် ခေတ် ကစေ ဘက္ခန္တိညောယျာ တိပိဋကဋ္ဌါဝေါ လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်း များဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းပြီး စာအောင်ဆု(ထာဝရ) ငွေပဒေသာပင် ငွေကူပံ့သိန်း ၃၀၀ အား တာဝန်ခံသူများထံ ပေးအပ်လှူဒါန်းသည်။ ထို့နောက် မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ်မဟာနာယက ဆရာတော်ကြီးက တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်အား လက်ပြုဖတ်တမ်းလှူဒါန်းလှည့် ပေးအပ်ချီးမြှင့်သည်။

ဆက်လက်ပြီး ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(ရေ)၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(လေ) နှင့် တပ်မတော်အရာရှိကြီးများက သံဃာတော်အရင်သျှမြတ်များထံလွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများ ဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းကြသည်။ ထို့နောက် တပ်မတော် ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့် အဖွဲ့ဝင်များသည် မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ် မဟာနာယက ဆရာတော်ကြီးထံမှ အနုမောဒနာ တရားနာယုတ္တိ လှူဒါန်းပစ္စည်းအတွက် ရေစက်သွန်းချ အမျှပေးကြသည်။ ယင်းနောက်သံဃာတော် အရင် သျှမြတ်များအား နေအိမ်ဆောက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းကြသည်။

ထို့အတူ နံနက်ပိုင်းကလည်း တပ်မတော်(ကြည်းရေးလေ) မိသားစုများက မဟာနာယက၊ နာယက၊ စာချူစာ သင်သံဃာတော် (၂၉၉၂)ပါးအား ဆွမ်းလောင်းလှူ ခဲ့ကြသည်။

ထို့နောက် တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့်အဖွဲ့ဝင်များသည် မန္တလေး အထွေထွေရောဂါကုဆေးရုံကြီး၊ နှလုံးအထူးကြပ်မတ်ကုသဆောင်၌ ဆေးရုံတက်ရောက် ကုသမှုခံယူလျက်ရှိသည့် မန္တလေးတိုင်းဒေသကြီး၊ မဟာအောင်မြေမြို့နယ်၊ မဟာဝိသုဒ္ဓါ ကျောင်းတိုက် ရွှေကျင်ကောယဥပဋ္ဌက္ခ မဟာနာယက တွဲဖက် ရွှေကျင်သာသနာပိုင် မက္ခရာသုဋ္ဌေကျောင်းတိုက် ဆရာတော် အာဇာနည်ပဏ္ဍိတ ဘက္ခန္တိယန်တသီရိတိပိဋက အားသွားရောက်ဖူးမြော်ကြည့်သည့် ကျန်းမာရေးအခြေအနေများ မေးမြန်းလျှောက်ထားပြီး လိုအပ်သည့်ဆွမ်း ပြည့်ဆည်းဆောင်ရွက်ပေးသည်။ ထို့နောက်တပ်မတော် ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်က လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် အားပြည့်ငှက်သိုက်ရည်များအား ဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းသည်။

ဆက်လက်ပြီး တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့်အဖွဲ့ဝင်များသည် မိုင်တော်ဩဝေါစေံယ၊ မန္တလေးမြို့ မဟာဝိစိတရကျောင်းတိုက်ဦးစီးမောန နာယကဆရာတော် အဘိဓမ္မမဟာရဋ္ဌရ ဘက္ခန္တိစာရိန္ဒာ တိပိဋက အား သွားရောက်ဖူးမြော် ကြည့်သည့် ကျန်းမာရေးအခြေအနေများအားမေးမြန်းလျှောက်ထားပြီး လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများ နှင့် အားပြည့်ငှက်သိုက်ရည်များဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းခဲ့သည်။

<https://twitter.com/SGMinAungHlaing>
<https://www.seniorgeneralmingaunghlaing.com.mm>



This post depicts a group of military families made donations at the Masoyein monastery (where Wirathu lives).

ရက်စွာ added 4 new photos.

ရက်စွာ added 4 new photos. Wednesday, September 6, 2017

မောင်တော်ကြီး အောင်လှိုင်မြတ်က မဟာအောင်ဆုနှင့် သံဃာတော်အရင် သန္တန်ခေတ်ကစေ ဘက္ခန္တိညောယျာ တိပိဋကဋ္ဌါဝေါ လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများနှင့် သံဃာတော်အရင် သျှမြတ်များထံမှ ဖန်တီးစား ခေတ်များယူကြသည်။

ယင်းနောက် တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ် ဗိုလ်ချုပ်မှူးကြီး မင်းအောင်လှိုင်၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(ရေ) ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး တင်အောင်စန်း၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(လေ) ဗိုလ်ချုပ်ကြီး မောင်မောင်ကျော်၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်ရုံးမှ တပ်မတော်အရာရှိကြီးများ၊ အလယ်ပိုင်းတိုင်းစစ်ဌာနချုပ်တိုင်းမှူးနှင့် အရာရှိ၊ စစ်သည်၊ သိမ်းဆွဲရမှုများ တက်ရောက်ကြသည်။

ဦးစွာတပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့် အခမ်းအနားတက်ရောက်လာကြသူများသည် မစိုရိမ်ကျောင်း တိုက် အာဇာနည်ပူဇော်သောကျောင်းဆရာတော်ထံမှ ငါးပါးသီလမံယုဆောက်တည်ကြပြီး သံဃာတော်အရင် သျှမြတ်များထံမှ ဖန်တီးစား ခေတ်များယူကြသည်။

ယင်းနောက် တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်က မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ် မဟာနာယကအာဇာနည် သန္တန် ခေတ် ကစေ ဘက္ခန္တိညောယျာ တိပိဋကဋ္ဌါဝေါ လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်း များဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းပြီး စာအောင်ဆု(ထာဝရ) ငွေပဒေသာပင် ငွေကူပံ့သိန်း ၃၀၀ အား တာဝန်ခံသူများထံ ပေးအပ်လှူဒါန်းသည်။ ထို့နောက် မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ်မဟာနာယက ဆရာတော်ကြီးက တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်အား လက်ပြုဖတ်တမ်းလှူဒါန်းလှည့် ပေးအပ်ချီးမြှင့်သည်။

ဆက်လက်ပြီး ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(ရေ)၊ ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်(လေ) နှင့် တပ်မတော်အရာရှိကြီးများက သံဃာတော်အရင်သျှမြတ်များထံလွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများ ဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းကြသည်။ ထို့နောက် တပ်မတော် ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့် အဖွဲ့ဝင်များသည် မစိုရိမ်တိုက်သစ် မဟာနာယက ဆရာတော်ကြီးထံမှ အနုမောဒနာ တရားနာယုတ္တိ လှူဒါန်းပစ္စည်းအတွက် ရေစက်သွန်းချ အမျှပေးကြသည်။ ယင်းနောက်သံဃာတော် အရင် သျှမြတ်များအား နေအိမ်ဆောက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းကြသည်။

ထို့အတူ နံနက်ပိုင်းကလည်း တပ်မတော်(ကြည်းရေးလေ) မိသားစုများက မဟာနာယက၊ နာယက၊ စာချူစာ သင်သံဃာတော် (၂၉၉၂)ပါးအား ဆွမ်းလောင်းလှူ ခဲ့ကြသည်။

ထို့နောက် တပ်မတော်ကာကွယ်ရေးဦးစီးချုပ်နှင့်အဖွဲ့ဝင်များသည် မိုင်တော်ဩဝေါစေံယ၊ မန္တလေးမြို့ မဟာဝိစိတရကျောင်းတိုက်ဦးစီးမောန နာယကဆရာတော် အဘိဓမ္မမဟာရဋ္ဌရ ဘက္ခန္တိစာရိန္ဒာ တိပိဋက အား သွားရောက်ဖူးမြော် ကြည့်သည့် ကျန်းမာရေးအခြေအနေများအားမေးမြန်းလျှောက်ထားပြီး လွှဲဖယ်ပစ္စည်းများ နှင့် အားပြည့်ငှက်သိုက်ရည်များဆက်ကပ်လှူဒါန်းခဲ့သည်။

<https://twitter.com/SGMinAungHlaing>
<https://www.seniorgeneralmingaunghlaing.com.mm>

This post alleges that Bengali Muslims have burned down their own homes in the Maung Daw Region, but placed blame on the Rakhine people or the military.

Annex 293

“Myanmar rejects UN accusation of ‘genocide’ against Rohingya”, *BBC* (29 August 2018)

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Myanmar rejects UN accusation of 'genocide' against Rohingya

29 August 2018



Myanmar has rejected a UN report which called for top Burmese military figures to be investigated for genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

Government spokesman Zaw Htay said the country didn't agree with or accept "any resolutions made by the Human Rights Council".

China had earlier also decried the UN report, saying putting pressure on Myanmar was "not helpful".

Zaw Htay said Myanmar had zero tolerance for human rights violations.

His statement is the government's response to **the unprecedented UN report, which was published on Monday.**

"We didn't allow the FFM [the UN Fact-Finding Mission] to enter into Myanmar, that's why we don't agree and accept any resolutions made by the Human Rights Council," **Zaw Htay told state news outlet the Global New Light of Myanmar.**

He said Myanmar had its own Independent Commission of Enquiry to respond to "false allegations made by the UN agencies and other international communities".

Myanmar's army has **previously cleared itself of wrongdoing.**

China, which has a close economic and diplomatic relationship with Myanmar, had earlier said the "historical, religious and ethnic background of the Rakhine issue" was "extremely complex".

"Unilateral criticism or exerting pressure is actually not helpful in resolving the problem," said Foreign Ministry spokeswoman Hua Chunying.

AFP/ GETTY IMAGES

The military launched a crackdown in Myanmar's Rakhine state last year after Rohingya militants carried out deadly attacks on police posts.

Thousands of people have died and more than 700,000 Rohingya have fled to neighbouring Bangladesh.

- **Will we ever see Myanmar's military leaders in the dock?**
- **What is genocide and why is the term so rarely used?**

There have also been widespread allegations of human rights abuses, including arbitrary killing, rape and burning of land over many years.

The government says Rohingya Muslims are illegal immigrants who present a threat to the country's security and Buddhist identity.

The UN's wide-ranging and damning report named six senior military figures, including army chief Min Aung Hlaing, who it said should be investigated for genocide, and called for the case to be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC).

It said the violence of the past year had been "a catastrophe looming for decades".

'Facebook is the internet'

Zaw Htaw also took a strong stance against Facebook, saying the government had been unaware the network was planning to erase accounts and pages linked to the recent allegations.

Facebook removed 18 accounts and 52 Facebook pages in Myanmar and banned 20 groups or organisations altogether after the UN report said it had become a "useful instrument for those seeking to spread hate".

The social media platform has admitted it was too slow to react to the crisis.

AFP

"We have many questions to be raised regarding the removal of these Facebook accounts," said Zaw Htay to the Global New Light. "Why did they ban... and how can we retrieve these accounts?"

He agreed with UN's assertion that "for most users, Facebook is the internet".

▪ **Why Facebook banned an army chief**

Zaw Htay also said that the government had "made inquiries" to Facebook, adding that plans were "underway" to reach an agreement between the government and Facebook.

Facebook is one of the biggest social media platforms in Myanmar, with more than 18 million users.

It was the first time Facebook has banned any country's military or political leader.

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Annex 294

Poppy McPherson, “Exclusive: Fake photos in Myanmar army’s ‘True News’ book on the Rohingya crisis”, *Reuters* (30 August 2018)



TOP NEWS

AUGUST 30, 2018 / 4:03 PM / UPDATED 2 YEARS AGO

Exclusive: Fake photos in Myanmar army's 'True News' book on the Rohingya crisis

By Poppy McPherson



YANGON (Reuters) - The grainy black-and-white photo, printed in a new book on the Rohingya crisis authored by Myanmar's army, shows a man standing over two bodies, wielding a farming tool. "Bengalis killed local ethnics brutally", reads the caption.

The photo appears in a section of the book covering ethnic riots in Myanmar in the 1940s. The text says the image shows Buddhists murdered by Rohingya - members of a Muslim minority the book refers to as "Bengalis" to imply they are illegal immigrants.

But a Reuters examination of the photograph shows it was actually taken during Bangladesh's 1971 independence war, when hundreds of thousands of Bangladeshis were killed by Pakistani troops.

It is one of three images that appear in the book, published in July by the army's department of public relations and psychological warfare, that have been misrepresented as archival pictures from the western state of Rakhine.

In fact, Reuters found that two of the photos originally were taken in Bangladesh and Tanzania. A third was falsely labeled as depicting Rohingya entering Myanmar from Bangladesh, when in reality it showed migrants leaving the country.

Government spokesman Zaw Htay and a military spokesman could not be reached for comment on the authenticity of the images. U Myo Myint Maung, permanent secretary at the Ministry of Information, declined to comment, saying he had not read the book.

The 117-page “Myanmar Politics and the Tatmadaw: Part I” relates the army’s narrative of August last year, when some 700,000 Rohingya fled Rakhine to Bangladesh, according to United Nations agencies, triggering reports of mass killings, rape, and arson. Tatmadaw is the official name of Myanmar’s military.

Much of the content is sourced to the military’s “True News” information unit, which since the start of the crisis has distributed news giving the army’s perspective, mostly via Facebook.

The book is on sale at bookstores across the commercial capital of Yangon. A member of staff at Innwa, one of the biggest bookshops in the city, said the 50 copies the store ordered had sold out, but there was no plan to order more. “Not many people came looking for it,” said the bookseller, who declined to be named.

On Monday, Facebook banned the army chief and other military officials accused of using the platform to “inflame ethnic and religious tensions”. The same day, U.N investigators accused Senior General Min Aung Hlaing of overseeing a campaign with “genocidal intent” and recommended he and other senior officials be prosecuted for crimes against humanity.

In its new book, the military denies the allegations of abuses, blaming the violence on “Bengali terrorists” it says were intent on carving out a Rohingya state named “Arkistan”.

Attacks by Rohingya militants calling themselves the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army preceded the military’s crackdown in August 2017 in Rakhine state, in which the U.N. investigators say 10,000 people may have been killed. The group denies it has separatist aims.

The book also seeks to trace the history of the Rohingya - who regard themselves as native to western Myanmar - casting them as interlopers from Bangladesh.

In the introduction to the book the writer, listed as Lieutenant Colonel Kyaw Kyaw Oo, says the text was compiled using “documentary photos” with the aim of “revealing the history of Bengalis”.

“It can be found that whenever a political change or an ethnic armed conflict occurred in Myanmar those Bengalis take it as an opportunity,” the book reads, arguing that Muslims took advantage of the uncertainty of Myanmar’s nascent democratic transition to ignite “religious clashes”.

Reuters was unable to contact Kyaw Kyaw Oo for comment.

Reuters examined some of the photographs using Google Reverse Image Search and TinEye, tools commonly used by news organizations and others to identify images that have previously appeared online. Checks were then made with the previously credited publishers to establish the origins of those images.

Of the 80 images in the book, most were recent pictures of army chief Min Aung Hlaing meeting foreign dignitaries or local officials visiting Rakhine. Several were screengrabs from videos posted by Rohingya militant group the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.

Of eight photos presented as historical images, Reuters found the provenance of three to be faked and was unable to determine the provenance of the five others.

One faded black-and-white image shows a crowd of men who appear to be on a long march with their backs bent over. “Bengalis intruded into the country after the British Colonialism occupied the lower part of Myanmar,” the caption reads.

The photo is apparently intended to depict Rohingya arriving in Myanmar during the colonial era, which ended in 1948. Reuters determined the picture is in fact a distorted version of a color image taken in 1996 of refugees who had fled the genocide in Rwanda. The photographer, Martha Rial, working for the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette, won the Pulitzer Prize.

“While it is always disappointing to see your work misrepresented, I am not surprised,” said Rial in an email. “It has been used in propaganda before and, sadly, it will probably happen again.”

Sally Stapleton, the paper’s managing editor, deferred questions about the use of its photo to Rial.

Another picture, also printed in black-and-white, shows men aboard a rickety boat. “Bengalis entered Myanmar via the watercourse,” the caption reads.

Actually, the original photo depicts Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants leaving Myanmar in 2015, when tens of thousands fled for Thailand and Malaysia. The original has been rotated and blurred so the photo looks grainy. It was sourced from Myanmar’s own Ministry of Information.

Reporting by Poppy Elena McPherson; Additional reporting by Sam Aung Moon; Editing by Alex Richardson

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MORE FROM REUTERS

Annex 295

Antoni Slodkowski & Shoon Naing, “Myanmar army apologizes for mistaken photos in book on Rohingya crisis”, *Reuters* (3 September 2018)



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SEPTEMBER 3, 2018 / 8:38 AM / UPDATED 2 YEARS AGO

Myanmar army apologizes for mistaken photos in book on Rohingya crisis

By Antoni Slodkowski, Shoon Naing



YANGON (Reuters) - The Myanmar military issued a rare apology on Monday, acknowledging that two photographs it published in a book on the crisis over the Rohingya Muslim minority were “published incorrectly”.



Rwandan Hutu refugees with as many possessions as they can carry trudge along a highway near Benaco Junction in Tanzania. They had tried to flee further away from Rwanda, into Tanzania, but had been turned back by Tanzanian soldiers. Several of the refugees said they would walk all the way through Kenya or Malawi just so they could return to Rwanda.



Bengalis intruded into the country after the British Colonialists occupied the lower part of Myanmar.

A combination of screenshots shows (top) an image taken from the Pulitzer Prize website depicting the migration of Rwandan Hutu refugees in 1996 following violence in Rwanda. The same image (bottom) appears in the Myanmar army's recently published book on the Rohingya, converted to black-and-white, describing the people as Bengalis entering the country following the British colonial occupation of lower Myanmar. Top: Martha Rial/Pittsburgh Post-Gazette/The Pulitzer Prizes Bottom: Myanmar Politics and the Tatmadaw: Part 1/via REUTERS

Reuters published an exclusive report on Friday revealing that two of the pictures in the book that aimed at illustrating the army's account of last year's events in the western Myanmar state of Rakhine, were in fact archive pictures of different conflicts, and one was posted with an incorrect caption.

The erroneous publication of the photographs comes amid a series of government steps against what it has seen as media abuses, including a report on army activity in an ethnic minority guerrilla zone and the flying of a drone in the capital, Naypyitaw.

On Monday, a court jailed for seven years two reporters from Reuters on a charge of violating a secrets law.

Reuters found that two of the photographs in the military book on the Rohingya crisis were actually taken in Bangladesh and Tanzania and a third was falsely labeled as showing Rohingya entering Myanmar from Bangladesh, when in reality the picture was of refugees leaving Myanmar.

The military's official newspaper, the Myawady Daily, issued a statement on Monday from its publishing arm, which produced the book 'Myanmar Politics and Tatmadaw: Part I', apologizing for two of the photographs.

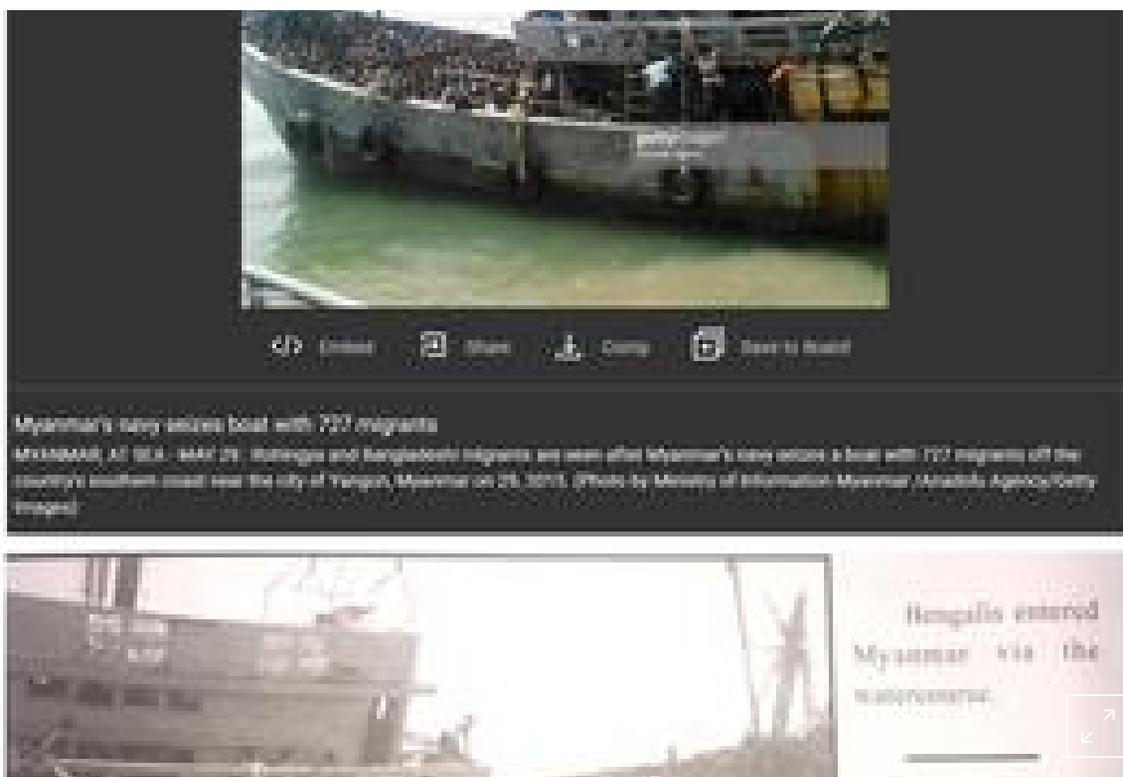
"It was found that two photos were incorrectly published," the publishing arm said in a statement carried by the newspaper, referring to the photograph from Tanzania and another showing victims of Bangladesh's 1971 war of independence.

"We sincerely apologize to the readers and the owners of the photographs for the mistake," it said.

It did not mention the photograph incorrectly captioned as showing Rohingya entering Myanmar when the picture was of them leaving.

Myanmar government spokesman Zaw Htay and military spokesman Major General Tun Tun Nyi could not be reached for comment.

The army's department of public relations and psychological warfare published the book in English and Burmese in July.



‘HEINOUS’

Of the 80 images in the book, most were recent pictures of army chief Min Aung Hlaing meeting foreign dignitaries or other officials visiting Rakhine.

Of eight photos presented as historical images, Reuters found the provenance of three to be faked and was unable to determine the provenance of the five others.

One faded black-and-white image shows a crowd of men who appear to be on a long march with their backs bent over. “Bengalis intruded into the country after the British Colonialism occupied the lower part of Myanmar,” the caption reads.

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Another picture, also printed in black-and-white, shows men aboard a rickety boat. “Bengalis entered Myanmar via the watercourse,” the caption reads.

Actually, the original photo depicts Rohingya and Bangladeshi migrants leaving Myanmar in 2015, when tens of thousands fled for Thailand and Malaysia. The original has been rotated and blurred so the photo looks granular. It was sourced from Myanmar’s own Ministry of Information.

The Myawady’s publishing arm, in its statement, made no mention of an alterations of images.

The prime minister of neighboring Bangladesh, where about 700,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from a Myanmar military crackdown launched after Rohingya insurgent attacks in August last year, denounced the use of the photographs when she was asked in a news conference about them.

“What Myanmar has done is simply heinous. They have lowered their reputation,” Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina told a news conference in Dhaka on Sunday.

“They are diminishing their position in the international arena.”

The 117-page book gives the army’s account of the crackdown last year which led to reports of mass killings, rape, and arson.

