

Witness to horror

Rohingya women speak out about
Myanmar Army rape and other
atrocities in Maungdaw



Kaladan Press Network

First Rohingya News Agency (Since 2001)

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PREFACE

I was born in Maungdaw to Rohingya parents. My family moved to Bangladesh when I was young, as my father, a full Burmese citizen, had set up a trading business in Chittagong. Even though I have spent most of my life in Bangladesh, where I now work as a lawyer and teacher, I have always identified myself as a Rohingya from Burma. Our neighbours in Chittagong have always referred to us as “Burmese,” and my father was well-known locally as a “Burmese merchant.”

In December last year, I was requested by a fellow Rohingya, Tin Soe - editor of Kaladan Press Network - to help interview refugee women arrivals in Bangladesh for a report about the human rights situation in Maungdaw. I immediately agreed, as I was keen to help expose to the world what was going on in my homeland.

It was extremely harrowing to carry out the interviews. It was not only hearing the terrible abuses suffered by the women, particularly rape, and knowing the lifelong mental scars that had been inflicted. It was also the realization of the desperate situation of the women – how they had been forced to abandon everything and flee to a foreign land where their future was completely uncertain. I wished I could have assured them they were safe in Bangladesh, but I knew that there were no guarantees for their rights as refugees, and they had become like prisoners in an open prison, where the future of their children would be bleak.

I cried together with the women, and felt anger at the Burmese government, who were already denying that their security forces had committed any abuses. To me, this was the final outrage – to submit these women to such horrors, and then accuse those who dared speak out of lying.

I hope when people read the testimony of the women in this report, they will be moved to seek justice for my people, and assist their right to return to their own land with dignity, and without fear of violence.

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DEDICATED TO

THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE OF ARAKAN

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Summary

This report comprises testimony of twenty-one Rohingya women who have fled to Bangladesh to escape Myanmar Army “clearance operations” in Maungdaw since October 9, 2016.

The women, from nine villages targeted during the operations, share similar experiences of how large numbers of Myanmar troops, with Border Guard Police and local paramilitary forces, surrounded and entered their villages, indiscriminately torturing and killing men, women and children, and burning down houses.

Almost all the women lost their husbands in the crackdown. Most are missing, feared dead. Three of their husbands were killed in massacres of up to forty men; one saw her husband and two young sons shot dead with thirty other men. Another woman saw soldiers shoot her husband dead by firing into his anus. Only one of the husbands had managed to flee to Bangladesh, but he had been severely tortured, with his testicles burned.

Eleven of the women lost their children during the attacks. One had her one-year-old baby pulled from her arms and thrown into her burning house. Another woman saw her seven-year-old son deliberately stamped to death. Another found her baby’s dead body on the ground with his throat cut.

Fifteen women, from eight villages, personally experienced or witnessed sexual violence by Myanmar Army and paramilitary troops during the recent security operations, providing evidence that at least 70 women and girls have been raped.

Most of the rape incidents took place when women were gathered at gunpoint in large groups outside their villages during security operations in Kyar Goung Taung, Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son, and Kyet Yoe Pyin. Groups of soldiers pulled young women away from the others and took them to be raped in nearby houses, fields or forest. Some women were taken to be raped in military camps. One woman witnessed gang-rape of ten girls by about 30 soldiers in an open field near Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son.

At least six of the rape victims were killed. One woman found the mutilated body of her 20-year-old sister in her house in Laung Don after a Myanmar military raid. Her breasts had been cut off, a gun barrel stuck in her vagina, and the body of

her newborn baby, who had been stamped to death, left on her chest. Another woman found the naked bodies of five of her neighbours in the forest near Laung Don. One had been beheaded, and another tied up to trees, her legs splayed.

Soldiers also subjected large numbers of women to sexually humiliating treatment during security raids. Women described how their breasts and groin were groped by soldiers during body searches. Groups of women forced out into fields near their villages were forced to strip down to their underwear or completely naked, and stand for long periods in the hot sun. Ten of the women interviewed had been personally robbed of their valuables, with soldiers pulling their gold earrings, necklaces and nose studs from their bodies. Fifteen of the interviewees had seen their houses burned down by the Myanmar troops.

Despite directly experiencing atrocities at the hands of the Myanmar military, villagers have been forced to deny that the Myanmar troops committed these crimes. A woman whose house was burned down was rounded up with other villagers in front of hundreds of armed soldiers at the police station in Kyet Yoe Pyin, and forced to declare in front of a video camera that it was the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) who had burned their houses and killed their parents and children.

The similarity of the testimony provided by women from different villages show a clear pattern of grave violations by the Myanmar military against civilians on a widespread scale, indicating that the abuses are being committed systematically, with full command responsibility.

The leadership of the Myanmar military must be held to account for these atrocities. The Myanmar government must stop denying reports of abuses. They must order an immediate withdrawal of military troops from Maungdaw, and allow an independent international investigation into the abuses as well as unfettered humanitarian access to the area.

In the meantime, we call urgently for international peace-keeping forces to be deployed in the Maungdaw area to protect local civilians from ongoing abuse, and for the government of Bangladesh to provide shelter and protection for civilians fleeing persecution.

About Kaladan Press Network

Kaladan Press Network (KPN) is an independent and non-profitable news agency of Rohingyas of Arakan, Burma. It was established on 21st February 2001 by some Rohingyas in exile based in Chittagong, Bangladesh. It provides factual, credible and independent news, particularly about the Rohingya people, to Rohingya and other Burmese populations as well as to the international community, to depict and disseminate the true history, culture, traditions and heritage of the Rohingya people, to protect and promote human rights and democracy, and to uphold and advocate tolerance and mutual coexistence amongst Myanmar's different communities, ethnic and religious groups. KPN's goal is a democratic just and fair society for all people in Arakan and the Union of Myanmar, and aims to become a multi-media organisation in a future democratic Myanmar. Kaladan Press Network (KPN) is a founding member of Burma News International (BNI), and works in close cooperation and shares information with other BNI partner news organizations.