Much of the content is sourced to the military’s “True News” information unit, which since the start of the crisis has distributed news giving the army’s position, mostly via Facebook.

The book is on sale at bookstores across the commercial capital of Yangon.

Reporting by Shoon Naing and Antoni Slodkowski, additional reporting by Aye Min Thant and Ruma Paul in DHAKA; Editing by Robert Birsel

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Annex 296

Isabella Steger, “After getting kicked off Facebook, Myanmar’s top general is banned from Russia’s biggest social network”, *Quartz* (17 September 2018)



After getting kicked off Facebook, Myanmar's top general is banned from Russia's biggest social network



REUTERS/LYNN BO BO/POOL

Looking for a new online home.



By **Isabella Steger**

Asia deputy editor

September 17, 2018 · This article is more than 2 years old.

Soon after Facebook booted senior general Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief of the armed forces of Myanmar, for spreading hate speech, he found a new home on social media on Russian site VKontakte (VK). Now he's no longer welcome there too.



The general’s VK page now says that his account has been “suspended due to a violation of the VK Terms of Service.” Frontier Myanmar reported that the account had about 37,000 followers before it was taken down—far short of the millions of follower his Facebook page had.

Facebook, which has been blamed for failing to take action against people in Myanmar who use the platform to stoke hatred of the Rohingya minority, suspended the accounts of 20 individuals and groups on Aug. 27, shortly after the release of a United Nations report that concluded that Myanmar’s military generals had “genocidal intent” against the Muslim minority. The report called for Min Aung Hlaing and other generals to be investigated and prosecuted for genocide.

Min Aung Hlaing wasn’t the only high-ranking Myanmar individual to use VK. Nay Zin Latt, a former presidential adviser in Myanmar, for example, urged citizens (paywall) to migrate to the Russian platform and called Facebook a “dictator.” And radical Buddhist monk Ashin Wirathu, who critics say also incites anger against the Rohingya minority, set up a VK account after being booted off Facebook in February, but his VK account was blocked in August, along with Nay Zin Latt’s.

In response to a query about the suspension, VK told Quartz: “The commander in chief of Myanmar’s armed forces page was blocked permanently after receiving many complaints from users. We have specifically hired Burmese speaking moderators to monitor

publications in communities and user pages from Myanmar. Our moderation team delete publications that violate VK rules.”

The statement echoed the reasons the social network gave the Wall Street Journal (paywall) in August with regards to the suspension of Wirathu’s account, when it said, “Publications with calls for violence will be deleted by our moderation team, and users who host them will be banned.”

Min Aung Hlaing’s Twitter account, meanwhile, remains in operation, with the last tweet posted on Sept. 1.

Annex 297

Emanuel Stoakes & Ben Dunant, “Myanmar foreign ministry emails UN agencies weblinks to anti-Rohingya film”, *Frontier* (18 September 2018)



Myanmar foreign ministry emails UN agencies weblinks to anti-Rohingya film

SEPTEMBER 18, 2018



By EMANUEL STOAKES and BEN DUNANT | FRONTIER

YANGON — The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, has sent United Nations agencies and at least one foreign aid group working in Myanmar weblinks to a recent film by US national Mr Rick Heizman that claims Rakhine State is the target of an Islamic plot to destroy Buddhism.

The ministry sent the film, which also claims that Rohingya militants ordered their people to torch their own houses before fleeing to Bangladesh, to several UN agencies operating in Myanmar by email and without comment, sources inside the world body and the humanitarian community told *Frontier* on condition of anonymity.

A UN-commissioned fact-finding report into alleged human rights abuses in Myanmar, published in full on Tuesday, referenced the email in a footnote to its recommendation that “a credible government response should begin with its own officials refraining from using hateful and divisive rhetoric”.

The footnote stated that, on August 13, “the International Organizations Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent an email to various United Nations agencies in Myanmar sharing the links to four videos about Rakhine State and the August 2017 events. The videos contain anti-Muslim/ anti-Rohingya messages.”

The report noted, “It is highly significant that the Ministry headed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi took the initiative of sharing such videos with the United Nations.”

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Mr Stanislav Saling, spokesperson for the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar, told *Frontier*, “We can confirm that several UN offices received this message on 13 August 2018 from an email address that is usually used for official communication by the government.”

The foreign ministry did not respond to requests for comment on their motivations for sending links to the film.

Key material in the four-part documentary, “Arakan: Ancient Buddhist Kingdom Endangered by Jihad”, was drawn from interrogations of Rohingya Muslims suspected of being members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.

The film links the ARSA militant group, which launched attacks on more than 30 security posts in northern Rakhine State prior to an army crackdown that drove 700,000 Rohingya Muslims into neighbouring Bangladesh, to the threat posed by “encroaching Islamic forces” that wish to “annihilate [the ethnic Rakhine community] and all other non-Muslims and destroy the deeply-rooted indigenous Buddhist culture, and even Buddhism itself.”

Heizman told *Frontier* he obtained the interrogation material on a trip to Myanmar in October last year. He returned to Myanmar in January this year to shoot footage for his documentary, and was granted extensive access to northern Rakhine State.

Independent journalists, over the last year, have only been allowed into the area on chaperoned government trips, and humanitarian access has been tightly restricted. The three-member UN Fact-Finding Mission, which delivered its report on Tuesday, was banned altogether from Myanmar.

In a statement Heizman uploaded to Twitter on December 13 last year, he wrote that he had “asked the proper authorities in [the Rakhine State capital] Sittwe, if I could get the interrogations of the captured ARSA affiliated militants / killers / terrorists. The answer was yes.”

When asked by *Frontier*, Heizman refused to confirm the exact provenance of the documents cited in the film, but added “just recently I asked for more, there are more than 100 that I can get.”

Asked about his relationship with the Myanmar foreign ministry, he said “no comment”.

In the film’s narration, Heizman says, “As you can see the prisoners tell of, and name, the Mawlawis [religious leaders] and that the Mawlawis and the ARSA leaders are the leaders, planners, commanders and authorities that ordered the villagers to burn their homes and to flee to Bangladesh.”

The receipt of confidential materials has not exposed Heizman to legal repercussions in Myanmar, unlike *Reuters* reporters Ko Wa Lone and Ko Kyaw Soe Oo, who were sentenced on September 3 by a Yangon judge to seven years each in prison under the Official Secrets Act for possessing “secret” documents relating to Rakhine. During the trial, a police witness testified that a senior police commander had ordered their arrest using planted confidential papers.

Mr Phil Robertson, deputy Asian director of advocacy group Human Rights Watch, told *Frontier* the foreign ministry’s forwarding of Heizman’s film “is clear evidence of the civilian government’s active

role in propagating the most crude sorts of anti-Rohingya propaganda.”

“Aung San Suu Kyi and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that she leads are playing a central role in devising the narrative to cover up the crimes against humanity and possible genocide. This is really the final blow to any remaining belief that Suu Kyi and the [foreign ministry] are somehow trying to moderate the Tatmadaw and the anti-Muslim hardliners in Myanmar,” he said.

Asked about the Fact-Finding Mission’s report, which documents substantial abuses by the military against the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities in Myanmar and recommends that senior military officers be tried at the International Criminal Court for alleged genocide and crimes against humanity, Heizman told *Frontier* it was “another report that belongs in the trash”. He accused UN investigators of ignoring ARSA atrocities against Hindus and members of the Mro ethnic group in Rakhine.

He said many in the world are “trying to force the country, the people, and the army all to kowtow, and it is having devastating effects on all”.

Heizman, an ethnomusicologist living in San Francisco who has visited Myanmar over several decades, regularly engages in anti-Rohingya and broader anti-Muslim speech on Facebook and Twitter, and has developed a following among Myanmar nationalists frustrated with sympathetic coverage of the Rohingya’s plight in international media.

Heizman’s heated rhetorical style and frequent use of capital letters over entire paragraphs in online posts has not deterred the Myanmar government from endorsing his explicitly anti-Muslim work in previous communication with foreign governments and organisations.

A government enquiry into Buddhist-Muslim “sectarian violence” in Rakhine State in 2012 cited an article by Heizman, “History, Issues and Truth in Arakan/Rakhine State”, in its 2013 report. Heizman’s article presents what it calls the “basic truth” that “the Buddhist Rakhine people are under a real and brutal campaign to seize their centuries old cultural homeland and turn it into an Islamic State”. This is consistent with the message presented in his recent film.

In October 2017, when the exodus of Rohingya into Bangladesh was at its height, the Myanmar embassy in London sent a British parliamentary committee “written evidence” on “recent development[s] in Rakhine State”. This two-page document referenced another article authored by Heizman that argued that Buddhists in Myanmar had “a very rational fear” of Islam.

In January this year, Heizman delivered a talk at the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Yangon, a foreign policy think tank led by former Myanmar diplomats, in which he presented his work as a corrective to international media and human rights narratives that highlight alleged atrocities committed against the Rohingya.

Heizman had previously lobbied in the US against military rule in Myanmar. Asked whether he was concerned his current work could help the military, known in Myanmar as the Tatmadaw, he told *Frontier* it was “not the same Tatmadaw. I am aware more than just about anybody of the history of [the] Tatmadaw. I am not buddies with them – but I see reality”.

BY EMANUEL STOAKES



Emanuel Stoakes is a freelance journalist who divides his time between Southeast Asia and New Zealand. He has produced two major documentary features on the plight of Myanmar’s Rohingya minority and written on a variety of subjects for several outlets, including *The Guardian*, *Foreign Policy*, *IRIN*, *Al Jazeera English* and *Frontier Myanmar*.

Annex 298

Fortify Rights, *New Release: Myanmar/Bangladesh: Video Provides Evidence of Crimes Against Rohingya in Myanmar* (27 September 2018)



News Release

Myanmar/Bangladesh: Video Provides Evidence of Crimes Against Rohingya in Myanmar

Bangladesh, Myanmar

September 27, 2018

U.N. Security Council should urgently refer Myanmar to International Criminal Court

(COX'S BAZAR, September 27, 2018)—Recently-analyzed mobile phone footage provides important evidence for the International Criminal Court to consider as it assesses whether Myanmar authorities are responsible for international crimes against Rohingya civilians in northern Rakhine State, Fortify Rights said today. In a [new short film](#) released today, Fortify Rights exposed footage of a Myanmar Army soldier explaining to a group of civilians how the authorities would “clear out” Rohingya villages, providing evidence of the crime against humanity of deportation.

“Myanmar authorities consistently claim they didn’t force Rohingya from their homes, and this footage shows a soldier explaining in detail that the authorities would indeed force Rohingya out of their villages,” said Matthew Smith, Chief Executive Officer of Fortify Rights. “We hope this will be of use to ICC prosecutors and others pursuing justice for the Army’s wanton attacks on civilians.”

The original footage is eight-minutes and 40 seconds and first appeared online on August 28, 2017, three days after Myanmar Army-led “clearance operations” against Rohingya in northern Rakhine State began. The operations forced more than 700,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh.

Video Provides Evidence of Crimes Against Rohin...



In a [historic decision](#) on September 6, the ICC granted jurisdiction for the prosecutor to investigate and possibly prosecute the crime against humanity of deportation of Rohingya to Bangladesh as well as persecution and other inhumane acts. On September 18, ICC Prosecutor Mrs. Fatou Bensouda announced her office had opened a [preliminary examination](#) into the allegations. In a [report](#) released on September 18, a United Nations Fact-Finding Mission mandated by the U.N. Human Rights Council to investigate human rights violations against Rohingya found evidence of the crime of genocide.

The footage released today shows an unknown Myanmar Army soldier in body armor and uniformed fatigues addressing in Burmese language a group of non-Rohingya residents in a rural location believed to be in northern Rakhine State. Insignia on the soldier's uniform that would identify his military rank and unit affiliation is indistinguishable due to poor video quality.

In the video, the soldier references two villages in northern Rakhine State—Kyauksar Taing village in Rathedaung Township and Naung Yoe village. The soldier describes Naung Yoe village as a *Natala* village. The Myanmar authorities established *Natala* villages—also known as “model” villages—to transplant ethnic



Burman Buddhist communities to areas of ethnic and religious minorities. *Natala* villages are common in areas of northern Rakhine State populated by Rohingya Muslims.

"We're going to crack down on them severely and fast," the soldier says in the footage, speaking about Rohingya. "No worries about that. We'll clear out their villages soon after we leave here."

He goes on to say: "Our indigenous villages will be protected when clearance actions begin. One group [of soldiers] will protect ethnic villages. One group will make clearance. Security forces will block the escape of Rohingya, so they don't spill towards our indigenous villages."

The soldier portrays all Rohingya as posing an existential threat to Myanmar, telling his audience "they will conquer the whole country," adding: "These guys have a high breeding population rate and high population growth, so they threaten our ethnic minorities here with their population."

In a [160-page report](#) published in July, Fortify Rights documented how soldiers, police, and local non-Rohingya citizens hacked Rohingya civilians, slit throats, and fatally shot and burned thousands of men, women, and children in a matter of weeks beginning on August 25, 2017. Soldiers raped masses of Rohingya women and girls, killed infant children, arbitrarily arrested men and boys, and destroyed several hundred villages in arson attacks. Fortify Rights identified 22 military and police officials who should be investigated and possibly prosecuted for the crime of genocide. Fortify Rights also documented human rights violations by Rohingya militants, including killings of and threats against civilians.

During the army-led "clearance operations," non-Rohingya citizens worked in concert with Myanmar Army soldiers in attacks against Rohingya civilians.

In the footage released today, the soldier appears to incite local residents, including

children, to join attacks against Rohingya.



“When we are working like this, people from this village need to cooperate with us,” the soldier tells the audience of civilians. “To show our courage, hold swords, hold sticks, even elders or young kids must defeat them.”

Fortify Rights and others have called on the U.N. Security Council to refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC to investigate the full spectrum of atrocity crimes in Myanmar, including crimes in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states.

“The international community must act fast and take every approach possible, including by establishing a new mechanism to collect and preserve evidence for prosecutions,” said Matthew Smith. “There’s no excuse for Security Council inaction. It should refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC without delay.”

Annex 299

“A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar’s Military”, *New York Times*
(15 October 2018)

A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military

The New York Times

October 15, 2018 Monday 16:47 EST

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Section: TECHNOLOGY

Length: 1745 words

Byline: Paul Mozur

Highlight: With fake pages and sham accounts, the military targeted the mostly Muslim Rohingya minority group, said former military officials, researchers and civilian officials.

Body

NAYPYIDAW, **Myanmar** — They posed as fans of pop stars and national heroes as they flooded **Facebook** with their hatred. One said Islam was a global threat to Buddhism. Another shared a false story about the rape of a Buddhist woman by a Muslim man.

The **Facebook** posts were not from everyday internet users. Instead, they were from **Myanmar** military personnel who turned the social network into a tool for ethnic cleansing, according to former military officials, researchers and civilian officials in the country.

Members of the **Myanmar** military were the prime operatives behind a systematic campaign on **Facebook** that stretched back half a decade and that targeted the country's mostly Muslim Rohingya minority group, the people said. The military exploited **Facebook**'s wide reach in **Myanmar**, where it is so broadly used that many of the country's 18 million internet users confuse the Silicon Valley social media platform with the internet. Human rights groups blame the anti-Rohingya propaganda for [inciting murders](#), [rapes](#) and the largest forced human migration in recent history.

While [Facebook took down](#) the official accounts of senior **Myanmar** military leaders in August, the breadth and details of the propaganda campaign — which was hidden behind fake names and sham accounts — went undetected. The campaign, described by five people who asked for anonymity because they feared for their safety, included hundreds of military personnel who created troll accounts and news and celebrity pages on **Facebook** and then flooded them with incendiary comments and posts timed for peak viewership.

Working in shifts out of bases clustered in foothills near the capital, Naypyidaw, officers were also tasked with collecting intelligence on popular accounts and criticizing posts unfavorable to the military, the people said. So secretive were the operations that all but top leaders had to check their phones at the door.

Facebook confirmed many of the details about the shadowy, military-driven campaign. The company's head of cybersecurity policy, Nathaniel Gleicher, said it had found "clear and deliberate attempts to covertly spread propaganda that were directly linked to the **Myanmar** military."

On Monday, after questions from The New York Times, it said it had taken down a series of accounts that supposedly were focused on entertainment but were instead tied to the military. Those accounts had 1.3 million followers.

"We discovered that these seemingly independent entertainment, beauty and informational pages were linked to the **Myanmar** military," the company said in its announcement.

A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military

The previously unreported actions by **Myanmar's** military on **Facebook** are among the first examples of an authoritarian government's using the social network against its own people. It is another facet of the disruptive disinformation campaigns that are unfolding on the site. In the past, [state-backed Russians](#) and [Iranians](#) spread divisive and inflammatory messages through **Facebook** to people in other countries. In the United States, some domestic groups [have now adopted similar tactics](#) ahead of the midterm elections.

"The military has gotten a lot of benefit from **Facebook**," said Thet Swe Win, founder of Synergy, a group that focuses on fostering social harmony in **Myanmar**. "I wouldn't say **Facebook** is directly involved in the ethnic cleansing, but there is a responsibility they had to take proper actions to avoid becoming an instigator of **genocide**."

In [August](#), after [months of reports](#) about anti-Rohingya propaganda on **Facebook**, the company acknowledged that it had been too slow to act in **Myanmar**. By then, [more than 700,000 Rohingya](#) had fled the country in a year, in what United Nations officials called "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing." The company has said it is bolstering its efforts to stop such abuses.

"We have taken significant steps to remove this abuse and make it harder on **Facebook**," Mr. Gleicher said. "Investigations into this type of activity are ongoing."

The information committee of **Myanmar's** military did not respond to multiple requests for comment.

The **Myanmar** military's **Facebook** operation began several years ago, said the people familiar with how it worked. The military threw major resources at the task, the people said, with as many as 700 people on it.

They began by setting up what appeared to be news pages and pages on **Facebook** that were devoted to Burmese pop stars, models and other celebrities, like a [beauty queen](#) with a penchant for parroting military propaganda. They then tended the pages to attract large numbers of followers, said the people. They took over one **Facebook** page devoted to a military sniper, Ohn Maung, who had won national acclaim after being wounded in battle. They also ran a popular blog, called Opposite Eyes, that had no outward ties to the military, the people said.

Those then became distribution channels for lurid photos, false news and inflammatory posts, often aimed at **Myanmar's** Muslims, the people said. Troll accounts run by the military helped spread the content, shout down critics and fuel arguments between commenters to rile people up. Often, they posted sham photos of corpses that they said were evidence of Rohingya-perpetrated massacres, said one of the people.

Digital fingerprints showed that one major source of the **Facebook** content came from areas outside Naypyidaw, where the military keeps compounds, some of the people said.

Some military personnel on the effort suffered from low morale, said two of the people, in part because of the need to spread unfounded rumors about people like Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel laureate and **Myanmar's** de facto civilian leader, to hurt their credibility. One hoax used a real photo of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi in a wheelchair and paired it with false suggestions that she had gone to South Korea for Botox injections, the people said.

The **Facebook** page of the sniper, Mr. Ohn Maung, offers one example of the military's tactics. It gained a large following because of his descriptions of the day-to-day life of a soldier. The account was ultimately taken over by a military team to pump out propaganda, such as posts portraying Rohingya as terrorists, said two of the people.

One of the most dangerous campaigns came in 2017, when the military's intelligence arm spread rumors on **Facebook** to both Muslim and Buddhist groups that an attack from the other side was imminent, said two people. Making use of the anniversary of Sept. 11, 2001, it spread warnings on **Facebook** Messenger via widely followed accounts masquerading as news sites and celebrity fan pages that "jihad attacks" would be carried out. To Muslim groups it spread a separate message that nationalist Buddhist monks were organizing anti-Muslim protests.

The purpose of the campaign, which set the country on edge, was to generate widespread feelings of vulnerability and fear that could be salvaged only by the military's protection, said researchers who followed the tactics.

A Genocide Incited on Facebook, With Posts From Myanmar's Military

Facebook said it had found evidence that the messages were being intentionally spread by inauthentic accounts and took some down at the time. It did not investigate any link to the military at that point.

The military tapped its rich history of psychological warfare that it developed during the decades when **Myanmar** was controlled by a military junta, which gave up power in 2011. The goal then was to discredit radio broadcasts from the BBC and Voice of America. One veteran of that era said classes on advanced psychological warfare from 15 years ago taught a golden rule for false news: If one quarter of the content is true, that helps make the rest of it believable.

Some military personnel picked up techniques from Russia. Three people familiar with the situation said some officers had studied psychological warfare, hacking and other computer skills in Russia. Some would give lectures to pass along the information when they returned, one person said.

The **Myanmar** military's links to Russia go back decades, but around 2000, it began sending large groups of officers to the country to study, said researchers. Soldiers stationed in Russia for training opened blogs and got into arguments with Burmese political exiles in places like Singapore.

The campaign in **Myanmar** looked similar to online influence campaigns from Russia, said Myat Thu, a researcher who studies false news and propaganda on **Facebook**. One technique involved fake accounts with few followers spewing venomous comments beneath posts and sharing misinformation posted by more popular accounts to help them spread rapidly.

Human rights groups focused on the **Facebook** page called Opposite Eyes, which began as a blog about a decade ago and then leapt to the social network. By then, the military was behind it, said two people. The blog provided a mix of military news, like hype about the purchase of new Russian fighter jets, and posts attacking ethnic minority groups like the Rohingya.

At times, according to Moe Htet Nay, an activist who kept tabs on it, the ties of the Opposite Eyes **Facebook** page to the military spilled into the open. Once, it wrote about a military victory in **Myanmar**'s Kachin State before the news became public. Below the post, a senior officer wrote that the information was not public and should be taken down. It was.

"It was very systematic," said Mr. Moe Htet Nay, adding that other **Facebook** accounts reposted everything that the blog wrote, spreading its message further. Although **Facebook** has taken the page down, the hashtag #Oppositeeyes still brings up anti-Rohingya posts.

Today, both **Facebook** and **Myanmar**'s civilian leaders said they were keenly aware of the power of the platform.

"**Facebook** in **Myanmar**? I don't like it," said Oo Hla Saw, a legislator. "It's been dangerous and harmful for our democratic transition."

Follow Paul Mozur on Twitter: @paulmozur. Wai Moe contributed reporting from Yangon, **Myanmar**.

PHOTO: A border police officer at a repatriation center for Rohingya returning to **Myanmar**. Human rights groups blame anti-Rohingya propaganda online for fueling violence and displacement. (PHOTOGRAPH BY Adam Dean for The New York Times FOR THE NEW YORK TIMES)

Annex 300

Natalie Brinham, “‘Genocide Cards’: Rohingya refugees on why they risked their lives to refuse ID cards”, *Open Democracy* (21 October 2018)



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“Genocide cards”: Rohingya refugees on why they risked their lives to refuse ID cards

Wary of the past, Rohingya have frustrated the UN’s attempts to provide them with documentation.

[Natalie Brinham](#)

21 October 2018



A demonstration over identity cards at a Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh in April, 2018. Image: NurPhoto/SIPA USA/PA Images.