About the Rohingya

"The Rohingya of Burma are one of the world's most persecuted and vulnerable ethnic minorities. Due to their racial and religious differences with the Burman Buddhist majority, they have been officially declared by Burma's ruling military regime as non-citizens of Burma, making them legally stateless people. They are treated not only as aliens, but also modern-day slaves in their ancestral homeland of Arakan."¹

The Rohingya is an ethnic group with bona fide historical roots in the region – its settlements dating back to the 7th century C.E.² Arakan sits at the border between Islamic and Buddhist Asia, and Rohingya reflect this geographic reality, being an ethnic mix of Bengalis, Persians, Moghuls, Turks and

¹ Tin Soe, Exodus of the Rohingya; Stateless Rohingya.....Running on empty, Chiang Mai, Thailand, 2013; P 34

² Dr. Habib Siddiqui: "Rohingya: The Forgotten People", The Weekly Holiday, Dhaka, Bangladesh, 2nd September 2005.

Pathan,³ who “have developed a culture and language which is absolutely unique to the region and civilization of their own.”

Rohingyas are a mixture of many kinds of people. The Rohingya speak a Bengali dialect – close to what is spoken in the Chittagong region of Bangladesh, mixed primarily with words from the Urdu, Hindi, and Arabic languages,⁴ and so have evolved distinct ethnic characteristics over the past several centuries, being as they are people of a different ethnic background from the majority.

The Rohingyas of Arakan still carry Arab names, faith, dress, music and customs. They are nationals as well as an indigenous ethnic group of Burma. “They are not a new born racial group of Arakan rather they are as old an indigenous race of the country as any others.”⁵

The name “Rohingya” derives from Rohang / Roshang, an earlier name for Arakan. Dr. Michael W. Charney writes, “the earliest recorded use of an ethnonym immediately recognizable as Rohingya is an observation by Francis Buchanan in 1799. As he explains, a dialect that was derived from Hindi “...is that spoken by the Mohammedans, who have long been settled in Arakan, and who call themselves Roainga, or native of Arakan⁶ and it can be asserted...that one claim of the Buddhist school in Rakhaing historiography, that Rohingya was an invention of the colonial period, is contradicted by the evidence.”

Arakan: An Historical Perspective

An independent kingdom for over 5,000 years until it came under Burma rule in 1784, Arakan found itself at the intersection of two worlds, situated as it was between Muslim-Hindu

³ Irish Centre for Human Rights, “Crimes against Humanity in Western Burma: The Situation of the Rohingyas”, 2010, p. 11

⁴ Amnesty International: “The Rohingya Minority: Fundamental Rights Denied”, May 2004, P.2

⁵ Mohammad Ashraf Alam, “Historical Background of Arakan”, Souvenir: Welcoming the Silver Jubilee Anniversary (1975-2000) Chittagong: Arakan Historical Society, 1999), p. 26

⁶ Dr. Michael W. Charney, “Buddhism in Arakan: Theory and Historiography of the Religious Basis of the Ethnonym”, a paper submitted to the Forgotten Kingdom of Arakan Workshop, 23-24 November 2005, First Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. P.15 In Buchanan, “A comparative Vocabulary,” p.55

South Asia and Buddhist Southeast Asia, and also amidst the Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid races. During its time as an independent kingdom, Arakan at times encompassed Chittagong region in the southern part of what is today known as Bangladesh, and covered an area larger than modern-day Arakan state. Col. Ba Shin, a Chairman of the Burma Historical Commission, wrote: “Arakan was virtually ruled by Muslims from 1430-1531.”⁷



Villagers fleeing from Myaw Taung

⁷ Col. Ba Shin (Chairman of the Burma Historical Commission), “Coming of Islam to Burma 1700 A.D. A research paper presented at Azad Bhavan, New Delhi, 1961, p.4.

Introduction and methodology

Despite international media exposure of the widespread violations being committed by Myanmar security forces in Maungdaw over the past few months, the Myanmar government is continuing to deny any such violations, and the persecution of Rohingya civilians is continuing.

Kaladan Press Network has been publishing regular news reports of the events in Maungdaw, but the Myanmar government's blanket denials of violations, particularly of sexual violence, spurred us to conduct a more in-depth investigation into the abuses. We chose to focus on women survivors, to provide them the opportunity to directly share their experiences.

We interviewed twenty-one Rohingya women, aged 17 to 52, in late December 2016 at a location near the Myanmar-Bangladesh border. All were recent refugee arrivals from nine villages in Maungdaw, having arrived within the previous month. They came from different social backgrounds: their husbands had been labourers, farmers, shop-keepers, traders, and fishermen; all had lived in their own homes before becoming displaced. Many had hidden in the mountains or sheltered in other villages before fleeing to Bangladesh. None had been to Bangladesh before.

The women had been identified by our community networks as having suffered abuses, and had agreed to be interviewed. All interviews were conducted in privacy, using only female interviewers. Video recordings were made of each interview, and have been kept by Kaladan Press Network. The names of the interviewees have been kept confidential for their safety. All analysis in this report is based on their testimony.

The women were deeply traumatized and it was clearly painful for them to recount their experiences. However, they were willing to speak in the hope this might bring an end to the ongoing persecution and suffering of their communities. We are indebted to them for their courage in speaking out.