In 2016, Nural, as a leader in a Rohingya village in Rathedaung, was called to a meeting by a high-ranking officer from the Myanmar Border Guard Police. There, Nural and the gathered village leaders were told all Rohingya must now accept identity cards, known as nationality verification cards (NVCs), or they would “no longer be allowed to remain in the country” and be “driven out”. Despite the risk of speaking out, Nural raised his voice in the meeting, “These NVC cards make us into foreigners who are supposed to apply for citizenship. We are already citizens of this country.” In his frustration and anger, he pounded his fist on the table three times. Four armed officers pointed their guns at his head, escorted him out of the room and handcuffed him to a chair. Fortunately, he was not among the 30 men who were arrested in the village that day. He was not the man who was shot dead while running away from the guards that came searching for his father-in-law. He was not the man who was sentenced to seven years in prison, or the one who was blinded in

one eye by police beatings. His village escaped being burnt that day – only to be razed a year later.

“These cards make us into foreigners... We are already citizens of this country.”

Nural is only educated to primary level, but he knows well the history of his people. He knows his Rohingya forefathers have resided in the north Rakhine region centuries before the Burmese generals in power now, who are Johnny-come-latelies by comparison. He knows that his parents and grandparents carried the same citizenship cards and had the same rights as all other citizens of independent Myanmar. And that Rohingyas' proof of citizenship and belonging has been systematically removed over the past thirty-five years through the confiscation, destruction, nullification, and targeted non-issuance of documents, all carried out by multiple civilian and military agencies under a single command. He is sure that NVCs are just the latest in a long-line of ID cards that attempt to recategorise Rohingya as foreigners, attack their group identity and remove their rights.

In all Rohingya communities, village chairmen and yar ein hmu (leaders of 100 households) like Nural were ordered to accept the cards. They were told if they did not, they would be dismissed from their positions and punished under the law. Some held out – others could not. Nural tells me with pride that his was one of eight villages in Rathedaung that stood united against the NVCs. He, himself, held out. He was just one of many Rohingya who resisted the destruction of their identity as a group indigenous to the Rakhine region by refusing the cards.

Now, after having fled across the border into Bangladesh, Rohingya are facing a new chapter in their struggle against identity cards. But this time threat is coming from an unexpected source – the United Nations refugee agency – who have proposed a form of documentation which Rohingya claim is almost identical to the cards imposed by the Myanmar state.

Nationality verification and genocide

Between 2016 and 2017, villages were subjected to night-time “security” raids which villagers say were linked to the NVC cards. One man described with tears of anger and sadness that his older brother died after being bitten by a snake while hiding in the forest one night. As the men hid, they left behind women and girls who were repeatedly subjected to sexual violence at the hands of the security forces. “I cannot even speak of what happened to our women, while we hid.” he said. Across ten focus groups and multiple in-depth interviews, I have been told that without the NVCs, school children were not allowed to sit for final examinations, fishermen could no longer fish, cattle traders could no longer go to market, businessmen could no longer pass through checkpoints, parents could no longer register the births of their children, prisoners could not be released at the end of their sentences, sick people could not go to the hospital, and retirees could no longer draw their salaries. It became barely possible to eke out a living, support a family or survive. The attempted enforcement of identity cards was, and still is, aiding, what the Indian philosopher Amartya Sen has described as, a “slow genocide” in Myanmar. But still communities hold out. Rohingya accounts of the enforced issuance of NVCs are full of heroism, tragedy, unity, pride and occasionally shame, where they could no longer endure.

The attempted enforcement of identity cards was, and still is, aiding the “slow genocide” in Myanmar.

In focus groups, I have often heard NVCs referred to as “genocide cards” by Rohingyas. Following the outbreak of violence in August 2017, the vast majority of Rohingya fled their homelands; many were killed or driven out of the country by terror, their homes burned, and their lands stolen by the state. A nationality verification process, originally (and sometimes still) promoted by international agencies as “a pathway to citizenship” for “stateless” Rohingya, has compounded the physical, symbolic and cultural destruction of a group.

Unsurprisingly, the 800,000 Rohingya in Bangladesh’s refugee camps are insistent that among their conditions of return to Myanmar is the end of NVCs or NVC-like procedures.¹ They are demanding an end to being labelled “Bengalis”, “foreigners” or “stateless.” They want their citizenship to be recognised and to be called by their

own name, Rohingya, as an indigenous group of Myanmar. It is not simply a matter of access to citizenship rights. It is also a matter of safety, security and survival.

Resistance to UNHCR’s “smart cards” in Bangladesh refugee camps

Displaced Rohingya are also uniting in their resistance to another kind of ID card – the “smart cards” being issued by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Despite a deep and tangible yearning to return home, they are resisting premature or forced repatriations by refusing to accept UNHCR-issued biometric “smart cards”. These cards are being issued following the memorandum of understanding between the UNHCR, the United Nations Development Programme and the Myanmar government relating to repatriations to Myanmar. Although the UNHCR and the Bangladesh government claim the cards will not lead to immediate repatriation, Rohingya are understandably wary. The UNHCR are in a predicament. Without issuing cards, they struggle to “be operational.” But Rohingya are resolute in their rejection – operations or not.



A demonstration during a UN Security visit at a Rohingya camp on 29 April, 2018. Image: NurPhoto/SIPA USA/PA Images On a visit to a refugee camp in Bangladesh to ask people about citizenship in Myanmar, not smart cards, it soon becomes apparent that the two are linked. The small crowd that gathers around me as I sit in a small open-air shelter steadily grows as the conversation moves on to smart cards. "Please do something about the smart cards, please", one young refugee begs of me.

Reports have been circulating for several months among the camp population that there may be shadowy organisations offering 500 Bangladeshi Taka to each family willing to break ranks and take the cards, or that beatings by security officers taking place outside the UNHCR office are doled out for those that refuse. There's buzzing concern and a subdued sense of confusion and betrayal that a group of residents in another camp have reportedly accepted UNHCR's smart cards. In almost all of my conversations with refugees over the past two months, the issue of "smart cards" has come up as a major concern related to safety and security on return to their homelands in Myanmar.

So, what's wrong with the cards? Firstly, Rohingya are asking that they be recognised on the cards as "refugees", a term the Bangladesh government is reluctant to entertain fearing it will contribute to the protracted nature of the Rohingya refugee issue in Bangladesh. For Rohingya, whose family and oral histories are ingrained with accounts of repatriations at gunpoint over the past 40 years and the confiscation, destruction and nullification of the documents that prove their citizenship on return, the term "refugee" offers some degree of international protection. It also offers proof that they crossed from their home in Myanmar. Myanmar has labelled past returnees "Bengalis" and the UNHCR, who has presided over the monitoring of returnees in the past, has been powerless to prevent further abuses.

Refugees are insisting that the UN refugee agency cards carry the term "Rohingya".

Secondly, refugees are insisting that the UNHCR cards carry the term "Rohingya", running contrary to the agency's practice of not stating ethnic identities on ID cards,

lest it result in discrimination. Rohingya demands for recording their identity as a group indigenous to the Rakhine region of Myanmar, relate not to international practices but to practices within Myanmar in which the only variety of citizenship worth having is one based on the membership of an ethnic group considered by the state to be pre-colonial or indigenous – one recorded on all documents. Since these refugees have been targeted for no other reason than their membership of a group, Rohingya understand that the public acknowledgement of their ethnic identity by the Myanmar state is absolutely essential in halting and preventing the ultimate crime against a group, genocide.

Thirdly, and most significantly, Rohingya repeatedly state that “the smart card is the same as the NVC card”. They have an important point here – smart cards may well not be so different from NVCs in terms of outcomes. All biometric and biographical information handed over to the UNHCR will be shared with the Myanmar government in the event of repatriations, and this can then be used, to produce the identification cards issued by the Myanmar state. But much more importantly, as one bright young refugee explains, jabbing aggressively with his finger at clause 15 of the leaked MOU between UNHCR, UNDP and Myanmar on repatriations, the agreement states after Myanmar has carried out the “necessary verifications” they will issue “appropriate identification papers” and provide a “pathway to citizenship to those eligible”. In short, the ID cards issued on return, using the data from the UNHCR smart cards, will either be NVC cards or something very similar, that require Rohingya to have their nationality verified by a government that has systematically removed evidence of their citizenship and evidence of Rohingya existence, as part of a 40-year genocidal process. If returnees are lucky, or perhaps unlucky, they may be provided with a citizenship document that labels and stigmatises them as “Bengali” – but certainly not “Rohingya”, not indigenous and not entitled to the same rights as other citizens.

The poisoned chalice of “pathways to citizenship”

What is even more problematic for Rohingya is that the UNHCR along with other international agencies have since the 1990s promoted “pathways to citizenship” as the way to resolve what they have historically understood to be Rohingya’s de jure

statelessness. The “temporary registration cards” or “white cards” issued to Rohingya from 1995 onwards, during the UNHCR’s time in the Rakhine state, gave material form to the international rhetoric that Rohingya were “stateless”. One high profile camp-based Rohingya activist claimed, “when UNHCR told us to accept these white cards in Myanmar, they effectively labelled us as stateless.” Since they had citizenship before the 1982 citizenship law, under the law, they should still be entitled to it.

Rohingya across five countries find the label “stateless” hurtful and harmful.

Rohingya across five countries, have consistently told me how hurtful and harmful they find the label “stateless” as, for many, it suggests that they have never been recognised as citizens. “Pathways to citizenship” is generally a way for international agencies to mediate between a neglectful state and undocumented people. It is perhaps less appropriate in a situation of genocide with the wilful denial of the rights and the existence an indigenous people.

“The good news”, I tell the young guy angrily prodding a copy of the MOU, “is the UN Fact Finding Mission report is the first UN report that does not call you de jure stateless, but de facto stateless. Just like any other refugee in the world. They recommend the reinstatement of your full citizenship.” His smile flickers, but he doesn’t appear reassured.

We can only but hope that the change in discourse brought by the FFM report, which also describes the Rohingya persecution as “genocide”, will help to finally bury the idea of NVC cards as part of a solution for Rohingya. In the refugee camps, it is hard to miss the simmering anger and indelible mistrust of the UNHCR for its inability to ensure voluntariness, safety and rights during two previous rounds of forced repatriations in 1978-9 and 1993-4; and for its lack of refugee consultation and transparency in negotiating the conditions of potential Rohingya returns this year. Promoting smart cards for genocide survivors, as though ID cards can provide a neutral record of external facts about human beings, just isn’t going to wash this time. As one Rohingya political leader told me, “it is impossible for the UNHCR to ensure repatriations if they cannot even issue the smart cards on a voluntary basis.”

It's time to stop talking about "pathways" – treacherous as they have been for Rohingya – and to start listening to Rohingyas' own understandings and interpretations of how the genocide has played out, including how they feel about the "genocide cards" and "smart cards". Rohingyas know the significance of these cards, more than anyone else, UN included. The survivors voice must carry the greatest weight.

**Names have been changed to protect interviewees.*

¹ See also the UN Special Rapporteur report on Human Rights in Myanmar for conclusions regarding National Verification Cards.

² Some Rohingya media has reported the beatings.

Annex 301

Ben Dunant, “Yangon Region minister hosts American anti-Rohingya activist”, *Frontier*
(9 November 2018)



Yangon Region minister hosts American anti-Rohingya activist

NOVEMBER 9, 2018



By BEN DUNANT | FRONTIER

YANGON – The Rakhine ethnic affairs minister in the Yangon Region government hosted an event with American anti-Rohingya activist Mr Rick Heizman at Yangon University on Wednesday, in which Heizman spoke of the “free access” the government and military had granted him in northern Rakhine State.

The event at the university’s Hlaing Campus, “Hidden Truths of Western Frontier in Rakhine State”, included lectures and a screening of a film recently made by Heizman, “Arakan: Ancient Buddhist Kingdom Endangered by Jihad”. The event follows an apparent pattern of endorsement of Heizman’s views and activities by parts of the Myanmar government.

On the same day as the Yangon event, Twitter suspended Heizman’s Twitter account for violating Twitter’s “rules against hateful conduct”.

Heizman has used social media extensively to spread anti-Rohingya messages and criticise journalists and human rights advocates covering the Rakhine crisis, gaining an enthusiastic online following among Myanmar nationalists.

A Twitter spokesperson told *Frontier* that the company would not comment on individual accounts but cited Twitter’s Hateful Conduct Policy in its decision to suspend Heizman: “you may not promote violence against or directly attack or threaten other people on the basis of race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, religious affiliation, age, disability, or serious disease.”

“We also do not allow accounts whose primary purpose is inciting harm towards others on the basis of these categories,” the spokesperson said.

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San Francisco-based ethnomusicologist and anti-Rohingya activist Mr Rick Heizman speaks on the premises of Yangon University, Myanmar’s oldest and best-known university. (Steve Tickner | Frontier)

‘Not our people’

In an introductory speech at the event on Wednesday, the minister U Zaw Aye Maung countered accusations from the United Nations and foreign governments that the Myanmar army had committed mass atrocities against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine, saying the crisis was rooted in Islamic terrorism and illegal immigration.

He cast the army’s campaign, which sparked an exodus of more than 720,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh, as a legitimate response to attacks in August 2017 by the Rohingya militant group the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and a general desire by the Rohingya to “occupy our land”.

“We are not fighting them without reason,” he said, claiming the army’s actions were purely defensive. “We need to protect our land.”

“We want to tell the world they are not our people. They are illegal migrants,” he said of the Rohingya, referring to them only as “Bengali” to impute a foreign origin. By way of explanation, he said, “Their appearance and their language is the same as the Bangladeshi people. When our officials go to [speak with them], they need interpreters.”



Linguists and members of the Rohingya community say their language is related but distinct from dialects spoken across the border in the Chittagong district of Bangladesh.

Zaw Aye Maung, a member of the Arakan National Party, was elected to the Yangon Region government in the 2015 by ethnic Rakhine voters resident in Yangon. He previously held the post under the government of President U Thein Sein.

The 2008 constitution stipulates that ethnic groups who can claim more than a 0.1 percent share of the national population in a given state or region can vote for their own ethnic affairs minister in that state or regional government.

'I could go anywhere'

The minister introduced Heizman as “a very independent man” who does not have any government or organisational affiliation.

Heizman, who introduced himself as “a top ethnomusicologist”, said he has visited Myanmar regularly since 1981 and was involved in the pro-democracy movement aimed at ending military rule.

He said he had recently returned from a trip to Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung townships in northern Rakhine, during which he was given “full permission, no restrictions at all”.

This contrasts with restrictions placed on journalists, most of whom can only visit northern Rakhine State on closely escorted government tours. “I could go anywhere,” Heizman said.

Government newspaper *The Global New Light of Myanmar* ran a picture, with a brief description, on October 8 of Heizman visiting Maungdaw Township in northern Rakhine, where “he documented burnt-out villages”. The description said Heizman would visit the village of Min Gyi, also known as Tula Toli, the site of an alleged massacre of Rohingya, which journalists have been barred from visiting.

Heizman said journalists facing travel restrictions had no legitimate reason to complain. “Have any of the journalists done anything positive for Rakhine?” he asked, before describing some of the charitable work he has conducted in Rakhine, such as helping to build schools.

He said, “I don’t think at all that the army has done the things it is accused of,” but insisted, “I’m not aligned with the army”.

Heizman was sharply critical of international media, which he called “feverishly one-sided” in its coverage of the Rakhine crisis. “Maybe I’m the real journalist, and you’re all wannabe journalists,” he said.

The event included a screening of a film that Heizman had largely shot during a trip to northern Rakhine earlier this year. The film claims that Rakhine State is the target of a plot to create “an extremist Islamic state”, and that Rohingya militants ordered their people to torch their own houses before fleeing to Bangladesh.

Key material for the film was drawn from interrogations of Rohingya Muslims suspected of being members of the ARSA militant group, as well as interviews with local Buddhist Rakhine, Hindus and members of other communities who claimed to have been attacked by ARSA.

After Heizman, Rakhine historian Dr Aye Chan delivered a lecture on what he said were the historical roots of the Rakhine crisis – large-scale migration from Bengal to what is now Rakhine State during British colonial rule. Aye Chan claimed that, in settling the area, Bengali migrants were animated by Wahhabism, a hardline Islamic doctrine that grew during the 18th century in what is now Saudi Arabia.



Yangon Region Rakhine Ethnic Affairs Minister U Zaw Aye Maung talks to reporters at the event "Hidden Truths of Western Frontier in Rakhine state", featuring Mr Rick Heizman, at Yangon University's Hlaing Campus on November 7. (Steve Ticker | Frontier)

Prior platforms

Wednesday's event was the latest in a series of platforms and apparent endorsements that government and civil society in Myanmar has provided for Heizman.

In September, *Frontier* reported that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, headed by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, sent United Nations agencies and at least one foreign aid group working in Myanmar weblinks to Heizman's film.

A UN-commissioned fact-finding report into alleged human rights abuses in Myanmar, which called for Myanmar's top generals to be prosecuted for genocide, referenced the email in a footnote to its recommendation that "a credible government response should begin with its own officials refraining from using hateful and divisive rhetoric".

A government enquiry into Buddhist-Muslim "sectarian violence" in Rakhine State in 2012 cited an article by Heizman, "History, Issues and Truth in Arakan/Rakhine State", in its 2013 report. Heizman's article presents what it calls the "basic truth" that "the Buddhist Rakhine people are under a real and brutal campaign to seize their centuries old cultural homeland and turn it into an Islamic State".

In October 2017, when the exodus of Rohingya into Bangladesh was at its height, the Myanmar embassy in London sent a British parliamentary committee "written evidence" on "recent development[s] in Rakhine State". This two-page document referenced another article authored by Heizman that argued that Buddhists in Myanmar had "a very rational fear" of Islam.

Last month, a pro-Tatmadaw think tank, the Thayninga Institute for Strategic Studies, included Heizman in a [panel discussion](#) on the Rakhine crisis at the Novotel Hotel in Yangon.

In January this year, Heizman delivered a talk at the Myanmar Institute of Strategic and International Studies in Yangon, a foreign policy think tank led by former Myanmar diplomats.

Annex 302

“Religion Minister Says ‘Extreme Religion’ Remarks Aimed at Rohingya”, *The Irrawaddy*
(4 December 2018)

Burma

Religion Minister Says 'Extreme Religion' Remarks Aimed at Rohingya



Minister of Religious Affairs and Culture U Aung Ko speaks to reporters in Naypyitaw on Tuesday. / Htet Naing Zaw / The Irrawaddy

By **THE IRRAWADDY** 4 December 2018

YANGON — Myanmar’s religious affairs and culture minister said on Tuesday that his recent remarks branding an unspecified faith an “extreme religion” did not refer to all Muslims but only to “Bengalis.”

Myanmar government officials use “Bengali” to refer to Rohingya, whom they do not consider an ethnic group but illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

At a funeral ceremony for a prominent Buddhist monk last month, Minister U Aung Ko **said** “the followers of an extreme religion take three or four wives and have families with 15 or 20 children,” posing a risk to Myanmar’s monogamous Buddhists.

Although the minister did not name the religion he was referring to, an Islamic organization based in Yangon, the Society of Enlightening Quranic Knowledge, took offense and issued a statement rebuking U Aung Ko for calling any religion “extreme.”

On Friday, the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture released a public announcement claiming that U Aung Ko was not targeting any one religion but “‘religious extremists’

from every faith in the country” and asked the public for a tolerant interpretation of the minister’s remarks.

When asked about his remarks by reporters on Tuesday, U Aung Ko said he did not mean to offend the Muslim community in Myanmar.

“In fact I mean to say Bengali as another religion,” he said, claiming that “Bengali” youth in refugee camps in Bangladesh were being pressured to go to Myanmar.

“With an exploding population, their ambition is to march to Rakhine [State] and Myanmar. That’s what I want to say,” the minister said.

More than 700,000 Rohingya have fled Rakhine for Bangladesh since August 2017, when coordinated attacks on security posts by the militant Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army triggered a military crackdown. The UN and others have accused Myanmar’s military of ethnic cleansing by unleashing a campaign of arson, rape and murder against the Rohingya. The military says it was carrying out legitimate operations against a terrorist organization.

Most of the refugees now live in sprawling camps in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar District.

More than 1 million Rohingya were estimated to be living in northern Rakhine before the military crackdown and constituted nearly 90 percent of the local population.

Topics: Rohingya



The Irrawaddy

...

Annex 303

“Myanmar army chief must be prosecuted for Rohingya ‘genocide’: U.N. Rights envoy”,
Reuters (25 January 2019)



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WORLD NEWS

JANUARY 25, 2019 / 12:24 PM / UPDATED 2 YEARS AGO

Myanmar army chief must be prosecuted for Rohingya 'genocide': U.N. rights envoy

By Reuters Staff



BANGKOK/DHAKA (Reuters) - Myanmar's army chief should be prosecuted for genocide against the Rohingya Muslim minority, a U.N. human rights investigator said, adding that holding perpetrators to account for crimes was necessary before refugees who fled the country could return.

Yanghee Lee talk to reporters during Reuters interview in Bangkok, Thailand January 18, 2019. REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun

Yanghee Lee, the United Nations' Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, was speaking during a trip to Thailand and Bangladesh, where she met officials and Rohingya driven out of western Rakhine state after an army crackdown in 2017.

“Min Aung Hlaing and others should be held accountable for genocide in Rakhine and for crimes against humanity and war crimes in other parts of Myanmar,” said Lee, who is barred from the country, referring to the military's commander-in-chief.

Her interview marked the first time Lee has publicly called for the army chief to be prosecuted for genocide. A U.N. fact-finding mission on Myanmar last year said that the military campaign, which refugees say included mass killings and rape, was orchestrated with “genocidal intent” and recommended charging Min Aung Hlaing and five other generals with the “gravest crimes under international law”.

Since August 2017 some 730,000 Rohingya have fled Rakhine to Bangladesh, where they now live overcrowded camps.

“For any repatriation to happen ... the perpetrators must be held to account, because sending the refugees back with no accountability is going to really exacerbate or prolong the horrific situation in Myanmar,” Lee told Reuters in an interview in Thailand on Jan. 18. “And then we’ll see another cycle of expulsion again.”

Spokesmen for Myanmar’s military and government could not be reached for comment. The country has previously denied almost all allegations made by refugees against its troops, who it says were engaged in legitimate counterterrorism operations.

LEGAL ROUTES

The U.N. Human Rights Council in September voted to approve the establishment of an “ongoing independent mechanism” for Myanmar that would collect, consolidate, and preserve evidence of crimes that could be used in an eventual court case.

Lee said the independent mechanism would provide funds for “victim support”, including money for criminal cases.

Myanmar has said it “absolutely rejects” that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has jurisdiction to rule on its actions. The country is not a party to the Rome Statute that established the Hague-based court.

Non-parties can be referred to the ICC by the U.N. Security Council, though diplomats have said permanent members China and Russia would likely veto any such move. Britain has been drafting a Security Council resolution on Myanmar, but diplomats told Reuters in December it did not include a referral to the ICC.

Legal experts say other options for an international prosecution include referral by individual

Slideshow (2 images)

U.N. member states – five Latin American states recently successfully referred Venezuela – or an ad hoc tribunal.

CAUTION URGED ON ISLAND PLAN

Lee's trip to the region this week included visits to Cox's Bazar, in southern Bangladesh, where the camps housing Rohingya refugees are located, and Bhasan Char, a remote island in the Bay of Bengal where the Bangladeshi authorities have been building new temporary accommodation for them.

Bangladesh says moving refugees to Bhasan Char - whose name means "floating island" - will ease chronic overcrowding in the existing camps. But some humanitarian groups have

criticised the plan, saying the island is vulnerable to frequent cyclones and cannot sustain livelihoods for thousands of people.

Speaking at a news conference in Dhaka on Friday, at the end of her trip, Lee called on the Bangladesh government to consult with the U.N. and humanitarian agencies before any move to Bhasan Char, which she said should not be done in haste.