The ages and original villages of the women interviewed are as follows:

No	Age of Interviewee	Interviewee's village of origin	
		Rohingya name	Burmese name
1	25	Sali Frang	Myaw Taung
2	30	Ra Bai La	Kyar Goung Taung
3	25	Bor Gazi Bil	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son
4	25	Bor Gazi Bil	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son
5	41	Ra Bai La	Kyar Goung Taung
6	35	Bor Gazi Bil	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son
7	20	Napoora	Nga Khu Ya
8	18	Kya Ri Prang	Kyet Yoe Pyin
9	25	Zammbonna	Zin Paing Nyar
10	25	Loun Dun	Laung Don
11	41	Sau Raw Gazi Bil	Dar Gyi Zar
12	17	Kya Ri Prang	Kyet Yoe Pyin
13	26	Sali Frang	Myaw Taung
14	20	Kya Ri Prang	Kyet Yoe Pyin
15	20	Kya Ri Prang	Kyet Yoe Pyin
16	35	Kya Ri Prang	Kyet Yoe Pyin
17	30	Sau Raw Gazi Bil	Dar Gyi Zar
18	52	Loun Dun	Laung Don
19	50+	Hati Fara	Sin Thay Pyin
20	23	Hati Fara	Sin Thay Pyin
21	25	Hati Fara	Sin Thay Pyin



Background

On October 9, 2016, attacks were carried out by alleged Rohingya militants on police outposts in Maungdaw township of Rakhine State. The Myanmar military responded immediately by deploying large numbers of troops - together with Border Guard Police⁸ and local paramilitary forces - to carry out “clearance operations” against the suspected attackers. The paramilitary forces are mainly comprised of ethnic Rakhine from local “model villages” set up by the previous military regime in northern Rakhine State, into which non-Rohingya peoples have been resettled from other areas.

By late November, the brutality of these operations, involving widespread human rights violations against civilians, had caused over 30,000 Rohingya villagers to flee to Bangladesh. On November 24, 2016, the UNHCR head in Cox’s Bazar, John McKissick, publicly accused the Myanmar government of carrying out ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya.

Since the start of the Maungdaw operations, the Myanmar government has consistently denied that its security forces have committed any human rights abuses, including sexual violence. Presidential spokesman Zaw Htay has accused residents of fabricating allegations of rape, and was quoted by Reuters on October 28, 2016, saying: “There’s no logical way of committing rape in the middle of a big village of 800 homes, where insurgents are hiding.”

On December 24, 2016, the Myanmar State Councillor’s Office issued a press release to “refute rumors of rape,” saying that the Rakhine State Investigation Commission (on December 11-13) and the government-organised media visit to Rakhine State (on December 19-22) had found no evidence of rape.

Women fleeing from these security operations tell a very different story. The twenty-one women interviewed for this report provide strong evidence that Myanmar security forces have been committing rights violations of a horrifying nature – including rape – on a widespread, systematic scale.

On January 16, 2017, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Bangladesh reported that an estimated 66,000 new arrivals from Myanmar had arrived in Cox’s Bazar since October 2016.

⁸ The Border Guard Police are armed forces based along the Bangladesh border. They serve as a special military unit, but use the name “Police”.



Interview findings

All of the women described similar patterns of behavior of the Myanmar security forces carrying out clearance operations in their villages. They described how large groups of soldiers, accompanied by local paramilitary forces, surrounded and entered their villages, looting, driving out occupants, and destroying or burning down houses. As residents were driven from their homes, men, women and children were indiscriminately tortured and killed. Men and boys were separated from women, and in some cases massacred, or else arrested and taken away. Whether caught in their houses, caught hiding in the forest, or when herded together outside their villages, women were prey to sexual assault by the troops.

The women had fled their homes as a result of these abuses. Some had sheltered in the forests and mountains for days, hoping that the situation would become peaceful. Others had gone to stay in neighbouring villages, or had returned to live on the charred remains of their homes, only to suffer further abuse by the military.

Indiscriminate torture and killing of civilians

"It was a Friday when they started shooting. Early in the morning at 3 am. When we heard the shooting, it was dark. We all came out. The whole village (Laung Don) came out. I was sleeping in our house. I saw the military there. They were running and shooting. People were falling down. I was running. I was trying to save my life. I saw people being shot and falling. They were shot in the arm, in the chest. There were men, women, and children. Still I'm afraid. More than 100 have been killed from my village. Some fell in the fields. Some in the river. Everything was red." (Interview 19)

It is clear from the testimony of the women that not only men, but also women and children were indiscriminately tortured and killed during the security operations. Eight of the women interviewed had personally been assaulted and injured. An 18-year-old woman from Kyet Yoe Pyin was hit on the head with a rifle butt when Myanmar troops seized her husband:

"I didn't see when the army arrived in our village. I just saw villagers running into our house, and eight soldiers following them into my house. I was eating. They caught my husband. They hit me on the top of the head with a gun. I was bleeding. My husband told me to run away. So, I took my two children and ran away. My husband's elder brother was beheaded in front of my house. I saw two soldiers force him to lie down. He motioned to me to go. But I saw him being beheaded. I ran away and hid in the paddy field. It was 8 o'clock in the morning. I stayed in the paddy field till 1 pm. They burned down our house. I could see this from the paddy field." (Interview 8)

A 17-year-old girl from the same village described being shot during a Myanmar military raid:

"I was with my 22-year-old sister-in-law in our house. We ran outside. We ran out to the field in front of the school. People were running everywhere. My sister-in-law was shot in the stomach. The Myanmar soldiers took away her body. There were many people killed - up to 100 killed, including men and women. I saw small children being thrown into the burning houses. Our neighbour's children, toddlers, were thrown into the fire. I was shot too at that time. The bullet went through the back of my calf, and came out the front. I was hurt but was able to run. As I ran, I left a trail of blood. I took shelter in another house, and got treated with herbal medicine." (Interview 12)

Massacres of men and boys

Three women personally witnessed massacres by Myanmar soldiers of groups of up to forty men and boys in their villages, including their own husbands and young sons.