“There should be no rush to relocate refugees, such as before the monsoon season which is one of the possibilities that has been outlined to me,” she said.

“The island’s isolation does particularly trouble me, especially in the event of cyclones or other natural disasters.”

(This version of the story corrects ‘Security Council’ to ‘Human Rights Council’ in eighth paragraph)

Reporting by Poppy Elena McPherson in Bangkok and Ruma Paul in Dhaka; Editing by Alex Richardson

Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

MORE FROM REUTERS

Annex 304

“World Islamic Group Votes to Take Myanmar Rohingya Abuses to International Court of Justice”, *Radio Free Asia* (5 March 2019)

9/24/2020

World Islamic Group Votes to Take Myanmar Rohingya Abuses to International Court of Justice



World Islamic Group Votes to Take Myanmar Rohingya Abuses to International Court of Justice

2019-03-05



Foreign ministers and diplomats from the Organization of Islamic Conference attend a meeting Dhaka, Bangladesh, May 6, 2018.

AFP

The world's top Islamic intergovernmental body has unanimously adopted a resolution to pursue legal recourse through the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to seek accountability and justice for large-scale human rights violations committed against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, a statement issued by Bangladesh's foreign ministry said.

The Council of Ministers of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) said it will also seek legal means through the ICJ to establish the legal rights of the Rohingya, the ministry said in a news release after the resolution passed on Monday.

The resolution came after a long series of negotiations to seek accountability for crimes committed against humanity and gross violations of human rights against Rohingya in Myanmar, it said.

“The OIC Council of Ministers at this Abu Dhabi meeting has taken a decision in a resolution to move that the International Court of Justice address the question of accountability and justice regarding the gross human rights violations against the Rohingyas,” Gousal Azam Sarjer, spokesman of Bangladesh’s Foreign Ministry, told RFA’s Myanmar Service by phone on Tuesday.

In a declaration at the end of the 57-member organization’s two-day meeting in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates, the OIC stressed the importance of its member states to continue to be involved in the United Nations system, including the General Assembly, the Rights Council, and relevant international organizations to respond to the rights violations against the Rohingya and the latest developments concerning them.

In a previous declaration following a ministerial meeting in May 2018, the OIC said that Myanmar’s treatment of Muslims in northern Rakhine state amounted to ethnic cleansing and is a “serious and blatant violation of international law.”

At that meeting, the OIC agreed to form an ad hoc ministerial committee to ensure accountability and justice for gross violations of international human rights against the Rohingya and to assist in gathering information and evidence collection for accountability purposes.

During the committee’s first session this February, it recommended taking legal steps to establish legal rights for the Rohingya on the principles of international law based on the U.N.’s Genocide Convention and other human rights and humanitarian law principles, the Bangladeshi government’s news release said.

Bangladesh houses more than 1.1 million Rohingya refugees, including over 730,000 who arrived there following a 2017 crackdown by Myanmar military forces in northern Rakhine state, which included killings, torture, rape, and arson in Muslim communities.

The Myanmar government justified the crackdown as a necessary countermeasure to defeat a group of Muslim militants in the state, and denied that its military had committed mass atrocities against the Rohingya, despite credible evidence and eyewitness accounts.

An extensive report by U.N. investigators in September 2018 detailed violence by Myanmar security forces and called for the prosecution of top military commanders on genocide charges at the International Criminal Court or by another criminal tribunal.

‘We will not accept it’

Reacting to news of the OIC’s measure, Myo Nyunt, spokesman of Myanmar’s ruling National League for Democracy government, said officials need to know which rights for

9/24/2020

World Islamic Group Votes to Take Myanmar Rohingya Abuses to International Court of Justice

the Rohingya the OIC is talking about.

“What do they mean?” he said. “If they ask us to recognize all of them as ‘ethnic Rohingya’ without identifying any of them, then it is interference in a country’s sovereignty, and we will not accept it at all.”

He reiterated Myanmar’s position of accepting back Rohingya who can prove previous residency in the country, according to the terms of a 1993 repatriation agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh.

“If it [the OIC] pressures us to do something by force, we will have to protect our sovereignty,” Myo Nyunt said.

Aye Lwin, a Muslim leader in Myanmar who was a member of a commission headed by former U.N. chief Kofi Annan that called for an end to restrictions on the stateless Rohingya minority to prevent further violence in Rakhine state, said basic rights should be extended to all people affected by atrocities.

“A country is responsible to give rights not only to the Rohingya, but also to all victims,” he said.

“It is important for those responsible in the relevant country to understand that point,” he said. “So what is needed is to convince those people and make them understand.”

Myanmar is supposed to take back many of the Rohingya refugees living in sprawling displacement camps in southeastern Bangladesh under a repatriation agreement that the two countries signed in November 2017, but the program has yet to get underway.

The refugees say they are afraid to return to Myanmar, where they are viewed as illegal immigrants, denied citizenship, and subjected to systematic discrimination, unless their safety can be assured and they are guaranteed certain rights. None have agreed to return under current conditions.

In mid-February, Shahriar Alam, Bangladesh’s state minister for foreign affairs, raised the possibility with OIC member states of creating a civilian “safe zone” for Rohingya who return to Myanmar that would be monitored by human rights and humanitarian groups, according to a ministry press release.

During a briefing with OIC delegates who were in Geneva to attend the launch of the U.N. Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis for 2019, he also provided details about the Bangladeshi government’s plans to relocate some of the Rohingya refugees living in camps in the country’s Cox’s Bazar district to Bhashan Char Island.

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World Islamic Group Votes to Take Myanmar Rohingya Abuses to International Court of Justice

Rights groups have warned against the move, saying that the island is uninhabitable and prone to flooding.

Bangladesh told the U.N. on Feb. 28 that it could not accept any additional refugees from Myanmar, who have strained humanitarian resources in the impoverished country.

On Tuesday, Yanghee Lee, the United Nation's special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, said she was "concerned" by the suggestion of creating safe zones in northern Rakhine state for returning Rohingya refugees, Reuters news agency reported, without elaborating.

Reported by Khin Khin Ei for RFA's Myanmar Service. Translated by Khet Mar. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.

Annex 305

Fatima Lianes, “An Unholy Alliance: Monks and the Military in Myanmar”, *Al Jazeera*
(18 March 2019)



47:34

From: [Featured Documentaries](#)

An Unholy Alliance: Monks and the Military in Myanmar

Is the joining of forces between radical Buddhist monks and generals threatening Myanmar's young and fragile democracy?

A film by Fatima Lianes

With almost 90 percent of Myanmar's population being devoted Buddhists, the religion has been at the heart of the nation's very identity for centuries.

But while the pillars of Buddhist teachings are love, compassion and peace, there is a very different variation to the philosophy being taught at the Ma Ba Tha monastery in Yangon's Insein township.

“

You can use monks for your own purpose, for very negative aims and objectives ... The monks and the military entered into this kind of unholy alliance ... Many activists believe that the military is using religion to keep power.

KHIN ZAW WIN, ACTIVIST AND COMMUNAL RELIGIOUS ANALYST

The monks there are connected to one of the world's worst humanitarian crises, the systematic persecution and genocide of the [Rohingya](#) in Rakhine state.

“The Rohingya Muslim people ... are discriminated against and treated like animals by the Buddhist people,” says a Rohingya who asked to disclose his identity.

Formed in 2012, ultra-nationalist monks organisation Ma Ba Tha – which translates to ‘the protection of race and religion’ – spearheaded most of the rhetoric that fueled anti-Muslim hatred in recent years.

“If one is not loyal to the nation, our country and race will disappear ... You have to follow the culture and the rules of this country,” says Ma Ba Tha chairman Ashin Tilawaka. “Because I was their inspiration and because Buddhism is now facing some

problems – we face threats and attacks – I was asked to be in charge of Ma Ba Tha to ⊗ protect our race and religion.”

Many in [Myanmar](#) believe that after the transition from military rule to civilian government in 2011, the military intentionally fueled divisions among Buddhist groups. They aligned with the most nationalistic Buddhist leaders – enhancing the army’s popularity and influence.

“Military leaders approached our fellow monks with offers of financial support and gifts ... This emboldened the monks to rise up and speak up in public to spread the pro-military propaganda, spreading hatred between religions,” says U Gambira, a former monk who fled to Thailand in 2016.



Since Myanmar’s independence from British rule in 1948 the country has embraced its Buddhist tradition as a way of consolidating its national identity [Al Jazeera]

Activists like Khin Zaw Win, who is also a communal religious analyst, are concerned about the rise of nationalism and anti-Muslim rhetoric as well as the monks’ close relationship with the military.

While “Muslims have been in Myanmar for centuries,” he explains that today, “even ⊗ educated people in Myanmar say that ... ‘very soon Rakhine state will be full of Muslim Rohingyas and the Buddhists will be swallowed.’ So it’s like ‘we are defending our country, our society and our religion.’ It’s a very strong message but totally wrong. It’s quite frightening. And that is the real danger of these extremist monks.”

“You can use monks for your own purpose, for very negative aims and objectives ... The NLD government doesn’t view the Ma Ba Tha very favourably, so the monks and the military entered into this kind of unholy alliance ... Many activists believe that the military is using religion to keep power,” he says. “There is a lot of evidence, not made public, that the military is supporting the Ma Ba Tha. The Ma Ba Tha is flushed with cash. They’ve got lots of money.”

Al Jazeera’s unprecedented access to the Ma Ba Tha monastery and its leaders offers a glimpse into how their ultra-nationalist agenda is becoming the blueprint for the political structure of the country. Is the joining of forces between monks and generals threatening Myanmar’s young and fragile democracy?



Chairman Ashin Tilawaka says he “was asked to be in charge of Ma Ba Tha to protect our race and religion” [Al Jazeera]

Annex 306

Shoon Naing & Simon Lewis, “Myanmar’s top court rejects final appeal by jailed Reuters journalists”, *Reuters* (23 April 2019)



EDITOR'S PICKS

APRIL 23, 2019 / 4:10 AM / UPDATED A YEAR AGO

Myanmar's top court rejects final appeal by jailed Reuters journalists

By Shoon Naing, Simon Lewis



NAYPYITAW (Reuters) - Myanmar's top court on Tuesday rejected the appeal of two Reuters reporters sentenced to seven years in jail for breaking the Official Secrets Act, in a landmark case that has raised questions about the country's transition to democracy.

Myanmar court rejects Reuters reporters' appeal

01:46

“They were sentenced for seven years and this decision stands, and the appeal is rejected,” Supreme Court Justice Soe Naing told the court in the capital, Naypyitaw, without elaborating.

Wa Lone, 33, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 29, have spent more than 16 months in detention since they were arrested in December 2017 while working on an investigation into the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim men and boys.

They are being held at Yangon’s Insein prison and were not present to hear the Supreme Court verdict.

Their wives, who had traveled from Yangon to hear the verdict on Tuesday, emerged from the courtroom quietly wiping away tears.

Panei Mon, Wa Lone’s wife, who gave birth to their first child last year, said she had been “hoping for the best”.

“Our husbands are good people,” she said. “We want them to be released as soon as possible.”

The journalists were found guilty under the Official Secrets Act last September by a district court judge in Myanmar’s largest city, Yangon. They were sentenced to seven years in prison. The Yangon High Court rejected an earlier appeal in January.

The appeal to the country’s most senior court, the Supreme Court, cited lack of proof of a crime and evidence that the pair were set-up by police. A policeman testified last year that officers had planted secret documents on the two reporters.

RELATED COVERAGE

U.N. secretary-general calls Myanmar prosecution of Reuters reporters 'unacceptable'

“Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo did not commit any crime, nor was there any proof that they did,” Reuters Chief Counsel Gail Gove said in a statement on Tuesday.

“Instead, they were victims of a police set-up to silence their truthful reporting. We will continue to do all we can to free them as soon as possible.”

Than Zaw Aung, a lawyer for the defense, said the families of the two men planned to submit a letter to Myanmar President Win Myint’s office seeking a pardon.

A government spokesman did not answer calls seeking comment.

‘GRAVE INJUSTICE’

The reporters’ imprisonment has sparked an outcry from press freedom advocates, Western diplomats, and world leaders, adding to pressure on Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, the Nobel laureate who took power in 2016 amid a transition to democracy from military rule.

The courtroom on Tuesday was crowded with diplomats and observers as Soe Naing read the brief verdict, without giving any explanation.

In a statement, the U.S embassy in Yangon called the ruling “deeply disappointing”. The convictions, along with charges brought against satirical poets, a film-maker and other journalists in recent weeks “point to an increasing intolerance for free speech in Myanmar,” the embassy said.

Slideshow (6 images)

“Journalism, satire, peaceful protest, and other forms of legitimate expression should not be crimes in a democratic society,” the statement said.

The head of the United Nations in Myanmar, Knut Ostby, said the U.N. would “continue to call for full respect of freedom of the press and human rights.”

The U.N. human rights spokeswoman Ravina Shamdasani told Reuters in Geneva that the judiciary had failed to act as an independent check on authorities and she urged Myanmar to act in line with international human rights standards.

“The Reuters case is but one of numerous others where restrictive legislation has been used to limit the right to information and to silence dissent and criticism,” she said.

Shawn Crispin, senior Southeast Asia representative of the Committee to Protect Journalists, said Myanmar had “criminalized independent journalism”.

Slideshow (6 images)

The investigation the journalists were working on at the time of their arrest, which uncovered security forces' involvement in killings, arson and looting, was completed by colleagues and published in 2018. Last week, the coverage was awarded the Pulitzer prize for international reporting.

U.N. investigators have called for high-ranking military officials to be prosecuted for crimes against humanity and genocide over a 2017 crackdown on the Rohingya in response to militant attacks in the western part of the country.

Nicholas Bequelin, Amnesty International's regional director for East and Southeast Asia, said in a statement after Tuesday's verdict that Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were not "isolated cases" and there had been a "disturbing surge" in politically motivated arrests in Myanmar.

President Win Myint pardoned more than 9,000 prisoners during a mass amnesty to mark the traditional Burmese New Year in mid-April, but rights group the Assistance Association for Political Prisoners said among them were just two of dozens of political prisoners.

Responding to criticism in local media, the country's prisons department said in a statement on Monday that there were "no political prisoners" in Myanmar.

Our Standards: [The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.](#)

MORE FROM REUTERS

Annex 307

“Key facts about Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo”, *Reuters* (7 May 2019)

EDITOR'S PICKS

MAY 7, 2019 / 4:10 AM / UPDATED A YEAR AGO

Key facts about Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo

By Reuters Staff

YANGON (Reuters) - Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were freed from Insein prison after receiving a presidential pardon in Yangon, Myanmar, May 7, 2019. REUTERS/Ann Wang

months after being sentenced to seven years in jail on Official Secrets Act.

Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo react as they are freed from Insein prison after receiving a presidential pardon in Yangon, Myanmar, May 7, 2019. REUTERS/Ann Wang

The two were arrested in December 2017 while working on an investigation into the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslim men and boys by security forces and Buddhist civilians in western Myanmar's Rakhine State. ([here](#))

The conviction of Wa Lone, 33, and Kyaw Soe Oo, 29, in September last year sparked an outcry from diplomats and press freedom advocates, who said the jailing of two young reporters raised questions about Myanmar's progress toward democracy. ([here](#))

During more than 500 days behind bars, their reporting on a military crackdown in Rakhine State was recognized with international awards and they were named by Time magazine as its "Person of the Year" alongside other journalists last year.

Here are some key facts about the two journalists, who had been detained since Dec. 12, 2017:

WA LONE

- Wa Lone, 33, was born to a rice farming family in Kin Pyit, a village of fewer than 500 people in the dry plains of central Myanmar's Sagaing region.

- In his 20s, Wa Lone moved to Myanmar's largest city, Yangon, and took up journalism. He worked as a reporter for outlets including the Myanmar Times, an English-language newspaper where he met his future wife, Pan Ei Mon. He joined Reuters in 2016 and married Pan Ei Mon the same year.

- Outside of his day job, Wa Lone did regular charity work. He co-founded the Third Story Project, a charitable foundation that produces and distributes books that aim to promote tolerance between Myanmar's different ethnic groups. He authored some of the books himself, including *Jay Jay the Journalist*, which he wrote while incarcerated at Yangon's Insein prison.

- Months after Wa Lone joined Reuters, an insurgent group from the Rohingya Muslim minority announced itself with attacks on police posts in the western state of Rakhine. Wa Lone was central to Reuters' coverage of the conflict that followed.

- Weeks after her husband's arrest, Pan Ei Mon discovered she was pregnant with their first child. Their baby girl, Thet Htar Angel, was born on Aug. 10, 2018, in a Yangon hospital. Wa Lone has only seen his daughter a handful of times on her visits to prison.

KYAW SOE OO

- Kyaw Soe Oo, 29, comes from Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, and was born to a Buddhist family from the Rakhine ethnic group that makes up the majority in the state.

- His home state has been beset by bursts of ethnic violence since 2012, but friends said Kyaw Soe Oo stayed out of the conflict, instead developing a love of books and composing poetry.

- Kyaw Soe Oo begun working as a journalist and was involved in setting up Root Investigative Agency, an outlet focused on news in Rakhine.
- He is married to Chit Su Win, who once worked for his family in Sittwe. Their daughter, Moe Thin Wai Zan, is three years old.
- After the north of Rakhine State erupted in violence in 2017, Kyaw Soe Oo started working for Reuters, where he and Wa Lone uncovered a massacre of Rohingya men and boys in the village of Inn Din. The pair were awarded a Pulitzer Prize for international reporting in April.

Writing by Simon Lewis; Editing by Nick Macfie, Robert Birsell

Our Standards: The Thomson Reuters Trust Principles.

MORE FROM REUTERS

Annex 308

Jamie Fullerton, “Myanmar army chief’s Twitter account suspended over anti-Rohingya hate speech”, *The Guardian* (16 May 2019)

The Guardian



This article is more than **1 year old**

Myanmar army chief's Twitter account suspended over anti-Rohingya hate speech

Min Aung Hlaing claims his army did not use excessive force when 700,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar in 2017

Jamie Fullerton

Thu 16 May 2019 01.21 EDT

A Myanmar army general accused of masterminding genocide against the country's Muslim Rohingya people has had his Twitter account suspended, following complaints about him using the social media platform for hate speech.

Min Aung Hlaing, the south-east Asian country's top ranking general, had his @sgminaunghlaing account taken offline this week.

The move against the commander-in-chief, who claims his army did not use "excessive force" when about 700,000 Rohingyas fled Myanmar in 2017, was hailed by prominent Rohingya activist Tun Kinh as a "massive victory" for members of the ethnic group.

Min Aung Hlaing, who was also accused of using social media to spread anti-Rohingya propaganda, had his Facebook account deleted in August 2018, after the United Nations called for Myanmar military leaders to be prosecuted for genocide.

He used social media to refer to Rohingya people as “Bengali”, implying that they were immigrants rather than Myanmar citizens. On Facebook he denied army atrocities and claimed that the military was targeting militants rather than committing genocide.

The suspension came after Tun Khin, president of the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, met Twitter executives in Silicone Valley last week and questioned them over why Min Aung Hlaing’s account remained live. The general’s Twitter account had not been used in about a year, but the suspension was still hailed as a significant gesture.

Tun Kinh said: “The fact that Twitter has joined Facebook in deleting his account - which he used to sow hatred and spew out his defensive propaganda - is a massive victory for the Rohingya people.”

He added that “Min Aung Hliang was the mastermind of the Rohingya genocide ... it is crucial that Twitter now follows through in deleting other accounts used by the regime for the same purpose.”

Annex 309

Hannah Beech & Saw Nang, “He Incited Massacre, but Insulting Aung San Suu Kyi Was the Last Straw”, *New York Times* (29 May 2019)

He Incited Massacre, but Insulting Aung San Suu Kyi Was the Last Straw

By Hannah Beech and Saw Nang

May 29, 2019

SITTWE, Myanmar — Ashin Wirathu, a radical Buddhist monk in Myanmar, has been charged with sedition over what prosecutors say are defamatory remarks he made about the nation’s civilian leader, the Nobel laureate Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

The most notorious of a band of extremist monks, Ashin Wirathu has been traveling the country delivering diatribes against Myanmar’s minority Muslims and accusing Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi’s government of foiling the military’s efforts to defend the Buddhist-majority nation against what he calls a Muslim onslaught.

In one speech this month, Ashin Wirathu said that the civilian government was funded by foreigners and that a member of the government was “sleeping with a foreigner.”

Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi was married to a British academic who died of cancer in 1999 while she was under house arrest by the military junta that controlled the country for nearly half a century.

For years, Myanmar’s military has systematically persecuted members of the country’s Rohingya Muslim minority. A 2017 campaign of murder, rape and arson constituted genocide, according to United Nations experts.

Most Rohingya have since fled from Myanmar’s far western Rakhine State to neighboring Bangladesh. But Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, who was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 “for her nonviolent struggle for democracy and human rights,” has refused to criticize the military over the atrocities carried out against the largely stateless Muslim minority.



Supporters of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi in Yangon in 2017. Ashin Wirathu accused her government of foiling the military’s efforts to defend the Buddhist-majority nation against what he calls a Muslim onslaught. Adam Dean for The New York Times

Ashin Wirathu and other ultranationalist monks paint Myanmar as a peaceful Buddhist land being overrun by Muslims, even though they made up only about 5 percent of the population even before the majority of Rohingya were expelled from the country. The military junta jailed Ashin Wirathu for eight years for inciting hatred.

In 2014, two years after Ashin Wirathu's release, nationalist monks formed a group called the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, known by its local acronym, Ma Ba Tha. The group, which gained national membership and enthusiastic support particularly from women, pushed successfully for laws making it more difficult for Buddhist women to marry outside their faith.

But in 2017, before the worst of the violence against the Rohingya, Myanmar's state body governing Buddhism banned Ashin Wirathu from public preaching for a year, a prohibition that the monk protested by posting pictures of himself online with an "X" taped over his mouth. The same body also banned Ma Ba Tha, but the group merely changed its name and continued its activities.

Even as Ashin Wirathu was punished by the state monastic authority, he continued to roam the country to deliver his anti-Muslim sermons, including in Rakhine State, home to the Rohingya. Soon after the ethnic cleansing campaign began in 2017, he was pictured in the state news media on a tour of Northern Rakhine, the epicenter of the anti-Rohingya violence.

In his hate-filled sermons, delivered in a deceptive monotone, Ashin Wirathu has referred to Muslims as "crazy dogs" that are "breeding so fast," "stealing our women, raping them" and "would like to occupy our country."

He has instructed Buddhists to "make your blood boil" to ward off Muslims, whom he accuses of using hyperfertility to inundate Buddhist-majority nations.

At a rally last year in Yangon, Myanmar's commercial capital, Ashin Wirathu said that the day Myanmar officials were brought before the International Criminal Court, which is conducting a "preliminary examination" of the Rohingya expulsion, was "the day that Wirathu holds a gun." Such militant statements go against the peaceful tenets of Buddhism, but Ashin Wirathu has said that extreme times require extreme measures.

Although Ashin Wirathu had a poster of Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi decorating the wall of his wooden monastery in the city of Mandalay, he has accused her political party, the National League for Democracy, of secretly supporting a Muslim agenda.



Monks at Ywama Monastery in Yangon, which is known to support Ma Ba Tha, a Buddhist nationalist group. Adam Dean for The New York Times

During Myanmar's decades of military rule, many of the party's leaders were imprisoned, including Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi, who was freed in 2010. In 2015 elections designed to establish a military-civilian hybrid government, her party won by a landslide. But unlike in previous elections, it did not field any Muslim candidates.