Two separate massacres took place in Dar Gyi Zar, in mid-November. In both incidents, men and boys were first separated from the women and then shot dead.

"It was in the morning at 8 am. There were more than 15 soldiers. We saw people running from the other side of the village. We tried to run to the east of the village. 2 groups of soldiers surrounded us. We were made to sit down, heads bowed, hands behind our back. The ground was wet. They separated men and women. There were about 40 men including some

children in one group, and 40 women and children in the other group. They shot the men and boys. They threw some of the bodies into houses and then set fire to the houses. And some bodies were burned in the field. My husband was shot in that group. Also two of my sons, aged eleven and seven, who were clinging to him so they went with the "men's" group. They were shot too. My two younger sons were in my group, so they were saved." (Interview 17)

"They entered our village early in the morning. All the people were ordered to come out and go into a field. Everyone was made to put their hands behind their heads. When we came out, they burned our houses. There were about 250 soldiers. They separated the men and women. They burned down all the houses, but left one house. All the women, including me, were made to go into that house. It was a large store house. They shut the door. Then I heard gunshots and men screaming. At sunset, the military left, and we came outside, and we saw that all the men had been killed and their bodies burned. There were 29 bodies. They were all my relatives, including my husband.

I went and searched among the bodies. I found my husband's charred remains. I had a stick and when I touched the body with it, it disintegrated. I could recognize my husband, my four brothers, and my nephew. We all lived together. The bodies were in different places in the field. Someone smelled petrol. Some of those killed were young boys, aged twelve to fourteen. Out of all the 14 houses in our section, they killed all the men and boys." (Interview 11)

In Laung Don, about 30 men working in a paddy field next to the village were gunned down by the Myanmar military in November.

"My husband was working in the paddy field, at 4 pm, when they started firing. The military came with no warning and started shooting. Our house is quite close to our paddy field. There were so many trucks of soldiers. A huge line of trucks came and the soldiers surrounded the village and started shooting. My husband had asked me to go and give him some betel leaf in the field. So I had gone and given it to him and then returned home. I was just taking my rice pot in my house, when I heard the sound of firing. I ran out, and saw all the villagers working in the field had been shot dead. There were more than 30 bodies. I tried to run over to my husband, but other people

held me back, saying I would be killed. We were not able to bury the bodies. The Myanmar soldiers guarded the bodies overnight, then the next morning, some men in civilian clothes who were with the Myanmar soldiers buried them by the side of the river.” (Interview 20)

Husbands killed or missing

Of the twenty married women interviewed, nineteen had lost their husbands, who had either been killed or gone missing during the recent security operations in their villages. Only one woman had managed to flee to Bangladesh with her husband, who had been tortured by the Myanmar military (his underarms and testicles had been burned), but was recovering after receiving treatment at a clinic in a refugee camp,

Of the other nineteen married women, six of their husbands had been killed. Three had been massacred in fields together with large groups of villagers in Dar Gyi Zar and Laung Don (see section above). Other women saw their husbands being shot as they were trying to run away. One woman from Myaw Taung saw her husband being shot in the anus in front of their house:



Myanmar border guard Police (BGP) checkpoint

“At 4 am, one month ago, the Myanmar military surrounded my village. There were about 50 soldiers. They shot guns and woke us up. My husband tried to escape but couldn’t run away. The military called us all outside. I saw other people being called. Men and women were separated. My husband was beaten, and he fell down on the ground. They pulled his leg up, and shot the gun into his anus three times, killing him. It was in front of the house. About four soldiers did this to him. Another group caught my brother, and shot him in the chest at close range, killing him with one shot. They wrapped the bodies in blankets – our own blankets, and took them away. I don’t know where they took them.” (Interview 13)

The husbands of the thirteen other women were all missing and feared dead. Most had tried to run away from their homes when the security operations began and were assumed to have been caught and killed by the Myanmar troops. Some had been seen arrested, tortured and led away, but the women had no idea where they had been taken.

One of the women interviewed, from Laung Don, who had seen her husband being taken away, travelled to Maungdaw Jail to try and find him, but in vain:

“My husband had gone to hide in the mountain from the soldiers. I was in the village and I saw he had been caught by the Myanmar soldiers. He was with a group of about 30 other villagers who had also been caught. They had their hands tied behind their back, and were being led through the village by about 100 soldiers. I saw my husband’s beard had been burned. When I saw my husband coming through the village, I ran to try and hold him, but I was hit in the stomach with a gun by a soldier, and fell down unconscious. My 12-year-old son had also been hiding with his father on the mountain, but I didn’t see him with the group who had been arrested. I don’t know where he is. I went to Maungdaw to look for my son and husband. I went with 3 other women whose husbands had been caught. We waited outside the jail, but we couldn’t speak to anyone. I spent two days in Maungdaw, then crossed to Bangladesh.” (Interview 21)

The following list shows abuses suffered by the husbands of women interviewed:

No	Age of Interviewee	Village of origin	Abuses suffered by women's husbands
1	25	Myaw Taung	Husband missing
2	30	Kyar Goung Taung	Husband arrested by Myanmar soldiers, now missing
3	25	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	Husband missing
4	25	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	Husband missing
5	41	Kyar Goung Taung	Husband missing
6	35	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	Husband missing
7	20	Nga Khu Ya	Husband missing
8	18	Kyet Yoe Pyin	Husband arrested by Myanmar soldiers, now missing
9	25	Zin Paing Nyar	Husband shot dead by Myanmar soldiers
10	25	Laung Don	Husband shot dead by Myanmar soldiers
11	41	Dar Gyi Zar	Husband shot dead in a field with 28 other male villagers by Myanmar soldiers
12	17	Kyet Yoe Pyin	(Unmarried)
13	26	Myaw Taung	Husband beaten and shot dead in the anus by Myanmar troops in front of their house
14	20	Kyet Yoe Pyin	Husband caught and tortured by Myanmar soldiers, his underarms and testicles were burned (but survived and has fled to Bangladesh)
15	20	Kyet Yoe Pyin	Husband missing
16	35	Kyet Yoe Pyin	Husband arrested by Myanmar soldiers, now missing

17	30	Dar Gyi Zar	Husband shot dead in a field with 40 male villagers by Myanmar soldiers
18	52	Laung Don	Husband missing
19	50+	Sin Thay Pyin	Husband missing
20	23	Sin Thay Pyin	Husband among 30 villagers shot in their paddy field by Myanmar soldiers
21	25	Sin Thay Pyin	Husband caught by Myanmar soldiers, his beard burned, now missing

Children killed or injured

Eleven of the women interviewed had lost one or more of their own children during the attacks. Young children of two women had suffered injury.

Three women witnessed Myanmar soldiers deliberately harming their young children. A 25-year-old woman from Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son was running out of her burning house, carrying her one-year-old baby daughter in her arms, when Myanmar soldiers pulled the baby from her arms and threw her into the burning house, killing her.

A woman from Kyar Goung Taung described how Myanmar soldiers robbing her house picked up her two-year-old son and threw him to the ground, causing brain injury:

"First they came and said "Leave the house." They were wearing military uniforms. Some could speak Rohingya. There were over ten soldiers. All had guns and knives. They pointed their guns at us. They said: "If you have money or gold, give it to us." I lost my gold earrings, and more than 10,000 kyat. They told us to get out of the house so they could search it. My two-year-old son was screaming, so one soldier picked him up and threw him out. He was knocked out. When they left, I put water on his head. After that, he woke up, but was shaking. He used to be able to walk and speak, but now he can't walk or speak any more. He's suffered brain damage." (Interview 2)

A woman from Nga Khu Ya described how soldiers searching her house stamped her seven-year-old son to death:

“More than seven Myanmar soldiers came into the house. They caught me and searched me. They took my earrings. I tried to struggle. My eight-year-old son had taken my daughter and youngest son outside, but my seven-year-old son was still inside. He shouted at the soldiers when they seized me. They let me go, and went and stamped on him with their boots. They killed him by stamping on him. Then I ran away. I took shelter in a neighbour’s house. I came back to my house the same day and found everything in it had been damaged and broken. I found my son’s body. So we buried him.” (Interview 7)

A woman from Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son ran from her house when soldiers arrived in her village, leaving her young baby asleep inside, and then saw the house burned down by soldiers. Another woman from Kyet Yoe Pyin fled from her village leaving her baby asleep in a house, only to return and find his body on the ground, with his throat cut.

Six women had lost sons between the ages of ten and fifteen, who had either gone missing when the Myanmar soldiers raided their villages, and were feared dead, or were witnessed being killed together with the men (see Massacres section above).

One woman from Zin Paing Nyar lost her six-year-old daughter after fleeing a Myanmar military attack on her village that killed her husband:

“I was moving in the mountains, taking shelter at other people’s houses and sometimes hiding in paddy fields. I was so scared. On the way, I lost my daughter. It was in Shil Khali (Kyauk Chaung). The Myanmar military was burning down houses, killing people. We were running away. It was Friday. When they started firing, everybody ran from the house. I took three of my children, but I didn’t manage to take my six-year-old daughter. Everyone was just running for their life. When I came to the riverside and tried to get a boat, I kept searching for my daughter. During the next five days while I was running, I kept asking people if they had seen my daughter.”

The list below shows abuses suffered by children of the women interviewed:

No	Age of Interviewee	Village of origin	Own children injured, killed or missing
2	30	Kyar Goung Taung	2-year-old son thrown to the ground by Myanmar soldier, now brain damaged
3	25	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	1-year-old daughter killed by being thrown by Myanmar soldiers into burning house
4	25	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	1-year-old daughter killed when left asleep in house which was set on fire
5	41	Kyar Goung Taung	12-year-old son missing since village set on fire
6	35	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	12-year-old and 15-year-old sons missing since village set on fire
7	20	Nga Khu Ya	7-year-old son stamped to death by Myanmar soldiers
9	25	Zin Paing Nyar	lost her 6-year-old daughter while fleeing
13	26	Myaw Taung	3-year-old son injured in legs by shrapnel
14	20	Kyet Yoe Pyin	1-year-old baby’s throat was cut and his body thrown on the ground
16	35	Kyet Yoe Pyin	12-year-old son taken away from their house by Myanmar soldiers, now missing
17	30	Dar Gyi Zar	7-year-old and 11-year-old sons shot dead by Myanmar soldiers in front of her

19	50+	Sin Thay Pyin	10-year old and 14-year-old sons missing since village attacked
21	25	Sin Thay Pyin	12-year-old son missing since going into hiding



Border Guard Police patrolling in village



An artist's impression of child killed by Myanmar military



Rohingya women and children waiting at a Bangladesh village to go to a refugee camp



Sexual violence

Of the 21 women interviewed, 15 women, from eight villages, had either personally experienced or witnessed sexual violence by Myanmar Army troops and militia during the security operations since October 2016. The flagrant, brutal nature of the sexual violence, with some rape victims killed and mutilated, provides strong evidence that the soldiers were deliberately using rape as a weapon of terror against local communities.