Already, anti-Muslim sentiment was festering across the country, with extremist monks cheering on the persecution of the Rohingya and other Muslims.

This month, a group of nationalists in Yangon stormed Muslim prayer halls set up for the holy month of Ramadan. Local officials have called for the arrest of the mob's leaders, but they have gone into hiding.

Myo Thu Soe, a police spokesman, said that while charges against Ashin Wirathu were filed on Tuesday, the police had not yet received an arrest warrant for Yangon, where aides said Ashin Wirathu arrived on Wednesday to meet with the state Buddhist authority. That meeting was later canceled.

"I'm in Yangon. I am not hiding," Ashin Wirathu told The Times on Wednesday. "They can come arrest me. I'm not afraid of prison."

Ashin Wirathu's supporters have railed against the government religious body for its actions against radical monks.

"They are just always trying to arrest monks," said U Yarza, one of Ashin Wirathu's aides. "It's very disappointing for the country's Buddhism."

Ashin Wirathu "does not fear anything even though he will be arrested," he said, adding, "He is always doing the right things for our country."

Annex 310

Editorial Board, “Myanmar is now erasing the Rohingya’s very name”, *The Washington Post*
(16 June 2019)

The Washington Post

Democracy Dies in Darkness

Myanmar is now erasing the Rohingya's very name

Opinion by **Editorial Board**

June 16, 2018 at 12:27 p.m. EDT



THE TRAGEDY of the Rohingya Muslims of Burma began with the forced expulsion of more than a half-million Rohingya people from northern Rakhine state to neighboring Bangladesh, a brutal army operation undertaken in response to an attack from a Rohingya militant group. But this conflict, now a humanitarian disaster as floods and mudslides threaten Rohingya camps, is also being fought with words. The government of Burma, also known as Myanmar, has erased their very name — “Rohingya” — from the news.

The Rohingya have lived in Burma for decades but were regarded by the majority Buddhists as interlopers from Bangladesh and derisively called “Bengalis.” In a nation with dozens of minority ethnic groups, Rohingya have been left stateless and persecuted. The maltreatment did not ease with the arrival of a fragile democracy in recent years, led by the longtime dissident and Nobel Peace Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, who is now the de facto head of government.

In recent weeks, the Burmese information ministry has detected the word “Rohingya” in television broadcasts by Radio Free Asia, a private, nonprofit news organization, funded by the U.S. government, which brings news to closed societies in Asia, and the BBC. Both organizations used “Rohingya” in shows that were shared with Democratic Voice of Burma, which operates on the state’s MRTV channel. The information ministry said that RFA and BBC could no longer air their content if they continued to use the word “Rohingya,” which is “strictly prohibited.” Both RFA and the BBC refused to censor their programs, and quit their partnership, although both will continue to be available to Burmese by shortwave, social media and websites.

Censorship was absolute under the military dictatorship that ruled Burma from 1962 to 2010. Hope blossomed for change when the shift to democracy began, and especially after Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy won a landslide in the 2015 election. But the past few years have shown that neither the NLD nor the military is making much progress toward press freedom; old laws that allow selective punishment of journalists remain on the books. The unjust detention of two Reuters reporters, Kyaw Soe Oo, 28, and Wa Lone, 32, who were investigating the killing of 10 Rohingya men and boys during the crackdown, is only the latest example.

Many people are questioning why Aung San Suu Kyi has let this happen. In her defense, it is often pointed out, correctly, that the military retains significant power in Burma, including in parliament and control over key ministries, and that she can only do so much. It is also true that Aung San Suu Kyi has appealed to people not to use either “Rohingya” or “Bengali,” saying they are emotive terms, which is hardly a courageous response. She must be asked why her government is acting as a censor. Surely she remembers during her long years of house arrest tuning in to RFA and the BBC to hear the truth. It is distressing to see it suppressed on her watch.

Annex 311

Htet Naing Zaw, “MaBaTha is a Necessity: Military”, *The Irrawaddy* (19 June 2019)

Burma

Ma Ba Tha is a Necessity: Military



Military officials pass the entrance of the monastery where the Buddha Dhamma Prahita Foundation held its annual meeting this month. / The Irrawaddy

By **HTET NAING ZAW** 19 June 2019

NAYPYITAW—The spokesperson for the Myanmar military (or Tatmadaw), Brigadier-General Zaw Min Tun, explained the military's recent cash donation to Myanmar's leading Buddhist nationalist group by saying the group is necessary and should be supported in the name of Buddhism.

At a meeting Monday, the Yangon Region military commander **personally donated 30 million kyats (US\$19,600)** to the Buddha Dhamma Prahita Foundation—formerly known by its Burmese acronym Ma Ba Tha—as nearly 1,000 Buddhist monks and their followers from across the country gathered at the group's headquarters, in Yangon's Insein Township, for their annual meeting.

The donation came just after the group **denounced** the Union government's **sedition lawsuit against their leader**, the firebrand and ultranationalist monk U Wirathu, who has been in hiding since an arrest warrant was issued against him late last month.

Ma Ba Tha was born in 2012 out of the 969 movement, a nationalist campaign that called for the boycott of Muslim-owned businesses. In 2013, 969 members rebranded the group as the Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, which came to be better known as Ma Ba Tha.

The row between Ma Ba Tha and the current National League for Democracy (NLD)-led government erupted when Yangon Region Chief Minister U Phyo Min Thein, addressing a gathering in Singapore of Myanmar citizens living in the Asian city-state in June 2016, described the group as “unnecessary.”

Later, the State-backed Buddhist cleric organization Ma Ha Na declared Ma Ba Tha **an unlawful organization** and, in May 2017, banned the group from operating under its current name.

The group has since rebranded itself as the Buddha Dhamma Prahita Foundation. “This foundation is a Sangha [Buddhist clergy] organization, and we made the donation for the Sangha. The Tatmadaw will make donations to organizations which it thinks are necessary for our religion,” Brig-Gen. Zaw Min Tun told The Irrawaddy. “We will make donations and support the organizations which we think we should.”

Quoting Article 34 of the 2008 Constitution, he said the group’s religious freedom is legally protected so long as they do not break the law or harm public order, morality or health.

“Does our donation harm the public order, morality or health?” Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun asked.

“We have no other intentions. We will make donations and offer support if we think we should.” Some of the group’s leading members, including U Wirathu, have sermonized against Muslims, claiming the country’s Buddhist foundations are under assault from Islam. In May, a crowd of around 200 Buddhist nationalists **surrounded and forcibly shut down** temporary sites of worship that Muslims had gathered at for Ramadan in Yangon’s South Dagon Township.

When The Irrawaddy asked if it appeared at all awkward to the Tatmadaw to be making a donation to an organization that, especially recently, openly opposes the current, civilian-led government, Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun replied that the timing was purely coincidental.

“All citizens know who made what donations with what intentions. I don’t want to give a remark,” NLD spokesperson Myo Nyunt said when asked for the citizen government’s views on the Donation.

“The Tatmadaw donating to such a [group] amounts to adding fuel to the fire” of public concern over the nationalist group’s incendiary rhetoric, said U Kye Myint, a lawyer in Yangon. “Even though they said that they donated to the Sangha, they in fact donated money to an anti- government rally. No matter how they described it, it added fuel to the fire.”

Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun said that, despite the widely-held perception of Ma Ba Tha as an anti-Muslim organization, the organization’s only intention is to protect race and religion.

Leading Ma Ba Tha figures have given sermons claiming that Muslims are threatening to outnumber Buddhists in Myanmar, and U Wirathu was **banned from Facebook** last year for his fiery posts against Muslims.

“Sayadaw U Wirathu previously supported [the NLD]. He was a dissident in the time of the Tatmadaw government,” he said. “It is not that he has changed sides only now. He has worked for the cause of race and religion from the very beginning.”

Religion is deeply embedded in the history of Myanmar, he said, citing the example of the Young Men’s Buddhist Association—one of the first organizations founded by lay Buddhist groups to preserve the Buddhism-based culture of Myanmar during British colonialism. Their mission centered on race and religion, which sounds radical today, he said.

“I am not speaking for the Buddha Dhamma Prahita Foundation, but may I ask: does any objective or activity of theirs go against public order, morality or health?” he said.

Tatmadaw chief Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing has donated to U Wirathu, among other monks, in the past. When a picture of them and other monks attending a donation

ceremony for the Mandalay monastery where U Wirathu lives in 2016 went viral online, Sen-Gen. Min Aung Hlaing was publicly criticized.

Brig-Gen Zaw Min Tun said the military chief was donating to the clergy, not just to U Wirathu.

In a statement released after Monday's meeting, the Buddha Dhamma Prahita Foundation denounced State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi for entering a pagoda precinct in Magwe where women are traditionally prohibited.

Translated from Burmese by Thet Ko Ko.

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Topics: Buddhism, Islamophobia, Tatmadaw



Htet Naing Zaw

The Irrawaddy

Htet Naing Zaw is Senior Reporter at the Burmese edition of The Irrawaddy.

Annex 312

“US imposes sanctions on Myanmar’s military leaders over Rohingya abuses”, *The Guardian*
(16 July 2019)

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Myanmar

🕒 This article is more than **1 year old**

US imposes sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders over Rohingya abuses

Steps are the strongest the country has taken in response to massacres of minority Rohingya in 2017

Reuters

Tue 16 Jul 2019 20.45 EDT



Mike Pompeo, the US secretary of state, has announced sanctions on the Myanmar military's commander-in-chief Min Aung Hlaing and other military leaders over extrajudicial killings of [Rohingya](#) Muslims, barring them from entry to the United States.

The steps, which also covered Min Aung Hlaing's deputy, Soe Win, and two other senior commanders and their families, are the strongest the United States has taken in response to massacres of minority Rohingya in [Myanmar](#), also known as Burma.

"We remain concerned that the Burmese government has taken no actions to hold accountable those responsible for human rights violations and abuses, and there are continued reports of the Burmese military committing human rights violations and abuses throughout the country," Pompeo said in a statement.



UN report condemns its conduct in Myanmar as systemic failure

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He said a recent disclosure that Min Aung Hlaing ordered the release of soldiers convicted of extrajudicial killings at the village of Inn Din during the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in 2017 was "one egregious example of the continued and severe lack of accountability for the military and its senior leadership."

"The commander-in-chief released these criminals after only months in prison, while the journalists who told the world about the killings in Inn Din were jailed for more than 500 days," Pompeo said.

The Inn Din massacre was uncovered by two Reuters reporters, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo, who [spent more than 16 months behind bars](#) on charges of obtaining state secrets. The two were released in an amnesty on 6 May.



'We will lose any hope of going home': Rohingya live in fear of resettlement

[→ Read more](#)

The US announcement came on the first day of an international ministerial conference on religious freedom hosted by Pompeo at the State Department that was attended by Rohingya representatives.

A 2017 military crackdown in Myanmar drove more than 730,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. UN investigators have said that Myanmar's operation included mass killings, gang rapes and widespread arson and was executed with "genocidal intent."

A United Nations investigator said this month that Myanmar security forces and insurgents were committing human rights violations against civilians that may amount to fresh war crimes.

America faces an epic choice ...

... in the coming months, and the results will define the country for a generation. These are perilous times. Over the last four years, much of what the Guardian holds dear has been threatened - democracy, civility, truth.

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Annex 313

Kyaw Htun Naing, “Ultrationalist Myanmar Monk Group Declared Illegal by Top Buddhist Organization”, *Radio Free Asia* (30 July 2019)



Ultrationalist Myanmar Monk Group Declared Illegal by Top Buddhist Organization

2019-07-30



Buddhist monks attend the annual meeting of the ultra-nationalist group Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation, previously known as Ma Ba Tha, in Yangon, Myanmar, June 17, 2019.

AFP

UPDATED at 10:25 A.M. ET on 2019-08-01

Myanmar's highest Buddhist body on Monday declared a hardline monk organization an illegal association and ordered the nationwide removal of all its signage, two weeks after its members blasted the civilian-led government at the group's annual meeting, the country's Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture said.

The 47-member Sangha Maha Nayaka (Mahana), a government-appointed council that oversees and regulates the Buddhist clergy in Myanmar, summoned the chairman and vice chair of the ultrationalist Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation to censure them for publicly criticizing the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) government at its annual meeting in Yangon's Insein township on June 16-17.

During the gathering, foundation members railed against the NLD-led government over its handling of the conflict with Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state, suggesting it had

“tarnished the reputation” of Myanmar and the Buddhist religion.

They called for a boycott of the NLD during the general elections in 2020 and expressed support for the military, saying that soldiers were fighting for the interests of the country.

The monk group also ripped into authorities for pursuing a sedition lawsuit against one of its leaders, firebrand Buddhist monk Wirathu, after he made inflammatory comments against the government and its leader Aung San Suu Kyi at nationalist rallies.

Despite the Mahana's summons for the foundations two leaders to appear, only the vice chairman of the group, formerly known as the Committee for the Protection of Nationality and Religion (Ma Ba Tha) and a main driver of anti-Muslim sentiment in the country, showed up for the meeting.

Afterwards, the Mahana declared the group illegal and ordered it to take down its signboards across the country by Sept. 13, a statement issued by the ministry said.

Monks and layman supporters of the group who failed to comply with the decision would be charged under the relevant law, it said.

“Our ministry has made an announcement to let people know about this issue,” said ministry director Aung San Win. “The statement is seven paragraphs long. I have nothing to add nor comment.”

The ministry’s statement also said that the Mahana was done with regulating the leaders of the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation.

‘No signboards to remove’

A Mahana monk who declined to give his name because he is not authorized to speak to the press, told RFA’s Myanmar Service that the body’s leaders had merely confirmed a decision they had already made on July 20, 2018.

“It had already been announced,” he said. “We are now confirming the decision already made earlier.”

When the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation held its annual meeting in June 2018, it accused the NLD-led government of damaging the interests of the nation, the country’s majority Burman race, and the predominant Buddhist religion, and urged the public and monks to overthrow it by any means necessary.

In response, the Mahana ordered the group to cease all activities and remove all signage within 45 days.

Venerable Thawparka, spokesman for the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation, said his organization had already removed all signage.

“The decision had been made in 2018,” he told RFA. “Now, it’s over a year. We have no signboards to remove. They can come and look.”

Ariyawontha, an influential Buddhist monk, said the organization was outlawed because its actions and words conflicted with Buddhist teachings.

“There are Buddha’s teaching on ethics, rules, and laws. They are the group violating these teachings. They are defying the laws,” he said.

“Mahana’s decision is correct,” he said. “It could affect the country if they carry on like this. They are out of control and speaking in an unruly manner. Their actions are a departure from Buddha’s teachings.”

The Mahana banned the foundation’s predecessor, Ma Ba Tha, in May 2017, but after the group rebranded itself as the Buddha Dhamma Parahita Foundation, it continued operating.

In 2018, the Mahana and the Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture ruled that the foundation had illegally changed its name and ordered the group to cease all activities.

Reported by Kyaw Htun Naing for RFA’s Myanmar Service. Translated by Ye Kaung Myint Maung. Written in English by Roseanne Gerin.

Annex 314

Nathaniel Gleicher, “Taking Down More Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior in Myanmar”,
Facebook (21 August 2019)

FACEBOOK



[Back to Newsroom](#)

Facebook

Taking Down More Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior in Myanmar

August 21, 2019



By Nathaniel Gleicher, Head of Cybersecurity Policy

Today, we removed multiple accounts and Pages for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior in Myanmar on Facebook and Instagram.

We're constantly working to detect and stop this type of activity because we don't want our services to be used to manipulate people. We're removing these Pages, Groups and accounts based on their behavior, not the content they posted. Over the past year, we've taken down three other networks in Myanmar for engaging in this sort of behavior.

We are making progress rooting out this abuse, but as we've said before, it's an ongoing challenge. We're committed to continually improving to stay ahead. That means building better technology, hiring more people and working more closely with security experts and other companies.

What We've Found So Far

Today, we removed 89 Facebook accounts, 107 Facebook Pages, 15 Facebook Groups, and five Instagram accounts for engaging in coordinated inauthentic behavior that originated in Myanmar. The people behind this activity used fake accounts — some of which had already been disabled by our automated systems — to promote their content, increase engagement, and manage Groups and Pages. They frequently repurposed legitimate news and entertainment content and posted about national and local topics, including crime, ethnic relations, celebrities, and the military. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities, our investigation found that some of this activity was linked to individuals associated with the Myanmar military.

- *Presence on Facebook and Instagram:* 89 Facebook accounts, 107 Pages, 15 Groups, and 5 accounts on Instagram.
- *Followers:* About 900,000 accounts followed one or more of these Pages, about 67,000 accounts joined at least one of these Groups, and around 400 people followed one or more of these Instagram accounts.
- *Advertising:* Less than \$1,200 spent on Facebook and Instagram ads paid for in US dollars and Russian rubles.

We identified these accounts through our internal investigation into suspected coordinated inauthentic behavior in the region.

Below is a sample of the content posted by some of these Pages.

 **Myanmar Media Watch**
September 10, 2018 · 🌐

လက်တလာ နာမည်ကြီးနေတဲ့ ရွှေမုံရတီရဲ့ အကြမ်းတကာ အကြမ်းစား ဓာတ်ပုံများ
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September 10, 2018

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ဝေဖန်မှုတွေအမျိုးမျိုးရှိနေပေမယ့်လည်း မေပြင်းလဲတဲ့ချစ်ခြင်းတရားနဲ့ အမြဲပျော်ရွှင်နေကြ ကြောင်း သူမရဲ့ လူမှုကန်ယက်ကတစ်ဆင့် ဖော်ပြတတ်သူလေးလည်းဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

ယေနဲ့မှာတော့ ရွှေမုံရတီဟာ သူမရဲ့ လူမှုကန်ယက်အကောင့်ကေန ပုံအလန်းစားလေးတွေကို တင်ပေးလိုက်တာလည်းဖြစ်ပါတယ်။ ပရိသတ်တွေဟာ ရွှေမုံရတီကို ဒီလိုပုံစံ စတိုင်မျိုးနဲ့ တစ်ခါမှမမြင်ဖူးတဲ့ အခန်းကိုအံ့အားသင့်စေခဲ့တာလည်းဖြစ်ပါတယ်။

ဒီပုံလေးတွေအားမှာလည်း ချစ်သူ ရွှေထူးက အရမ်းလန်းနေကြောင်း ဝင်မန့်ထားတာကို ငွေတစ်ခုမှာဖြစ်တဲ့အပြင် ရွှေမုံရတီကေတော့ ရွှေကြီးချစ်ချစ်မို့ လန်းတာပဲလို့ ပြန်လည်ပြောဆိုထားတာလည်းငွေတစ်ခုပဲရပါတယ်။

ခုတော့ အရမ်းငွေတက်ကို ဂေရီနဲ့ ရွှေမုံပုံလေးငွေတက်ကို ဖော်ပြပေးလိုက်ပါတယ်နော်
takon



Page Name: Myanmar Media Watch
 Translation: The hottest pictures of recently famous actress Shwe Mone Yati
 Currently, Shwe Mone has a beautiful and romantic life. Her social media features how her caring boyfriend loves her. Just recently, Shwe Htoo gave her a hat worth 8 lakhs as their anniversary gift and told how much he loves her. Despite the criticism, she shared through her social media how much they

love each other and are happy together.

Today, Shwe Mone Yati posted hot pictures on her social media account. The fans are also surprised as they had never seen her in such style. Under those pictures, you will find her lover, Shwe Htoo's comments on how amazing she looks and Shwe Mone Yati replied she is amazing because she is Shwe Htoo's girlfriend.



မြန်မာ့ မတ်စလင်သတင်း

January 23 · 🌐

...

အာဖဂန်နစ္စတန် စစ်ထောက်လှမ်းရေးစခန်းကို တာလီဘန်များ ဝင်ရောက်တိုက်ခိုက်၊ အနည်းဆုံး ၆၅ ဦးသေဆုံး ...

23-1-2019

အာဖဂန်နစ္စတန်နိုင်ငံ၊ ဂါဇနီရှိ စစ်ထောက်လှမ်းရေးအခြေစိုက်စခန်းကို တာလီဘန်များက ဝင်ရောက်တိုက်ခိုက်ခဲ့သည့်အတွက် သေဆုံးသူအရေအတွက်မှာ အနည်းဆုံး ၆၅ ဦး ရှိခဲ့ကြောင်း အာဖဂန်နစ္စတန်အာဏာပိုင်များက ယေန့(ဇန်နဝါရီ ၂၂ ၊ အင်္ဂါ) ပြောကြားသည်။

အဆိုပါတိုက်ခိုက်မှုမှာ တနင်္လာနေ့က ဖြစ်ပွားခဲ့ခြင်းဖြစ်ပြီး ကနဦးတင် သေဆုံးသူ ၁၂ ဦး ရှိခဲ့သည်ဟု ထုတ်ပြန်ခဲ့ရာမှ အနည်းဆုံး ၆၅ ဦးရှိသည်ဟု ယေန့တင် အတည်ပြုခဲ့ခြင်းဖြစ်သည်။

" သေဆုံးသွားသူများ၏ ရုပ်အလောင်းများကို အေဆာက်အညီအပြီအပျက်များကြားမှ ဆီထုတ်ခဲ့ရာတွင် ၆၅ ဦးအထိရှိခဲ့သည်ဟု ဝါဒက်မ်ပြည်နယ်ကောင်စီ ဒုတိယအုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူး Mohammad Sardar Bakhyari က ပြောကြားခဲ့သည်။

တာလီဘန်စစ်ဌာနကြီးများက ပစ်ကပ်ကားတစ်စီးတွင် ပေါက်ကဲစေတတ်သည့်လက်နက်များတပ်ဆင်ကာ စစ်ထောက်လှမ်းရေးစခန်းကို ဖောက်ခွဲဝင်ရောက်ပြီးနောက် ကားတစ်စီးဖြင့် လက်နက်ကိုင်များ ထပ်မံရောက်ရှိလာကာ စိတ်ကြိုက်ပစ်ခတ် တိုက်ခိုက်သွားခဲ့ခြင်းဖြစ်ပြီး အာဖဂန်နစ္စတန်၏ လုံခြုံရေးပိုင်းဆိုင်ရာကိုလည်း မွေးစန်းထုတ်စရာ ဖြစ်လာခဲ့သည်။

သေဆုံးသူအရေအတွက်မှာ ၇၀ အထိပင် ကျော်သွားနိုင်သည်ဟု အာဖဂန်နစ္စတန်လုံခြုံရေးအရာရှိတစ်ဦးက ပြောကြားခဲ့ပြီး ၁ ရက်အကြာတွင် Bakhyari က အေရအတွက်ကို ဧပြီဟု ကြားခဲ့ခြင်း ဖြစ်သည်။ စစ်ထောက်လှမ်းရေးဆိုင်ရာ အခြေစိုက်သင်တန်းကျောင်းဖြစ်နေသည့် အတွက်လည်း သေဆုံးအေရအတွက်နှင့် သတင်းအချက်အလက်များကို လတ်လွပ်စွာအတည်ပြုနိုင်ရန် ခက်ခဲနေသည်ဟု AFP သတင်းတစ်ရပ်က ဖော်ပြခဲ့သည်။

ဝင်ရောက်တိုက်ခိုက်သူများကို ချက်ခြင်းနှိမ်နင်းသတ်ဖြတ်နိုင်ခဲ့သည်ဟု Bakhyari က ဧပြီဟု ကြားခဲ့သလို သေဆုံးသူအများစုမှာ အေဆာက်အညီပြုကျမှုကြောင့် သေဆုံးခဲ့ခြင်းဟုလည်း ဆိုခဲ့သည်။

အာဖဂန်နစ္စတန်နိုင်ငံတွင် အစိုးရကို အနာဂတ်နိုင်ငံများက ထောက်ခံနေသော်လည်း တာလီဘန်စစ်ဌာနကြီးများက ၁၇ နှစ်ကြာ တိုက်ခိုက်လာခဲ့ကာ ယခုတိုက်ခိုက်မှုကလည်း ၎င်းတို့၏လက်ချက်ဖြစ်သည်ဟု တာလီဘန်များက အတည်ပြုခဲ့သည်။

The Ladies News



Page Name: Myanmar Muslim News
Translation: At least 65 killed in Taliban attack on Afghan intelligence base

At least 65 people were killed in a Taliban-claimed attack on an Afghan intelligence base, Afghan authorities said on Tuesday, Jan. 22. This attack happened on Monday and the announcement about at least 65 people killed was made today, raising the toll substantially from 12 announced previously. "We took about 65 bodies out of the rubble yesterday," Mohammad Sardar Bakhyari, deputy head of the Wardak provincial council said. Afghanistan security has become questionable as Taliban put explosive weapons on pickup cars and invade the station and attacked. Moreover, another car came in and shot everyone in sight during the attack. Just after a day after an Afghan security officer stated that the number of death can increase up to over 70, Bakhyari made the announcement. The attack was on a training facility for the National Directorate of Security (NDS), the Afghan intelligence agency, meaning that any toll will likely be difficult to confirm independently, AFP mentioned. The attackers were killed immediately, Bakhyari said, but most of the casualties were caused by a building collapse. The Taliban, who have been waging a 17-year war against the Western-backed Afghan government, later claimed responsibility for the assault.

သတင်းရင်းမြစ် - Follow
စက်လှေနှင်ခြင်းမဟုတ်ဘဲ လူအစုလိုက် အပြိုလိုက်ကြီးစုသတ်ဖြတ်မှုဖြစ်နေ
စက်လှေနှင်ခြင်းမဟုတ်ဘဲ လူအစုလိုက် အပြိုလိုက်ကြီးစုသတ်ဖြတ်မှုဖြစ်နေ
" သူ့စက်လှေနှင်ခြင်းမဟုတ်ဘဲ ကျွန်တော်တို့ဘက်က နောက်ဆုတ်ဆရာရေပဲရှိတော့တယ် "



Page Name: News Zone
Translation: It was a premeditated mass murder, and not a boat accident

“We were attacked from three sides and all we could do was back up into the water.” Sixteen people died and 39 people went missing from the boat accident on July 23, which happened during a territory dispute between two villages in Yenangaung Township.

 **တိုင်းရင်းသားဒေသသတင်းများ** August 7 at 7:49 AM · 🌐

သက်တမ်းရင့် ကုက္ကိုလ်ပင်ကြီးတစ်ပင် ကားပေါ်လဲကျေသော်လည်း ကံကောင်းစွာ အသက်ရှင်ခဲ့တဲ့ ယာဉ်မောင်း 7.8.2019

တက္ကသိုလ်ရိပ်သာလမ်း မြဝတီဆီဆိုင်အနီးတင် သက်တမ်းရင့် ကုက္ကိုလ်ပင်တစ်ပင် လဲကျမှုကြောင့် လမ်းပေါ်သားနေသည့် ကိုယ်ပိုင်ယာဉ်တစ်စီးပေါ်ပိကျမှု ဩဂုတ် ၇ ရက် နံနက် ၉ နာရီကျော်က ဖြစ်ပွားခဲ့ကြောင်း သိရသည်။

အဆိုပါ ကုက္ကိုလ်ပင် လဲကျမှုကြောင့် ကိုယ်ပိုင်ယာဉ်ပေါ်မှ ယာဉ်မောင်းမှာ ကားအတွင်း ၁၀ မိနစ်ခန့် ပိတ်မိနေခဲ့ပြီး ရဲတွဲဖွဲ့ဝင်များ ကယ်ထုတ်ခဲ့ကြောင်း၊ ထိခိုက်ဒဏ်ရာရရှိမှု မရှိသော်လည်း ကားတစ်စီးလုံး ပျက်စီးသားခဲ့ကြောင်း ယာဉ်ပိုင်ရှင်က ပြောကြားသည်။

“ကျွန်တော်က ကုက္ကိုင်းမီးပိုင်ဘက်ကနဲ့ လှည်းတန်းဘက်ကို မောင်းလာတာပါ။ အဲဒါမျိုးနဲ့ မိုးကလည်း ဖြစ်လေ့ ရှာနေတယ်။ မြဝတီဆီဆိုင်နား အေရာက်မှာတော့ ကျွန်တော် ကားပေါ်ကို အဲဒီကုက္ကိုလ်ပင်ကြီး ဝုန်းဆိုပြီး လဲကျမိခဲ့တာပါ။ ကျွန်တော် ကားထဲမှာ ၁၀ မိနစ်လောက် ပိတ်မိနေတယ်။ အဲဒါနားက ရဲတွဲဖွဲ့ဝင်တွေ ပြေးထက်လာပြီး ကျွန်တော်ကို ကယ်ထုတ်ခဲ့တာပါ။ လူဘာမှ မဖြစ်တာ ကံကောင်းလို့ပဲ ပြောရမယ်။ ကားကေတာ တစ်စီးလုံး ပျက်စီးခဲ့ပါတယ်” ဟု ယာဉ်ပိုင်ရှင်က ပြောကြားသည်။

ယင်း ကုက္ကိုလ်ပင် လဲကျမှုကြောင့် တက္ကသိုလ်ရိပ်သာလမ်း တစ်လျှောက် ၁ နာရီကျော်ကြာ ယာဉ်ကြောပိတ်ဆိုမှု ဖြစ်ပွားခဲ့ပြီး ကုက္ကိုလ်ပင်ကို ရဲတွဲဖွဲ့နှင့် စည်ပင်ဝန်ထမ်း ၃၀ ကျော် ရှင်းလင်း ဆောင်ရွက်ခဲ့ကြောင်း သိရသည်။

crd; Eleven Media Group
#နေ့စဉ်သတင်းmedia



Page Name: Ethnic Regional News
Translation: A driver miraculously survives tree fall
On the morning of August 7 at 9AM, there was a case where an old tree on the University Avenue Road near Myawadi Petrol Road fell on top of moving car. Because of this accident, the

driver was trapped in the car for 10 minutes and he was later saved by police. Although he said he wasn't injured, his car was totally damaged from the accident.



Page Name: Collection of Ta'ang Land News
Translation: If you are a true Buddhist, please do not skip and say "Hi" here. I am proud and admire you, little daughter, as your skill is incredible regardless of your age.

Our security team’s ongoing investigations are just one part of the work we’re doing to help keep our community in Myanmar safe. We also continue to work on [tackling hate speech and misinformation](#), building better tools and technology, deepening our partnerships and programs, and preparing for the 2020 General Election.

Categories: Facebook, Integrity and Security

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Tags: Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior

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April 2020 Coordinated Inauthentic Behavior Report

We’re sharing an overview of the eight networks we took down over the past month as part of regular CIB reports.

May 5, 2020

Annex 315

Htet Naing Zaw, “Myanmar Military to Court-Martial Troops over Mass Graves in Rakhine”,
The Irrawaddy (2 September 2019)

Burma

Myanmar Military to Court-Martial Troops over Mass Graves in Rakhine

ဘူးသီးတောင်မြို့နယ်အုပ်ချုပ်ရေးမှူးဦးဆောင်သည့်အဖွဲ့ ဂူတာပြင်ကျေးရွာဝန်းကျင်သို့
ကွင်းဆင်းစစ်ဆေးမှု မှတ်တမ်းဓာတ်ပုံ



The investigation team led by the Buthidaung Township general administrator visits Gutar Pyin village in February. / Information Committee

By **HTET NAING ZAW** 2 September 2019

NAYPYITAW—The Myanmar Military will begin court-martial proceedings against a group of soldiers involved in fighting against the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Gutar Pyin village, in Rakhine State's Buthidaung Township, two years ago after a military Court of Inquiry found the soldiers did not follow the rules of engagement. The village is the site of a mass grave that was exposed in news reports following the clash.

Military spokesman Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun told The Irrawaddy on Sunday that “the military Court of Inquiry found there are grounds to believe the soldiers did not fully comply with the rules of engagement. Therefore, we will open a court-martial proceeding.”

He said, “The incident happened in August 2017, as the conflict [with ARSA] was escalating.”

He said the military (or Tatmadaw) would not release details of the incident, or any other information, while the trial is ongoing and the Court of Inquiry continues its investigation.

The military formed the Court of Inquiry in response to an Associated Press report on Feb. 1 stating that hundreds of bodies had been found in five mass graves near Gutar Pyin village. It said the bodies had been burned with acid in an apparent attempt to destroy them.

The report was based on video footage provided by Rohingya refugees now living in a refugee camp in Bangladesh. The AP said it had interviewed at least two dozen refugees.

In February, the President's Office denied the AP report, saying that **no mass graves were found in Gutar Pyin village**, during an inspection of the area on Feb.1 by officials and Muslim community leaders. The community leaders and local residents said there had been no mass killings, but reported that heavy clashes had erupted between government security forces and ARSA militants in Gutar Pyin on Aug. 28.

The government's investigation team said in its statement at that time that during the fighting in Gutar Pyin, about 500 villagers joined a raid by ARSA militants on security forces, and that in the resulting fighting, a member of the security forces was injured and 19 militants were killed. It said the militants' bodies were properly buried and opened a criminal case relating to the militants' deaths under Section 50(i) of the Counter-terrorism Law at Nyaung Chaung Police Station.

The **Rakhine State government initially planned to sue the AP**, but later opted not to.

The Court of Inquiry is chaired by Major General Myat Kyaw. The investigation team visited Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships twice, with the most recent trip being made on July 15-Aug. 5.

A **statement** released in English by the Office of the Commander-in-chief reads, "According to the finding of the Court of Inquiry during its investigation of the area for two times, there occurred a situation where action is to be taken in accordance with the military discipline due to the weakness in following the instructions in some of the incidents at Gutabyin [Gutar Pyin] village."

U Aung Thuang Shwe, a Lower House lawmaker from Buthidaung Township, told The Irrawaddy on Sunday that when there are complaints from victims, a proper investigation is needed. "If [the military] does it right and investigates at the victims' request, they do not need to worry about the incident that happened here."

The Gutar Pyin case is the second such investigation prompted by a media report.

Reuters reported on a case in Inn Din village in Rakhine's Maungdaw Township in which 10 Rohingya men were killed.

Seven soldiers were prosecuted and sentenced to 10 years with hard labor in April last year over their roles in the killings. However, the soldiers were released from prison in November under a pardon from the Army chief.

The Myanmar military's 2017 counterinsurgency operation followed attacks by ARSA in northern Rakhine State. It caused more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee into Bangladesh, resulting in widespread allegations of human rights violations.

International pressure has mounted to have Tatmadaw commander-in-chief Senior-General Min Aung Hlaing tried at the International Criminal Court for human rights violations committed against the Rohingya Muslim community during the operation.

Military leaders have said the conflicts that erupted in Rakhine State in 2012, 2016 and 2017 were not initiated by the Tatmadaw or the indigenous people, but were started by outsiders. They say the Tatmadaw performed its duty to protect the security of the local people and Myanmar's territory. They have also said that action would be taken against anyone found to have violated military ethics.

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[Four Police Injured in AA Attack on Outpost in N. Rakhine](#)

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Topics: court martial, mass grave, Military, Rohingya, Tatmadaw



Htet Naing Zaw

The Irrawaddy

Htet Naing Zaw is Senior Reporter at the Burmese edition of The Irrawaddy.

Annex 316

Min Naing Soe, “Myanmar to respond to Gambia lawsuit at ICJ in line with international laws”,
Eleven News (16 November 2019)



Myanmar to respond to Gambia lawsuit at ICJ in line with international laws

Myanmar to respond to Gambia lawsuit at ICJ in line with international laws

[Politics](#)



The press conference of the President Office in progress on November 15

Published 16 November 2019

Min Naing Soe



The government will take responsive measures against the lawsuit filed by The Gambia against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in accord with the international laws, President Office Spokesperson Zaw Htay said.

He replied to the question about the lawsuit during a press conference of the President Office held in Nay Pyi Taw on November 15.

He said the government had expected over a month before that Myanmar could face a suit at ICJ.

"Myanmar is a signatory to many international conventions. This is the mandate of ICJ. It has its procedures as well. The international laws are related to each other. So we will respond in line with the international laws," Zaw Htay said.

Representing the 57-member Organization of Islamic Cooperation, The Gambia filed a lawsuit at the ICJ against Myanmar for allegedly violating its obligations under the Genocide Convention.

He also said that another lawsuit against Myanmar in Argentina required no solution adding that the issue includes incidents that happened from 2012 to 2018 in Rakhine State. The lawsuit targeted former Presidents Thein Sein and Htin Kyaw, incumbent President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi and Military Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing.

Zaw Htay said the government issued a statement on April 13, 2018 regarding the decision of the International Criminal Court to investigate the Rakhine issue.



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Annex 317

“Court-Martial Trial on Incident of Gutapyin Commences”, *Myanmar Digital News*
(26 November 2019)

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Nov 26, 2019 | 02:18 |

Court-Martial Trial on Incident of Gutapyin Commences

26 November

THE Court of Inquiry chaired by Maj-Gen Myat Kyaw established in accordance with the Defence Services Act and the Defence Services Rules submitted its opinion that some incidents which happened in Gutapyin village should be tried by the Court-martial. With respect to such opinion, in carrying out the processes of Military Justice, the trial of the Summary General Court-Martial against the accused military personnel will commence at the local Regiment in Buthidaung on 26 November 2019.

The Tatmadaw, on its part, is cooperating with the Independent Commission of Enquiry-ICOE. When the report of ICOE comes out, if such report mentioned that Tatmadaw members are involved in committing the offence, the investigation will be followed and action will be taken against them in accordance with the law, according to the Office of the Judge Advocate General, according to the Tatmadaw True News Information Team.—MNA

(../live)

Annex 318

Isabel Todd & Yanghee Lee, “Myanmar’s military companies should be sanctioned”, *Al Jazeera*
(26 November 2019)

 <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2019/11/26/myanmars-military-companies-should-be-san...>

 Isabel Todd, Yanghee Lee

 7 min read

Myanmar's military companies should be sanctioned

During the optimistic years that ultimately led to the National League for Democracy forming a government in 2016, the international community confirmed its faith in Myanmar's transition from military rule by lifting a succession of economic sanctions that had been imposed on the country. But there were warnings that this response came too soon.

With the army's involvement in politics protected by the constitution it drafted in 2008, continued progress in the reforms was not guaranteed. Removing the sanctions reduced important leverage against the military, which could have been instrumental to the new government. For its part, the military-allied elite had spent years carefully positioning itself to be the main beneficiary of economic liberalisation and Myanmar's re-engagement with the global market.

As [Myanmar](#) now once again approaches general elections in 2020, the optimism has decidedly diminished. Under Aung San Suu Kyi's government, the reforms have stalled, and the human rights situation has deteriorated across the country.

Democratic freedoms have been curbed, armed conflict has plagued the lives of hundreds of thousands, and the relentless plunder of natural resources has persisted unabated. The emboldened military leadership retains a firm grip on politics and the economy, while the government has so far proved unwilling or unable to make any significant move against it.

This public alignment between the military and the government has dismayed those who have long fought for [human rights](#) and democracy in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi's refusal to

acknowledge the horrific atrocities committed against the Rohingya in Rakhine state by the military and other security forces in 2016 and 2017 has been particularly shocking to the international community.

The extreme violence inflicted during the so-called counterinsurgency “clearance operations” was executed on an unprecedented scale and with an unprecedented brutality and has forced a mass exodus that has created the world’s largest refugee camp across the border in Bangladesh.

Senior military leaders now stand accused of genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes for these events, which were a culmination of a decades-long campaign of systematic state-sponsored persecution of the Rohingya, alongside allegations of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed against various ethnic minorities in Kachin and Shan states since 2011.

Reports of violations of international law continue to mount in the context of current military operations in Rakhine state where conflict with the ethnic Rakhine Arakan Army has raged all year, and in Shan state since serious fighting re-erupted in August.

The Rohingya still living in Rakhine state continue to be denied their most basic rights and are confined to either closely guarded internment camps or remote villages. The system of oppression they are subjected to remains unchanged, and they are at real risk of recurring genocide.

Those responsible for these violations enjoy impunity which perpetuates the devastating cycle of abuse. With present conditions in Myanmar making the state incapable of delivering accountability, an international response is needed and is under way. The Gambia has filed a case against Myanmar at the International Court of Justice for violating the Genocide Convention and the International Criminal Court has authorised an investigation by the Prosecutor into crimes against humanity.

But the military, backed by Aung San Suu Kyi, has responded with defiance, and with the immediate threat of further atrocities present, more must urgently be done to prevent further

tragedy, and with the immediate threat of further atrocities present more must urgently be done to prevent further tragedy.

The army is able to fund its operations without government oversight through commercial operations which generate vast revenues while bypassing formal channels. The military leadership owns and directly controls two major conglomerates, Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL) and Myanmar Economic Corporation (MEC).

Along with their subsidiaries, they are active in many sectors, including resource extraction, banking, tourism, transport, manufacturing, and telecommunications and dwarf other economic actors in Myanmar. Until 2016, both were subject to US sanctions.

The army also has strong links to several private Myanmar companies through familial or business ties. Its companies are advantaged by their close relationships with Myanmar's state-owned enterprises (SOEs), which both regulate and hold commercial interests in their respective sectors. They operate without transparency yet effectively determine Myanmar's political economy.

The international community must impose targeted sanctions against all army-linked and army-owned companies, especially MEHL and MEC. This will serve as an immediate form of accountability for its assault on human rights. By weakening its financial base, it will reduce its capacity to commit further gross violations.

Private companies and international donors must be required to scour their supply chains and sever any ties with military companies. No one should be doing business with the army of Myanmar given its long track record of violations.

The sanctions could also strengthen the position of those still committed to the reforms. The government is already attempting a comprehensive overhaul of the business sector, intended to improve transparency and competitiveness and promote sustainable development.

In order to be successful, these changes must break the domination exerted by the military-allied elite that drove the country into poverty by syphoning money and resources from the state through decades of secret backroom deals. Wrestling the economy from the grip of the army will be a formidable task that the international community can and must support.

To do this, sanctions must go hand in hand with a concerted effort to divert investment to, and build the capacity of non-military economic actors. The international community must continue to advocate and provide support for transparency in the economy to aid this process. Myanmar's reporting obligations under the Extractive Industry Transparency Initiative and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provide important opportunities.

Transparency is particularly important when it comes to the SOEs. In 2012, Aung San Suu Kyi urged foreign companies not to enter into joint ventures with one of the most powerful SOEs, Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE), owing to its lack of transparency and accountability.

This call was not heeded and with the lifting of economic sanctions, foreign investment in the oil and gas sector rushed in, with MOGE a shareholder in all foreign operated fields. Much of this investment activity is centred off the coast of now war-torn Rakhine state.

MOGE remains one of the opaquest economic actors in Myanmar, and yet another round of bidding for offshore oil and gas blocks is expected soon. Without further reforms, this could cement the army's finances for decades.

Finally, it is critical that economic reforms recognise and respect rights to land use and resource governance of ethnic minorities. The government will not be able to regain dwindling public confidence in its commitment to peace, equality and federal democracy unless it takes measures to secure these rights.

The change that so many hope to see in Myanmar will not come to fruition while the army retains its current dominance. Unchecked trade and investment with military companies will only further inflate its power which it is successfully wielding to obstruct democracy and commit atrocities against the people of Myanmar.

By imposing targeted sanctions and economically isolating the military, the international community has an opportunity to influence Myanmar's downward trajectory. Now, more than ever, it is time to act.

The views expressed in this article are the authors' own and do not necessarily reflect Al Jazeera's editorial stance.

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Annex 319

Anealla Safdar & Usaid Siddiqui, "ICJ speech: Suu Kyi fails to use 'Rohingya' to describe minority", *Al Jazeera* (13 December 2019)



News | Rohingya

ICJ speech: Suu Kyi fails to use 'Rohingya' to describe minority

While defending military against genocide charges, Myanmar leader does not use Rohingya to describe persecuted minority.



By Anealla Safdar, Usaid Siddiqui

13 Dec 2019



In a [speech](#) on Wednesday at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that lasted about 30 minutes, Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi defended her country's military against allegations of genocide.

The case, filed by The Gambia, accuses [Myanmar](#) of violating the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, with regard to a bloody crackdown in 2017 in which thousands of [Rohingya](#) were abused, displaced and killed.

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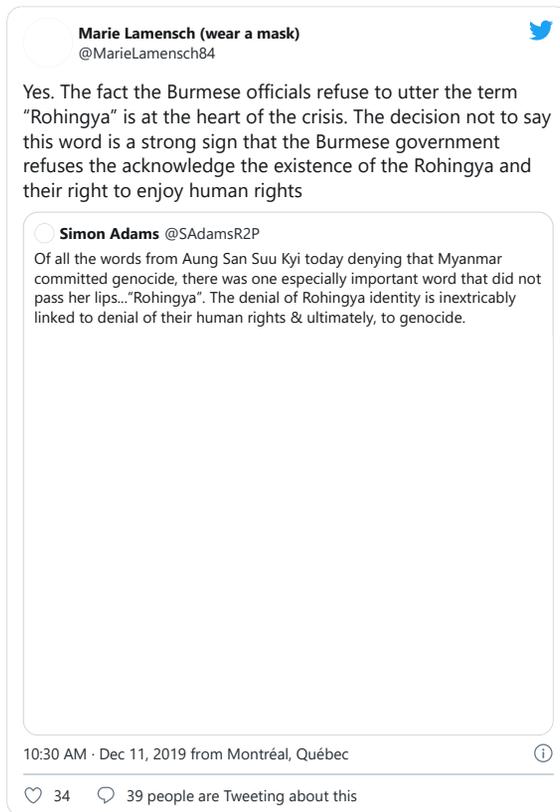
- [Transcript: Aung San Suu Kyi's speech at the ICJ in full](#)
- [Rohingya refugees reject Aung San Suu Kyi's 'lies on genocide'](#)
- [At top court, Myanmar urged to 'stop genocide of own people'](#)

The hearing concludes on Thursday, but a final judgement could take several years.

In her opening statement, the former human rights icon denied "genocidal intent" on the part of the military and outlined the history of tensions in Rakhine state.

She promised that civilians and members of the military who attacked innocent people would be prosecuted, but repeatedly termed the 2017 crackdown as an "internal conflict", saying Myanmar's military was responding to attacks by armed local groups, such as the [Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army](#) (ARSA).

But she failed to use one word in the 3,379-word speech to describe the minority, an ethnic group that has been persecuted for years in Myanmar and denied citizenship rights – Rohingya.



She only used the word Rohingya when referring to ARSA.

Critics said her refusal to use the word is part of Myanmar’s attempt strip the minority of their identity and rights.

“It’s routine for Rohingya to be called Bengalis and even described as Kalars, a slur referring to their darker complexion, to deny that they’re native to Rakhine,” Kaamil Ahmed, a journalist who has reported on the Rohingya and is writing a book about the minority, told Al Jazeera.