Rape

At least 70 women and girls were seen either being raped, being taken away to be raped, or found after being raped by groups of soldiers and militia. Most of the rape incidents took place when women had been forcibly gathered in large groups outside their villages during security operations in Kyar Goung Taung, Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son, and Kyet Yoe Pyin Groups of soldiers pulled young women away from the other women and took them to be raped in nearby houses, fields or forest.

In Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son, the women were gang-raped in full view of the group of women from which they had been taken:

"We were all ordered outside the village to stay in a field. There were only women. There were no men left. The soldiers came and searched the bodies of all the women. I was searched, and they took 200,000 kyat from me. Then they chose the pretty young girls. They called them away to another area. They said they wanted them to dig up the ground where they accused villagers of hiding weapons. There were about 100 women in our group, and they chose about 10 pretty young girls, some were just aged 10-12. We could see the girls being raped. There were over 30 soldiers, also some men in civilian shorts. They gang raped them one by one. Each girl was raped by 5 or 6 men in turn. They cut open their clothes with a knife, and then held a knife to their mouth so they wouldn't shout. One older woman with white hair was also taken, and they cut her vagina with a knife. She didn't die. After the soldiers left, people looked after her, and treated her wound." (Interview 3)

In Abuja Para (part of Kyet Yoe Pyin village tract), the rapes took place within earshot of the other women:

"There were 30 women in the field. There were more than 200 soldiers. Eight beautiful girls, aged 16 to 20, were taken by the soldiers to the pond nearby. We couldn't see what was happening to them, but we could hear them screaming. When the soldiers took them away, they told the rest of us to go. I later heard the eight girls were killed." (Interview 8)

A 52-year-old woman from Laung Don described young women being taken to a nearby house to be raped:

"When I was sitting in the field, I saw three young women being taken by two soldiers – they were wearing military shirts and civilian shorts. First one soldier took the women into a house, and the other man waited outside. When he had finished he made a clicking sound. Then the next man went in. The 3 women were aged 20-21. They were unmarried. There were about 50 soldiers standing around the field at the time. They saw what those two soldiers were doing. We were sitting in a circle of about 50 women. There were other groups of women in the field. The soldiers standing guard would come and kick us from time to time. We couldn't move our heads or they would beat us. At about 1 pm, the soldiers left. When they left, the two soldiers who had taken the women were left behind, and had to run after them. When the women came out, we asked what had happened, but they didn't say anything. They were ashamed. I could see that one woman was bleeding." (Interview 19)

Several of the rape incidents took place as soldiers were searching through villages. A 40-year-old woman was gang-raped in her house in Zin Paing Nyar by soldiers after they had beheaded her husband.

A 20-year-old woman from Kyet Yoe Pyin described how she had been raped. The assault had taken place when she had returned to her village after fleeing when her house was burned down, believing the announcement by the Myanmar military that it was safe for villagers to return. She had been sheltering with other women, when a group of about ten soldiers came and assaulted them.

"They pulled one woman inside a house. Four soldiers raped her, not so far from where we were. They tried to pull me away from my children. One soldier pulled my hand and put it on his penis. They caught my 18-year-old niece and took off all her clothes. They poked a gun in her vagina, and used a lighter to burn her genitals. Then three soldiers caught me, and took me

inside a house. Two pulled off my earrings, and one raped me. They also beat me. After that they let me go.” (Interview 14)

The woman was so traumatized that she fled from her village and hid for three nights. She had left her one-year-old baby in a cot in one of the houses. When she returned, she found his dead body face down on the ground in front of the house, with his neck cut.

At least two of the rape incidents took place in Myanmar military camps. Ten women were taken to be raped at the temporary military camp on the mountain above Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son. Two were taken to be raped at the military camp in the police station in Laung Don.

Killing and mutilation of rape victims

At least six of the rape victims were killed. Their dead and mutilated bodies were found in and near Laung Don. Ten other rape victims were believed to have been killed, in Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son and Laung Don, but interviewees had not seen their bodies. Several women in Kyar Goung Taung died of their injuries after being raped.

A young woman who had fled from Sin Thay Pyin to Lounng Don village when her husband was shot dead, described how her sister was sexually mutilated and killed straight after giving birth:

“When I was in Lounng Don, I stayed with my sister in her house. She was pregnant. She had just given birth in her house, and we had just finished cleaning up after the birth, when the Myanmar soldiers came into the village. It was about 5 pm. We heard people shouting that the military were coming so we all ran away, but my sister couldn’t because she had just given birth. The soldiers came in the house and stamped on her newborn baby, and cut off her breasts. I returned after about half an hour and found the dead bodies of my sister and her baby. It was her first baby. She was 20 years old. They had taken off her clothes and cut into her vagina. They had cut off

her breasts and put the dead baby on her chest. The baby had been stamped to death. Its stomach had burst open and the intestines had come out. They had put the breasts next to each other on a pillow beside her. She was lying in her bed. They had stuck a rifle into her vagina. It was left there. We had to take it out from her body, and wash the blood off it. At midnight, we buried her.” (Interview 20)

Another woman (from Sin Thay Pyin) found the bodies of five of her neighbours in the forest near her village:

“At the time they started burning houses in our village, after my husband had been arrested, I went into the mountains, and saw the bodies of five women who had been raped and killed. They were all pretty and they were my neighbours. They were all naked. One body had been beheaded. One was tied by the ankles and wrists to the trees with her legs apart. One woman had pieces of paper covering her breasts and groin. Their names were: “A” (the mother of two children), “B” (the mother of one child), “C” (unmarried), “D” (the mother of 3 children), and “E” (who was newly married). I saw the bodies, but didn’t dare do anything. Only when the military left the area, we went back later and collected the bodies.” (Interview 21)