“Aung San Suu Kyi doesn’t use the terms but she has suggested that they’re not from Myanmar and she has refused to call them Rohingya, even claiming it’s a polarising term.

“It’s all part of denying that they are native, that they have historical links to the land they live on.”

The majority-Muslim Rohingya make up around one million of the total 50 million population in Buddhist majority Myanmar. They hail from the country’s northwest and speak a Bengali dialect. Almost all live in Rakhine, one of the poorest states, which has a population of three million.

They are not regarded as one of the country’s 135 official ethnic groups and are denied citizenship under Myanmar’s 1982 Citizenship Law, which effectively renders them stateless.

To get citizenship, they need to prove they have lived in Myanmar for 60 years, but paperwork is often unavailable or denied to them. As a result, their rights to study, work, travel, marry, practise their religion and access health services are restricted.

“Refusing to use the term Rohingya means she still doesn’t acknowledge the root cause of the genocide allegation. Instead she is continue to carry genocidal policies,” Yangon based Rohingya activist Wai Wai Nu told Al Jazeera.

“It also shows she has no willingness to restore our equal rights in Myanmar. The denial of our existence and other ethnic name is a fundamental factor to destroy our ethnic group physically and mentally.”

In her speech, Suu Kyi referred to the Rohingya as Muslims, people, civilians and members of Rakhine communities.

“She has called us Rohingya in the past, until before the 2015 elections,” said Ro Nya San Lwin, a Rohingya activist and cofounder the Free Rohingya Coalition who travelled to the Netherlands from Germany, where he lives in exile, for the ICJ hearing.

“But after she came into office, she started refusing to call us Rohingya. She urged her government not to use either Rohingya or Bengali but to use ‘Muslims from Rakhine state’,” he told Al Jazeera. “Refusing to call us Rohingya is also a part of genocide. This was the same thing she did at court yesterday. She failed to recognise our identity. Calling us Muslims is not right. It is a religious identity. In our country, Myanmar, ethnic identity is the most important. Religion is private belief. I would call her now a genocide denier. She has officially denied genocide. She has dismissed genocide.”

“Her stand will be remembered by the world history. This is first time a Nobel Peace laureate has defended genocide at world’s highest court.”

Simon Adams, head of the Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, said in a tweet: “Of all the words from Aung San Suu Kyi today denying that Myanmar committed genocide, there was one especially important word that did not pass her lips...’Rohingya’. The denial of Rohingya identity is inextricably linked to denial of their human rights & ultimately, to genocide.”

Annex 320

Andrew Nachevson, “Myanmar to release its Rohingya crackdown investigation results”,
Al Jazeera (16 January 2020)

Myanmar to release its Rohingya crackdown investigation results

Independent Commission of Enquiry is probing 2017 crackdown that led Rohingya to flee and UN has said was genocide.

A commission established by the Myanmar government is due to report this month on its investigations into the 2017 crackdown in Rakhine state that led hundreds of thousands to flee [File: Dar Yasin/AP Photo]

By Andrew Nachemson

16 Jan 2020

Yangon, Myanmar – An inquiry set up by the government of Myanmar to investigate the 2017 crackdown that prompted hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee the country is expected to report this month, but activists and independent observers are sceptical about the story it will tell, despite promises of accountability from the country’s civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi.

“Accountability through domestic criminal justice is the norm,” State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi said last month when she took the stand at the International Court of Justice in The Hague to defend the country against charges of genocide against the Muslim Rohingya minority.

KEEP READING

[Transcript: Aung San Suu Kyi’s speech at the ICJ in full](#)

[Rohingya refugees reject Aung San Suu Kyi’s ‘lies on genocide’](#)

[ICJ to rule on emergency measures in Myanmar genocide case](#)

“Only if domestic accountability fails, may international justice come into play.”

The Myanmar military has been accused of genocide by the United Nations and others for the brutal crackdown on the country’s Rohingya Muslim minority, which prompted more than 740,000 to flee.

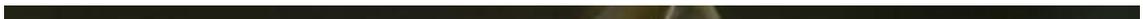
A UN fact-finding mission report estimated at least 10,000 were killed.

Addressing the ICJ, Aung San Suu Kyi said an internal investigation by the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) was underway and that the commission's report would shed light on what really happened in 2017.

“There is currently no other fact-finding body in the world that has garnered relevant first-hand information on what occurred in Rakhine in 2017 to the same extent as the Independent Commission of Enquiry,” she said.

Rosario Manalo, a diplomat from the Philippines, was appointed to chair the four-member ICOE [Nyunt Win/ EPA]

The government has rejected the findings of the UN and severely restricted the ability of neutral observers and journalists to investigate. As the public awaits the findings from the ICOE, human rights activists and the Rohingya themselves expect little.





Exclusive: Myanmar state agents triggered violence (2:35)

“We do not believe the Commission of Enquiry, which was formed by the genocidal Myanmar government, because the government is not sincere to investigate any crimes committed against the Rohingya community,” Khin Maung, executive director of the Rohingya Youth Association, told Al Jazeera.

Concerns about independence

There have been concerns about the independence of the ICOE from the very beginning.

Advertisement

Zaw Htay, a spokesman for the president’s office, said the commission was created to respond to “false allegations made by the UN Agencies and other international communities”.

ICOE head, Philippine diplomat Rosario Manalo, has stated there would be “no blaming of anybody”, in spite of the fact that the panel’s website states that it means to assign accountability for any violations.

“It is not a diplomatic approach, and a very bad approach, in fact, to be doing finger-pointing, blaming, to say ‘you’re accountable’,” Manalo said, adding: “That is not looking for peace.”

Also on the panel are Kenzo Oshima, a former Japanese ambassador to the UN, and Myanmar officials Mya Thein and Aung Thun Thet.

The latter is also a member of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD), which the UN fact-finding mission has accused of consolidating the “consequences of war crimes” by building infrastructure on land abandoned by the Rohingya when they fled.

Khin Maung noted that if the government truly wanted to address the situation, it would not have stifled independent investigation or banned UN special rapporteur Yanghee Lee from the country.

Aung San Suu Kyi retains strong support within the country; protesters took to the streets to back her as she defended Myanmar against charges of genocide at the ICJ [File: Myat Thu Kyaw/Reuters]

Lee began her final fact-finding mission on January 15 but will visit only Thailand and Bangladesh during a week of meetings and investigations.

“We lost trust in Myanmar government,” he said, adding that it was unreasonable to expect the very institutions that committed crimes to investigate themselves.

John Quinley III, senior human rights specialist for Fortify Rights, said the Myanmar government had shown “time and again” it was not able to hold perpetrators accountable.

“Myanmar has set up many domestic commissions and none have conducted a serious, impartial investigation into the atrocities against the Rohingya. Domestic mechanisms have been exhausted and there is a need for international justice,” he said.

No reference to ‘Rohingya’

The ICOE [website](#) defines the commission’s mandate as: “Investigate the allegations of human rights violations and related issues following terrorist attacks by ARSA with a view to assigning accountability for any human rights violations and related issues that may have occurred.”

Rohingya crisis: UN warns of ongoing genocide (1:54)

The commission’s position reflects the government line – blaming the instigation of violence on ARSA rather than interrogating the military’s actions and downplaying decades of discrimination against the Rohingya.

Nowhere does the word “Rohingya” appear on the ICOE website – except in reference to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, an armed rebel group.

Many in Myanmar call the Rohingya people “Bengali”, believing them to be “illegal immigrants”, even though the minority group has lived in Myanmar for many generations.

The ICOE did not respond to Al Jazeera’s requests for comment.

David Mathieson, a Yangon-based independent analyst, said it is “highly improbable” that Myanmar is capable of investigating any of its conflict areas fairly.

Rather than holding rights abusers accountable, Mathieson believes the true purpose of the report is “sanitising a crime scene”.

“The ICOE is an exercise in exculpating the military by admitting some abuses, pinning the blame on the Rohingya terrorists, and saying the scale of Western reporting was exaggerated,” he said via email, adding that these kinds of piecemeal admissions “distract from the larger culture of abuse and impunity that permeates the Myanmar military”.

Northern Rakhine villages in flames on September 3, 2017, as hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled to Bangladesh [Bernat Armangué/AP Photo]

Both the UN fact-finding mission and the International Commission of Jurists have concluded that the ICOE cannot be seen as reliable.

Risk of further harm

Mathieson said while there was some level of anticipation over the report, he expects those “who believe the violence was overblown by western reporting and rights activists” will “welcome any kind of report if it backs this view” regardless of its accuracy.

Nevertheless, some diplomats and civil society groups are hoping for something of substance from the ICOE. At a recent lecture at Yangon University, US Ambassador Scot Marciel said the report was an “important step” and he hoped it would provide new information that the government would “acknowledge” and “follow up” on.

In a recent interview with Bangladeshi media, Japan’s ambassador to the country said it was “indispensable” for Myanmar to adopt the ICOE’s recommendations.

But in a statement soon after the commission was established in 2018, the International Commission of Jurists warned that “giving any recognition to [the report] was likely to undermine and delay effective international measures for justice and accountability.”

Mathieson is also concerned the report has the potential to do more harm than good, saying that those in the diplomatic community supporting its release may not have considered the full consequences.

“I think depending on the quality of the report, the political results will be an emboldened military that will be given a green light to continue an entrenched culture of operational savagery, and a belligerent approach to political and peace concessions,” he said.

SOURCE : AL JAZEERA

Annex 321

Andrew Nachemson & Lun Min Mang, “ICOE staffer embroiled in conflict of interest controversy”, *Frontier* (29 January 2020)



ICOE staffer embroiled in conflict of interest controversy

JANUARY 29, 2020



By ANDREW NACHEMSON & LUN MIN MANG | FRONTIER

YANGON — A staff member at the Independent Commission of Enquiry served simultaneously on the legal team that defended Myanmar against genocide allegations at the International Court of Justice, *Frontier* has learned, in a development that raises concerns over conflict of interest.

Ms Leena Ghosh served as a staff member on the ICOE, a government-appointed panel tasked with investigating allegations of abuses in Rakhine State, which released its long-awaited report last week, and has been accused of whitewashing the military's alleged crimes against the Rohingya..

Ghosh was also an advisor to Myanmar's Joint Peace Fund until December 31. She became a senior peace advisor at the National Peace and Reconciliation Center, a government body assisting with

Myanmar's peace process that receives funding from the JPF, in July 2017, according to her LinkedIn profile.

In a statement, the JPF told *Frontier* that Ghosh was contracted as a "consultant" to support the peace process. The JPF has 12 donors – including Australia, the United States, Japan, and the European Union.

Ghosh was then appointed head of the ICOE Secretariat, which was established in July 2018 to investigate human rights abuses in Rakhine State, following attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army and the military's subsequent crackdown on the Rohingya, which some observers have labeled genocide.

Support independent journalism in Myanmar
Sign up to be a Frontier member.



It's unclear when Ghosh joined the ICOE, but the JPF did not learn until August 2019 that she was heading the Secretariat, said a source familiar with the matter.

In December last year, The Gambia accused Myanmar of genocide at the ICJ, and Ghosh was appointed as an advisor on the [defence](#) team.

Rights observers and legal experts told *Frontier* that taking on roles in both the body set up to investigate rights abuses, and the team denying those abuses at the world court, showed a clear conflict of interest which casts further doubt on the ICOE's independence.

At the same time, donors felt Ghosh's work in the ICOE was a violation of her contract with the JPF, and made worse by the fact that she had failed to inform the JPF, a source familiar with the matter told *Frontier*.

"People were pretty unhappy with the fact that she was doing this work without making the JPF and donors aware," he said.

Her contract with the JPF expired on December 31 last year and was not renewed. While the source said that the contract was not renewed because of Ghosh's work on the ICOE, a JPF spokesperson told *Frontier* that the issue never arose because she decided to return to Malaysia at the end of the year.

The ICOE has already been subjected to scathing criticism, both before and after it submitted its report earlier this month, for a perceived lack of independence from the government.

An [executive summary](#) of its report showed that the ICOE found no evidence of genocide and no evidence of sexual violence, despite widespread reports of rape, leading many to dismiss it as a whitewash.

It would be a potential blemish for the JPF if funds meant for the peace process were used by Ghosh in her capacity at the ICOE.

"It was made clear that no JPF funding or technical assistance could be used for any ICOE, ICJ, or other non-peace process related work," JPF told *Frontier*. It is not known for how long Ghosh had

been working for the ICOE without the JPF's knowledge.

Photographs published by the ICOE and government ministries show Ghosh accompanying the team during [field visits](#) to Rakhine, speaking with ICOE chairperson Ms Rosario Manalo and [meeting](#) local government officials.

A document from the Rakhine State government shows that she visited with Manalo and the rest of the team in August 2018. During that visit they travelled by convoy, with Ghosh in the same car as ICOE investigators Dr Aung Tun Thet and U Mya Thein. Another [document](#) instructed translators who hoped to work for the ICOE to send their applications to Ghosh.

Bangladeshi media identified Ghosh as head of the ICOE Secretariat when she visited with an ICOE "advance team" in [August 2019](#), before joining Myanmar's legal team at the ICJ. Her role in the Secretariat was confirmed to *Frontier* by Aung Tun Thet.

Ghosh is a Malaysian national with an MA in human rights from the University of Essex in England, according to her LinkedIn page. Her relationship with Manalo goes back many years. They were both part of the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights from at least 2010 to 2015, with Ghosh serving in the Secretariat while Manalo was the Philippines representative.

Mr Phil Robertson, deputy director of Human Rights Watch's Asia division, said Ghosh's positions at the ICOE and ICJ constituted "yet another blatant conflict of interest" that damages the ICOE's credibility.

"The word 'independent' never really belonged in the title of the ICOE, since from the get-go this was a Myanmar government effort to divert attention from truly impartial investigations and accountability," Robertson told *Frontier* via email.

A previous controversy centred around Aung Tun Thet, who is also the chief coordinator for the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance Resettlement and Development (UEHRD). The UEHRD is headed by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and was accused by the UN Fact Finding Mission of consolidating the "consequences of war crimes" by taking land abandoned by fleeing Rohingya.

Aung San Suu Kyi is also the head of the NRPC, meaning the state counsellor is the direct superior of both Ghosh and Aung Tun Thet in their other roles. The NRPC also shares an [address](#) with the ICOE, according to its website.

It was Ghosh's presence on the defence team that was most concerning for Robertson and Mr Sam Zarifi, secretary-general of the International Commission of Jurists, an international organisation that focuses on promoting human rights through rule of law and legal expertise.

Aung Tun Thet defended the independence of the ICOE, saying Ghosh was just acting at the ICOE's instructions. "I think we can ask anybody to help us with the ICOE's tasks," he said in an interview, adding that Ghosh's role at the ICJ is "her own matter".

Responding to an inquiry from *Frontier*, Ghosh did not directly address whether her dual role affected the integrity of the ICOE, and did not specifically elaborate on her duties at the ICOE. She pointed to

the ICOE Terms of Reference, which state that the Myanmar government will provide the ICOE with secretariat services.

“These include all financial, administrative, technical and logistical assistance required to enable the ICOE to fulfil its mandate promptly and efficiently,” she said in the email, adding that the ICOE would be provided with legal counsel and research staff if required.

“For your information, National Human Rights Commission are funded by Governments,” she added. Ghosh did not respond to a follow up email about her contract with the JPF.

During an interview in Yangon, Zarifi agreed that it is normal for independent inquiries to be funded by governments but said the ICOE’s problems run deeper than funding. He said on its face, the ICOE does not meet international standards of independence or impartiality, and its competency is unknown, as details of its methodology have not been released.

Zarifi, who said he knows Ghosh personally, called her role at the ICJ “problematic” and said it “certainly calls into question the independence and impartiality of the ICOE”. He did defend her credentials, however, saying Ghosh is a “prominent ASEAN human rights person”.

“I wouldn’t dismiss her good intentions,” he said. “But it creates a further impression of the ICOE being intertwined with the government.”

Zarifi said government-appointed inquiries like the ICOE have these kinds of problems “all the time”.

Robertson said the government should have put a “firewall between the ICOE and all agencies of the government,” and Ghosh should have been “nowhere near” the ICJ defence team.

“Ultimately, Leena Ghosh’s conflict of interest is the icing on the cake of a failed Myanmar attempt to outwit the systems of international justice, and those efforts were too little, too late,” he said.

Correction, January 31: This article has been amended to remove a statement that Ms Ghosh’s JPF contract was not renewed because of her work on the ICOE, and updated to include a statement on the matter from JPF.

Letter to the editor, January 30:

Dear Editor,

I wish to refer to the article attributed to Andrew Nachemson and Lun Min Mang which appeared on the Frontier Myanmar website on January 29, 2020. The article is not only unfair but also contains allegations that are untrue.

Ms Leena Ghosh was contracted by the Joint Peace Fund (JPF) as part of the assistance provided to the National Reconciliation and Peace Centre (NRPC). Under her contract, she reports directly to the Vice Chairman (1) of the NRPC. Her terms of reference (ToR), among others, include “any other tasks assigned by the Vice Chairman (1) of the NRPC”.

The Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) was set up to investigate allegations of human rights violations and related issues following the terrorist attacks by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) with a view to seeking accountability and formulating recommendations on steps to be taken to ensure peace and stability in Rakhine State. The terms of reference of ICOE specifically mention “as part of its national initiative to address reconciliation, peace, stability and development in Rakhine”.

Reconciliation through accountability is one of the priorities of NRPC. Because of her wide experience, the Vice Chairman (1) of NRPC assigned her to assist the ICOE Secretariat. Ms Ghosh has an LLM in Commercial Law from Exeter University, M.A. in Human Rights from University of Essex, LLB from the University of Leeds, all from United Kingdom and she was called to the bar in the UK, Singapore and Malaysia. Because of her desire to promote and protect human rights, Ms Ghosh left her lucrative legal career to work in the field of human rights.

Ms Ghosh was assigned to help the ICOE by the Vice Chairman (1) of NRPC. Upon JPF raising the issue, the Vice Chairman (1) of NRPC wrote to the Chair of JPF that she was assisting the ICOE as assigned by him as stipulated in her ToR. She applied for and was granted leave by JPF for the trip to accompany the Myanmar Delegation to The Hague, in her capacity as advisor to Alternate Agent, the Vice Chairman (1) of NRPC.

The article was inaccurate, untrue and unfair when it mentioned, “As a result, her contract with JPF was not renewed after it expired on December 31 last year.” In truth, her original contract ended on July 14, 2019, and Ms Ghosh wanted to return to Malaysia to attend to personal matters. However, she agreed to extend her contract further until December 31, 2019, to which JPF agreed. She had no intention nor did she ask for any further extension and left JPF at the end of her contract.

As Director General in charge of Peace and Reconciliation issues, I had worked with Ms Ghosh extensively. The authors of the article, perhaps in their zeal to discredit ICOE, have done a great wrong to Ms Ghosh, a dedicated and – as the article mentioned – “prominent ASEAN human rights person”.

Zaw Htay
 Director General
 Ministry of the Office of the State Counsellor

Editor’s note, January 31:

Frontier Myanmar welcomes this response from the government, and has corrected the article accordingly. The focus of the article was not Ms Ghosh’s credentials or the quality of her work, but whether assigning an individual to roles on both the ICOE and the defence team at the International Court of Justice undermined the independence and credibility of the ICOE. Ms Ghosh was also given ample time to respond to all of the points raised in the article.

BY ANDREW NACHEMSON





Andrew Nachemson is a journalist covering politics, human rights, and Chinese development in Southeast Asia. Prior to joining Frontier, he was based in Cambodia for three years.



BY LUN MIN MANG

Lun Min Mang is a journalist who previously worked for the Myanmar Times. He covered politics, the peace process and general news stories.



More stories

Annex 322

DFRLab, “Inauthentic anti-Rohingya Facebook assets in Myanmar removed”, *Medium*
(5 May 2020)

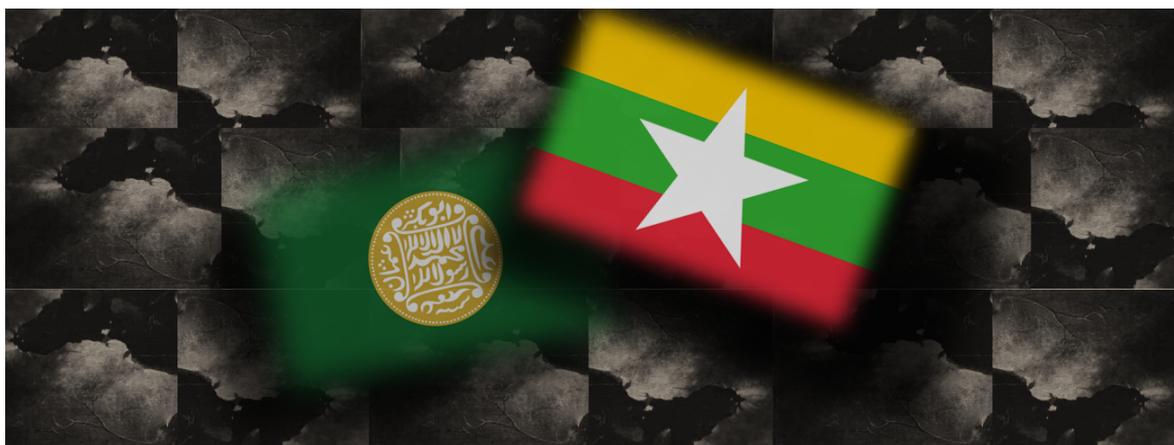
Inauthentic anti-Rohingya Facebook assets in Myanmar removed

Posts portrayed Rohingya as terrorists, denied that atrocities against them took place, and amplified reports of violence to inflame ethnic tensions



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May 5 · 9 min read



(Source: [@AlyssaKann/DFRLab](#) via [Wikimedia](#), background; [Wikimedia](#); [Wikimedia](#))

On April 30, 2020, Facebook took down a network of pages and accounts the company attributed to members of the Myanmar Police Force (MPF) for coordinated inauthentic behavior. Many of these assets inflamed anti-Rohingya sentiment before, during, and after the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims by the Myanmar military in 2017.

Starting in August 2017, between 10,000 and 25,000 Rohingya Muslims were killed and 700,000 fled; the United Nations described the situation as “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” Social media use was rife around the crisis — both as a means of

inciting further violence against the Rohingya but also as a means of communication that avoided government censors within that same community.

In its monthly statement on May 5, 2020, Facebook said that:

The individuals behind this network used fake and duplicate accounts to post in Groups and manage Pages posing as news entities. The Page admins and account owners shared content primarily in Burmese about local news and events such as the successes of the national police and military, stories about police officers providing assistance to local families, arrests and police raids, criticism of the Arakan Army and anti-Rohingya content. Most recently, some of these Pages posted about COVID-19. Although the people behind this activity attempted to conceal their identities and coordination, our investigation found links to members of the Myanmar Police Force.

The DFRLab examined 18 assets that Facebook stated were operated by members of the MPF. The DFRLab could not corroborate the direct links, though the assets it had access to did demonstrate a heavy pro-MPF bias. A portion of these assets inflamed anti-Rohingya sentiment by presenting the Rohingya as terrorists, denying that atrocities against the Rohingya took place, amplifying reports of violence by the Rohingya on other groups, and dismissing the existence of the Rohingya in Myanmar. Although there was little evidence of coordinated activity in the assets the DFRLab had access to, they displayed behavior intended to hide their identities while driving the anti-Rohingya narratives.

A Bloody Backdrop

Although the Myanmar military officially relinquished control of the state in 2011, allowing more independent elections after years of repression, the military — also called the Tatmadaw — still wields significant power and influence in the country. Unlike many other countries, which have civilian control of police forces, the Myanmar Police Force operates under the military, along with the Myanmar Army, Navy, and Air Force.

For years before the 2017 ethnic cleansing, the Myanmar military used Facebook to stoke ethnic divides through anti-Rohingya propaganda and coordinated troll campaigns. Facebook plays an outsized role in Burmese citizens' understanding of the news. An estimated 20 million of Myanmar's 53 million people use Facebook, and it is synonymous with the internet for many of its users; Facebook is even pre-downloaded

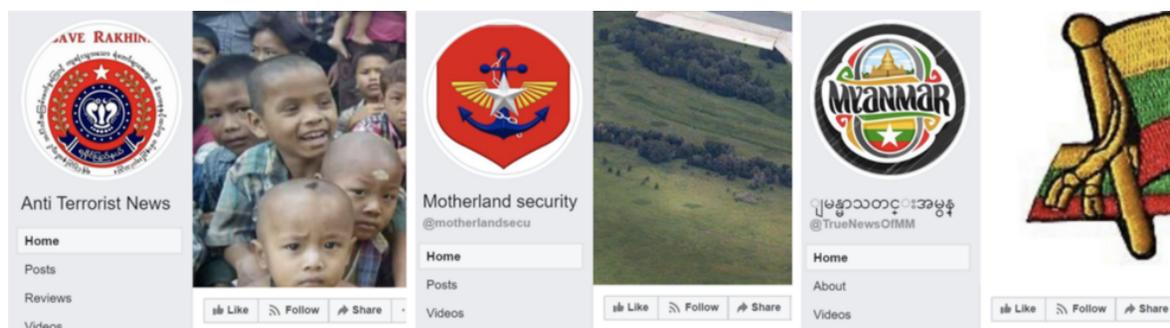
on most cellphones in Myanmar due to decisions made by the main telecoms providers in the country. The DFRLab previously examined inauthentic Facebook assets from a Burmese telecommunications company partially owned by the Myanmar military.

On August 28, 2018, Facebook took down accounts of Myanmar military and related individuals who had “committed or enabled serious human rights abuses,” amid criticism it acted too late to prevent the incitement of anti-Rohingya sentiment on its platform. Since August 2018, Facebook has attempted to play a more proactive role in Burmese content moderation with special attention paid to hate speech, although some human rights activists have criticized their choice to ban certain violent Burmese groups — including the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), a Rohingya group dedicated to violent resistance to the Myanmar military — while still allowing the Myanmar military to operate on the platform.

Anti-Rohingya, pro-MPF pages

Facebook took down at least three pages it attributed to members of the MPF:

“Motherland security,” “Anti Terrorist News,” and “ပျမနွာသတင်းအမ္ဗန့်,” whose unique handle is “TrueNewsOfMM.”



Screenshots of the three pages in the takedown to which the DFRLab had access. (Source: Facebook)

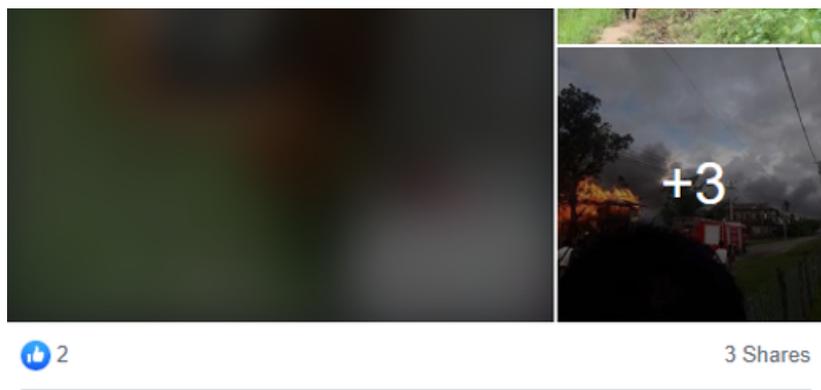
“Motherland Security” and “ပျမနွာသတင်းအမ္ဗန့်” were newer pages, created on April 6, 2019, and January 23, 2019, respectively. In contrast, “Anti Terrorist News” was created on August 28, 2017, two days after ARSA violently attacked the Myanmar military. The attack catalyzed days of atrocities by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya, leading to ethnic cleansing. According to human rights investigators, the worst days of the violence were between August 25, 2017, and September 1, 2017.

All three pages shared Burmese security-related news, including alleged terrorist activity, and some posts seemed similar to police dispatches with information on crimes and potential suspects.

Anti Terrorist News' content demonized the Rohingya, mischaracterized the violence by denying that atrocities against the Rohingya took place, amplified the deaths of other ethnic groups at the hands of the Rohingya through graphic imagery, and dismissed the existence of the Rohingya in general.

For example, the page's very first post, on August 28, 2017, shared graphic, violent images, including the corpses of children, who the post described in English as, "Two innocent kids brutally and inhumanly killed by barbaric Bengalis." "Bengalis" is used by some in Myanmar, including the government, to describe the Rohingya in the attempt to portray the Rohingya as belonging in Bangladesh and not Myanmar.





An anti-Rohingya post from August 28, 2017, on the Anti Terrorist News page included photos of dead children allegedly killed by Rohingya. (Source: Facebook)

Another post on the same date shared a meme about ARSA using babies as human shields, in comparison to the Myanmar Army who are depicted as protecting babies; the accompanying text included the hashtag “#No_Rohingya_in_Myanmar.” Multiple surviving Rohingya Muslims have accused the Myanmar military of murdering and stabbing Rohingya babies during the August 2017 violence. One Rohingya woman recounted that the Myanmar military killed her baby by throwing him into a fire on August 29, 2017 — a day after this meme was posted.





An anti-Rohingya post from August 28, 2017, on the Anti Terrorist News page included a depiction of ARSA as baby killers and the Myanmar Army as baby saviors. (Source: Facebook)

Posts in early September detailed the atrocities faced by Hindus at the hands of “ARSA extremist terrorists,” implied that the Rohingya were pretending to need help while murdering Rakhine people, and denied that attacks on the Rohingya occurred. One image falsely stated that “HRW [Human Rights Watch] is announcing wrong news [sic] on Rakhine State, Myanmar. All of the victims are indigenous ethnic group of Rakhine race villagers. They run away to escape Bengali extremist terrorists attack.”

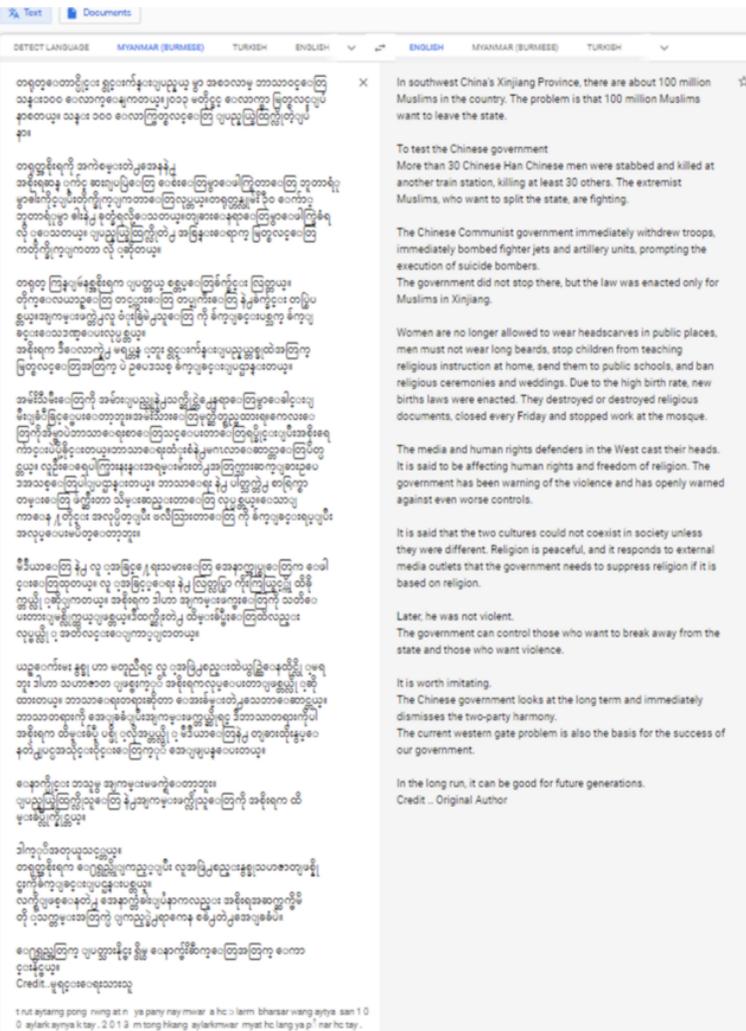


Some of the photos shared in a September 5, 2017 post by the “Anti Terrorist News” page. (Source: Facebook)

These posts — portraying all Rohingya as terrorists, denying that the Rohingya existed, and falsely casting the sectarian violence as one-sided — all occurred as the Myanmar

military murdered and displaced the Rohingya in August and September 2017.

Other posts spread conspiracy about Muslims in general. A February 18, 2018, post notably lauded the oppression of Uighur Muslims in China's Xinjiang Province, justifying the Chinese government's abusive, repressive tactics and, according to a Google translation, stating that "It is worth imitating. The Chinese government looks at the long term and immediately dismisses the two-party harmony... In the long run, it can be good for future generations."

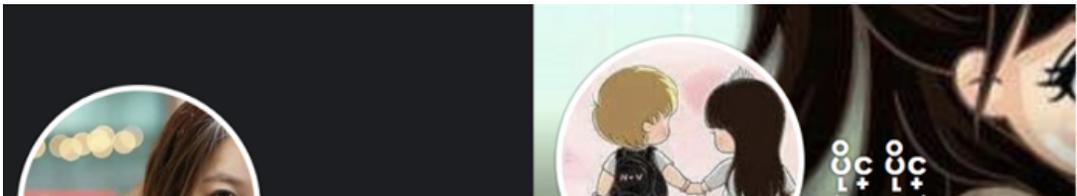


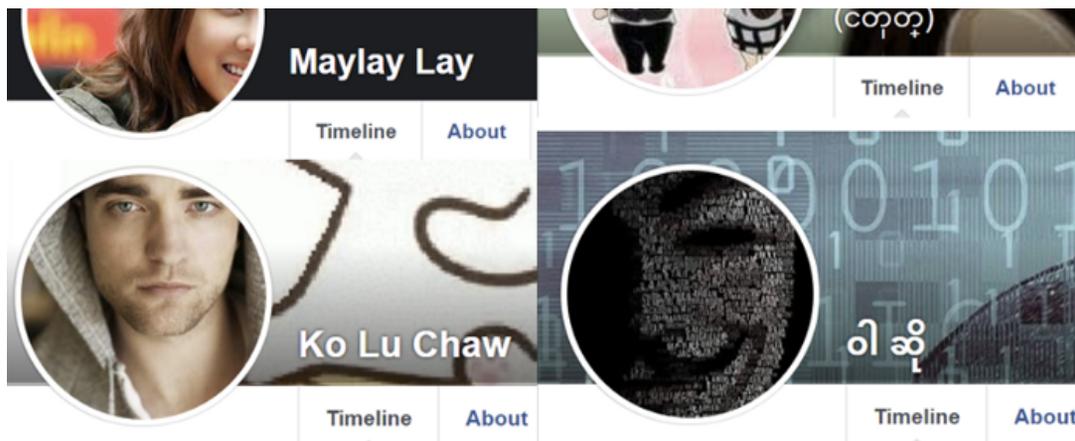
Post praising Uighur oppression, next to the Google Translate of the Burmese text. (Source: Facebook)



Screenshot of an anti-Rohingya article shared by the account Min Kha LuLin. (Source: Facebook)

The DFRLab identified minor signs of potentially inauthentic activity and coordination between the assets in the dataset provided by Facebook. The DFRLab’s open source analysis, however, was not able to confirm Facebook’s assessment of inauthentic behavior, nor could it invalidate that same assessment. In other words, the DFRLab found no evidence that would cause it to doubt the company’s attribution, which likely relied on back-end information not available to open source researchers. All of the accounts identified appeared to shield their identity by using anonymous or stock photos for their profile pictures and cover photos. Two accounts used celebrities’ faces instead of their own for profile pictures.

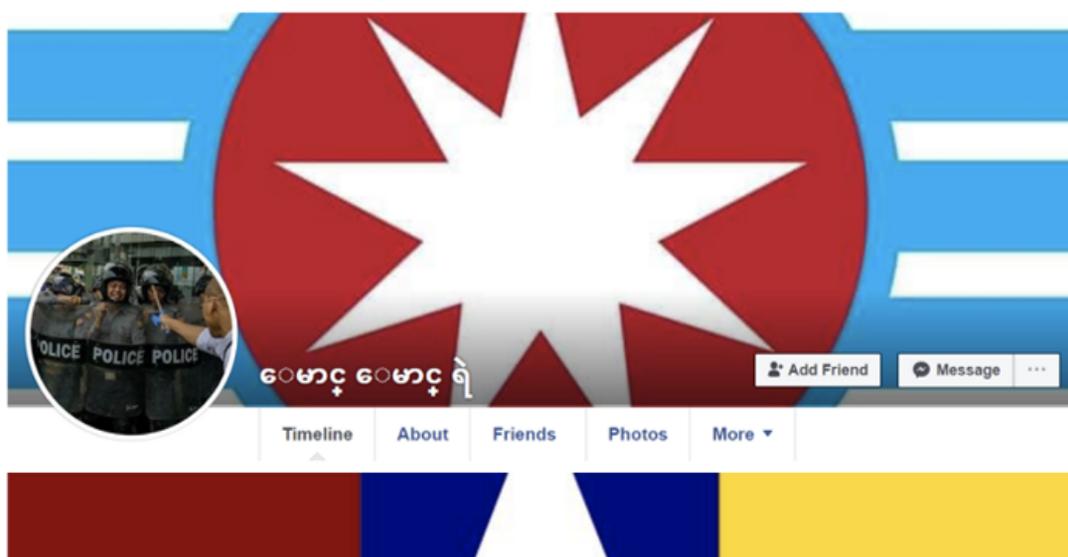




Some of the removed accounts masqueraded as actors Lee Ji-ah and Robert Pattinson, top and bottom left, respectively. Others used anonymous imagery, as at right. (Source: Facebook)

Although behavior that points to the obfuscation of an identity is one potential sign of inauthentic activity, in and of itself it is not a conclusive indicator of an inauthentic account.

The accounts using celebrity photos — Ko Lu Chaw and Maylay Lay — were two of the 10 accounts that displayed clear pro-Myanmar military sentiment. Eight accounts featured military imagery in their profile — either through flags and insignias from the Military Police Force, Myanmar Army, and the specific Army flag “Badge of the Western Command” — or through uploaded images of military forces.

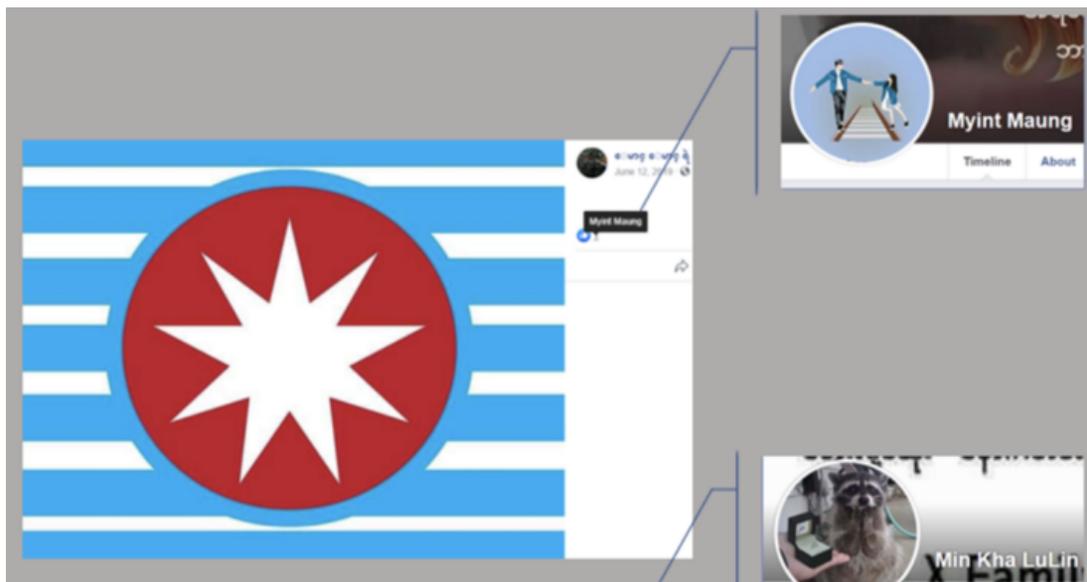


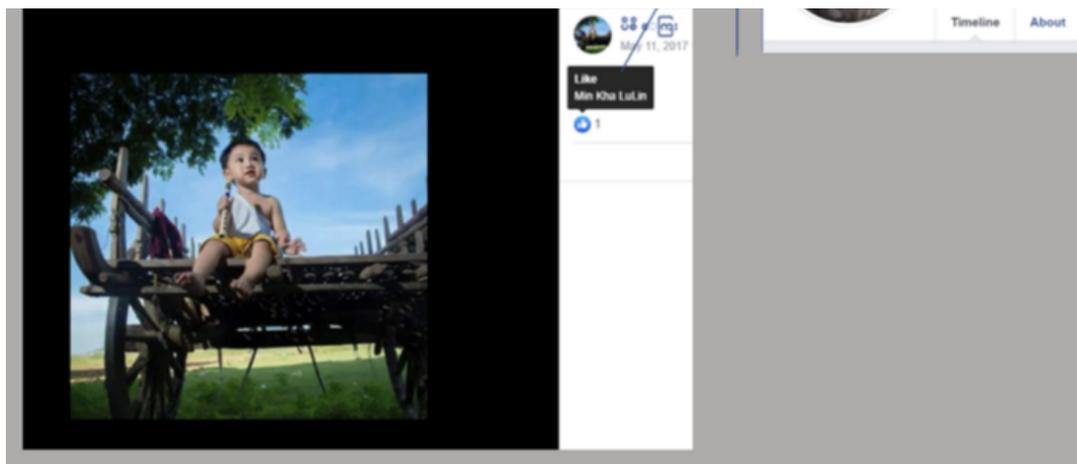


Myanmar military imagery on two of the accounts. (Source: Facebook)

Nine of the removed accounts liked Myanmar military pages, including the page of the official MPF, which was not in the removed assets. The Myanmar Police Force’s official Facebook page is an outlier when compared to other countries: it has a staggering 1.3 million likes. In Indonesia — which has five times the population of Myanmar and 6.5 times the number of active Facebook users — the national police force Facebook page has only 920,000 likes.

In terms of coordination, several of the accounts liked photos on other assets in the set. The dearth of strong evidence of coordination could be a result of the high privacy settings on most of the accounts identified, which prevented the DFRLab from “friends only” access.





Some of the 15 accounts liked photos on other accounts. (Source: Facebook)

Conclusion

While Facebook took down these assets belonging to members of the Myanmar Police Force for coordinated inauthentic behavior, little open source evidence conclusively linked these assets to the Myanmar military beyond imagery deployed in their profiles or pointed to significant inauthentic and coordinated behavior. Lack of significant open-source evidence highlights the responsibility social media platforms have to identify and moderate coordinated inauthentic activity, particularly when that activity incites violence along sectarian lines in a country with ongoing conflict and a history of ethnic repression. The DFRLab's analysis indicated that some of the assets actively inflamed anti-Rohingya sentiment during the critical period of June through September 2017 in Myanmar when tens of thousands of Rohingya were murdered and hundreds of thousands were displaced.

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Alyssa Kann is a Research Assistant with the Digital Forensic Research Lab.

Kanishk Karan is a Research Associate with the Digital Forensic Research Lab.

Follow along for more in-depth analysis from our #DigitalSherlocks.

Annex 323

Sai Wunna, “Tatmadaw Says 3 Soldiers Punished for Rakhine Violations”, *Myanmar Times*
(1 July 2020)

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Tatmadaw says 3 soldiers punished for Rakhine violations

Tatmadaw says 3 soldiers punished for Rakhine violations

[Sai Wunna](#) 01 Jul 2020



Tatmadaw spokesperson Brig gen Zaw Min Tun speaks to journalists about the conflict in northern Rakhine State, during a press conference at the Defence Services Museum in Nay Pyi Taw in May 2019. Photo: EPA-EFE

Tatmadaw says 3 soldiers punished for Rakhine violations

The Tatmadaw (military) said it has punished three soldiers for human rights violations during the massive military crackdown on the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in Rakhine State in August 2017.

The Office of the Commander-in-Chief of Defence Services said on June 30 the three soldiers were found guilty of committing human rights violations in Gutabyin village in Maungdaw township in northern Rakhine, but did not give details.

“We’ve taken action against them,” said Brigadier General Zaw Min Tun, spokesperson of the Tatmadaw’s True News agency, without giving their sentences.

He said the three were found guilty of not “performing their duties for defence, security and regional peace.”

“We have to consider their dignity and service,” he added. “We don’t want this to affect the morale of Tatmadaw soldiers in performing their duties and their spirit of comradeship.”

An Associated Press report on February 1, 2019, said hundreds of bodies had been found in five mass graves near Gutabyin that had been burned with acid in an apparent attempt to destroy evidence.

The AP report was based on video footage provided by northern Rakhine refugees in Bangladesh and interviewed by the AP.

Subsequent investigations by the government found that 19 bodies had been haphazardly buried in one mass grave in the area.

The Tatmadaw formed a team on March 19 to investigate the report headed by Major General Myat Kyaw.

The team recommended court-martial proceedings against those believed involved in the incident, and the trial began on November 26 at a camp in Buthidaung township.

The international community accused Tatmadaw troops of killing thousands of northern Rakhine Muslims during the crackdown it launched after ARSA carried out deadly attacks on 30 government outposts on August 25, 2017.

It alleged that Tatmadaw soldiers also committed mass rapes and systematic human rights violations against northern Rakhine Muslims, resulting in the exodus of over 740,000 Muslims to Bangladesh.

The accusations prompted Gambia to file a genocide case against Myanmar before the International Court of Justice on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation. - Translated

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Annex 324

“Press Statement of Tatmadaw True News Information Team about allegations regarding villages in Maungdaw area”, *The Global New Light of Myanmar* (15 September 2020)



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Press Statement of Tatmadaw True News Information Team about allegations regarding villages in Maungdaw area

🕒 September 15, 2020 📍 Global New Light of Myanmar 👁 324

It was announced on 6 July 2020 that a court of inquiry led by Major-General Myat Kyaw had been established to investigate the events at the Chut Pyin and Maung Nu villages in Rakhine State in 2017. This investigation has advanced to such an extent that we can now announce that there will be a court-martial in this case, commencing before the end of 2020. Allegations regarding Taung Bazar are included in the scope of the Maung Nu investigation announced on 6 July 2020.

Furthermore, we also announce that the analysis by the Office of the Judge Advocate-General of the final report (with annexes) of the Independent Commission of Enquiry (ICOE) and other information has reached the point where the Office is investigating possible wider patterns of violations in the region of northern Rakhine in 2016-2017. Allegations regarding villages in the Maungdaw area are included in the scope of this wider investigation.

Tatmadaw True News Information Team

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