Border Guard Police harassing Rohingya villagers

A summary of the rape incidents documented is below:

No	Age of Interviewee	Village of origin	Sexual violence suffered/ witnessed
2	30	Kyar Goung Taung	Saw a 15-year-old girl being taken away by 4-5 Myanmar soldiers to be raped in a field; 8 other women taken by soldiers and raped in fields, in the forest, and in a house; heard some later died
3	25	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	Saw about 10 young women and girls in her village gang-raped by about 30 Myanmar soldiers at the side of a field; they cut open their clothes with a knife and 5-6 men raped each of them in turn; an older woman was also taken and her vagina cut open with a knife
4	25	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	Saw 3 young women taken away by Myanmar soldiers to be raped at their temporary military camp on the mountain; altogether 10 women were taken to be raped at the camp
6	35	Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son	Saw 4 women being taken away by Myanmar soldiers to be raped while she was being kept with other women on the school field; she heard 2 of these women died
7	20	Nga Khu Ya	Saw Myanmar soldiers attempting to rape her relative outside her house

8	18	Kyet Yoe Pyin	In Abuja Para (in Kyet Yoe Pyin), forced to strip to her underwear and stand in field with other women; saw 8 young women taken away by large group of Myanmar soldiers to be gang-raped by a nearby pond, heard their screams; heard they were killed
9	25	Zin Paing Nyar	Neighbor's wife was raped by Myanmar soldiers in her house (after they beheaded her husband)
10	25	Laung Don	When running from her village, saw 2 young women being pulled away by Myanmar troops to the military camp at Laung Don police station
13	26	Myaw Taung	Saw 4 young women being taken by 12 Myanmar soldiers – they were gang-gaped in a house
14	20	Kyet Yoe Pyin	She was grabbed by 3 Myanmar soldiers and raped by 1 of them in a house in the village; saw another woman being taken to be raped by 4 soldiers in a house; her 18-yr-old niece was stripped naked and a gun poked in her vagina, and her groin burned with a lighter by a group of 10 soldiers
15	20	Kyet Yoe Pyin	Saw several young women pulled away from her group and raped in a nearby house
16	35	Kyet Yoe Pyin	Her 18-year-old daughter was taken away from their house by Myanmar soldiers, never seen again

19	50+	Sin Thay Pyin	Saw 3 young women taken to be raped in a house by 2 Myanmar soldiers
20	23	Sin Thay Pyin	Saw 6 women taken away by Myanmar soldiers; found the dead body of her 20 year old sister with her breasts cut off and a gun stuck in her vagina - her newborn baby was stamped to death and left on her dead sister's chest
21	25	Sin Thay Pyin	Saw 2 young women being taken away by Myanmar soldiers in the forest; found naked bodies of 5 women neighbours in the forest - one was tied up, her legs splayed, another body was beheaded



Villagers fleeing from their village -Kyet Yoe Pyin

Sexual groping during body searches; forced to undress in public

While being searched and robbed, women were subjected to sexually humiliating treatment by Myanmar security forces. Women from Laung Don, Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son and Dar Gyi Zar the women described how their breasts and groin were groped by soldiers during such searches.

When women were forced in groups out into the open during security raids in their villages, this also provided opportunity for soldiers to publicly humiliate them. A young woman from Kyet Yoe Pyin was forced with 30 other women to strip to her underwear out in a field near the village of Abuja Para (in Kyet Yoe Pyin) during a security search. They were made to stand in the hot sun for an hour.

Another woman from Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son, hiding in the mountains, described seeing a group of about 100 women forced to stand in the sun in a field east of Jari Para village (Leik Ya tract). The younger women in the group had been forced to strip entirely naked.

Deliberate burning of houses and property

Fifteen of the women interviewed, from seven villages (Kyet Yoe Pyin, Zin Paing Nyar, Laung Don, Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son, Kyar Goung Taung, Myaw Taung and Dar Gyi Zar) described how their houses had been burned down by Myanmar security forces.

They described how the soldiers simply entered the village without warning and began burning houses. Some women were able to run away with their children in time and take shelter outside their villages, without being caught by the soldiers.



Rohingya home in Zin Paing Nyar village
burned down by Myanmar military

A woman from Kyar Goung Taung described being able to escape with eight of her children, but her husband and 12-year-old son disappeared on that day:

“Early in the morning, when the sun came out, the Myanmar military surrounded my village. They didn’t say anything, but started burning the houses. We all ran out to try and save our life. I don’t know when the men were caught. I didn’t see anything. We just tried to save our life. When they started burning. I ran to another village, with my children, and with other people. It was in the morning at the prayer time. My husband and 12-year-old son had gone to the mosque at about 5 am. The prayers start at 5.30 but before that they started firing guns. There were so many soldiers. I don’t know how many. They started burning the houses. I grabbed my children and ran outside the village. I wanted to save my life. From outside the village, we looked back and saw the houses burn. I saw my house burn – my stock of paddy. I saw the houses burning in a line, the houses near the mountain as well as the houses near the road. It seemed like they were all burning. We were shouting. All the houses were burning. The trees were also burned. There were lots of coconut trees. The mosque was burned too.” (Interview 5)

Other women and their family members were not able to escape from the soldiers in time. As mentioned earlier, two women from Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son lost their young children in the fires.

A woman from Myaw Taung described how her father was burned alive:

“My father was pushed inside his house, and then they burned the house down. My father tried to come out, but they pushed him back. He was sick and weak. About four or five soldiers pushed him back in, shut the door and burned the house.”

Another woman from Zin Paing Nyar also saw an elderly neighbor being burned alive:

“After my house was burned down, I saw the military burn alive an old disabled man. It was in my village. The man was 80 years old and paralyzed. His family had left him sitting in front of his house. I saw the military take him and put him in the house, and shut the door. Then they burned the house down. I saw them do this.”

The same woman described how the Myanmar troops

fired an incendiary device to burn the houses: "I saw the military shooting something to burn the houses. They shot once, and then five houses burned down, because the houses were close together. They shot a cylinder-like gun. Fire came out one end. There was a "Shhh" sound. The fire landed and started to burn. Animals were also burned with the houses."

Looting, robbery

Almost all the women described Myanmar Army soldiers and paramilitary troops looting and robbing during the security operations, both when they entered the villages and when they forced residents to gather in fields outside the villages. As most men had run away from the villages or been captured during this time, it was usually the women who were made to gather in groups outside.

A woman from Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son who fled to stay in the village of U Shey Kya after her house was burned down described how the Myanmar military searched and looted the village multiple times:

"I ran to Bura Shida Para (U Shey Kya), another village. I stayed with other people there for one month. While I was staying there, the Myanmar military came more than 17 times to the village. Each time they would order people outside the village and then search and loot the houses. Sometimes they came in the morning. Sometimes in the evening. When they ordered us outside the village, they would push and pull us out to a field, and sometimes beat us. I was slapped and also kicked. Another woman near me was beaten. They would make us sit in the field. They would search our bodies. They ordered us to take off our headscarves." (Interview 4)

Ten of the women were personally robbed of gold jewelry and cash, pulled from off their bodies, by Myanmar soldiers in the villages of Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son, Kyar Goung Taung, U Shey Kya, Nga Khu Ya, Myaw Taung, Kyet Yoe Pyin, and Laung Don.

A woman from Yae Khat Chaung Gwa Son described being robbed on the day Myanmar troops entered her village and started burning houses:

"Over 1,000 Myanmar soldiers surrounded the village. The first thing I knew was someone came running to my house, saying "They are beheading Muslims." My house is raised up and I saw people running. They were shouting and screaming. We too shouted and screamed. I came out of my house, and met some Myanmar soldiers. They had a translator. They said to me: "Give me whatever you have. If you don't, we will kill you." The Myanmar soldiers searched my body and robbed me. One soldier stood with a knife, and another robbed me. He pulled off my gold chain around my neck. He pulled out the gold stud in my nose. He took my gold earrings and money (over 800,000 kyat) in my bra pocket." (Interview 6)

An elderly woman from Laung Don who had hidden her gold earrings in her hair bun, was made to take off her scarf and loosen her hair when forced to sit outside in a field with other women. The soldiers found her earrings and took them away. She described how women who had hidden money in their undergarments were made to take off their undergarments by the soldiers.

Forced by Myanmar military to provide false testimony

Two women from Kyet Yoe Pyin said that after fleeing, they had gone back to their burned homes and set up temporary shelters in their compounds, in the hope that they could remain in their village. One of the women said she had gone back because ten days after the burning in Kyet Yoe Pyin, the Myanmar military had announced they would not burn any more houses, and that villagers could return. However, the day after she had returned with her family, all the villagers were called by the Myanmar military to the police station in the village and forced to say it was the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) who had burned their houses:

"We were rounded up in the field in the police station. The soldiers pointed their guns at us and asked: 'Who burned your houses?' 'Was it RSO who did this?' 'Was it RSO killing your parents and children?' We were afraid that if we said no, we would be shot. They were taking video of us. We had to say it was RSO who burned our houses and did the killing. There were about 400 soldiers. They were speaking Burmese, but there was a Rakhine who translated into Rohingya. We stood in the field for about one hour, then we were freed." (Interview 14)



Myanmar army in Myaw Taung

Conclusion

The similarity of the testimony provided by women from different villages show a clear pattern of grave human rights abuses being committed by the Myanmar military against civilians on a widespread scale. This provides strong evidence that the abuses are being committed systematically, with full command responsibility.

By continuing to give full public support to the Myanmar military's "clearance" operations in Maungdaw, giving blanket denials to any reports of rights violations by the military – particularly rape – the Myanmar government is condoning the ongoing atrocities and enabling them to continue.

We entreat the international community and the Myanmar government to act immediately to end the atrocities in Maungdaw. The women interviewed for this report have had the courage to speak out. The world must listen.



Recommendations

To the Myanmar government:

- To order the Myanmar Army to withdraw all troops from Maungdaw and immediately end the arbitrary arrest, torture, killing and rape of civilians
- To allow an independent international investigation into abuses committed by Myanmar security forces in Maungdaw since October 2016, and to ensure the safety of anyone interviewed during the investigation
- To immediately allow humanitarian agencies to access all areas of Rakhine State and provide humanitarian aid without restriction
- To lift all existing abusive restrictions and grant fundamental rights to the the Rohingya in accordance with the UN Charter, including the right to self-identification
- To allow the Rohingya to return back to their original place of residence, with guarantees of full protection of their rights

To the international community:

- To use every means to pressure the Myanmar government to withdraw all military troops from Maungdaw and end the arbitrary arrest, torture, killing and rape of civilians
- To send an international peace-keeping force to protect and provide security for civilians in Maungdaw
- To organize an independent investigation into human rights violations committed against civilians during the recent security operations in Maungdaw
- To stand together with Rohingya in demanding the return of their fundamental rights - and not ask for designation of “new” citizenship for the Rohingya

To the Bangladesh government:

- To give shelter and protection to all refugees fleeing Myanmar, and to allow humanitarian agencies to provide necessary aid to these refugees without restriction



