

BURMA BULLETIN



A month-in-review of events in Burma



ALTERNATIVE ASEAN NETWORK ON BURMA
campaigns, advocacy & capacity-building for human rights & democracy

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- **Tatmadaw clearance operations in northern Arakan State force over 480,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh within 5 weeks. A humanitarian crisis ensues.**
- **Burmese security forces, in some cases supported by Buddhist mobs, subject unarmed Rohingya civilians to systematic attacks as well as mass-scale targeted burning. Satellite imagery reveals that 214 villages were burned down.**
- **Survivors say rape was used as a “calculated tool of terror” to force them to flee.**
- **UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein calls the crisis “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing”.**
- **The international community strongly condemns the Tatmadaw violence in northern Arakan State.**
- **The Burmese government dismisses allegations of Tatmadaw human rights violations in Arakan State as “fake news”.**
- **Meanwhile, the Tatmadaw escalates its offensive in northern Shan State, affecting civilians.**
- **Shan and Kachin IDPs call for continued aid at the Thai-Burma border.**
- **India defends its plan to deport over 40,000 Rohingya, including those registered as refugees with UNHCR.**

KEY STORY: THE ROHINGYA EXODUS

The military “clearance operations” carried out in the aftermath of the 25 August attacks in Arakan/Rakhine State [see *August Bulletin*] prompted a new exodus of Rohingya refugees to Bangladesh. On 3 September, the estimated number of new arrivals was 73,000,¹ while on 8 September it was over 270,000.² The most recent report on 26 September put the figure at 480,000, but high mobility has been making it impossible for aid agencies to verify these numbers.³

¹ Aljazeera (03 Sep 17) Rohingya exodus continues after 73000 flee Myanmar

² Reuters (08 Sept 17) Exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh reaches 270,000- UNHCR; Reuters (07 Sept 17) Exclusive: U.N. expects up to 300,000 Rohingya could flee Myanmar violence to Bangladesh

³ The Economic Times (27 Sep 17) Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh now 700,000 plus: UN; Inter Sector Coordination Group – ISCG (11 Sep 17) Situation Report: Influx (August 2017)

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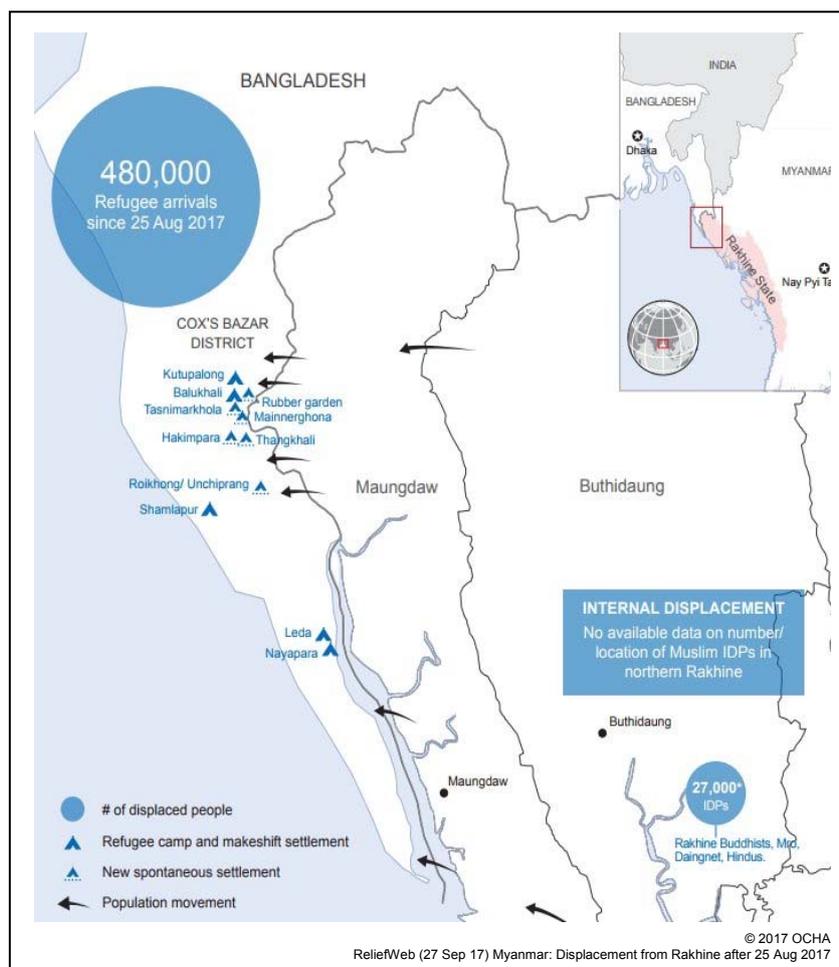
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This added to the pre-existing displaced population, estimated at around 164,000 by the Inter Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) – chaired by the International Organization for Migration (IOM).⁴ Among these, nearly 34,000 long-term displaced Rohingya were officially registered as refugees at Kutupalong and Leda camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and approximately 87,000 arrived as a result of the clearance operations that followed the 9 October 2016 attacks in Maungdaw Township.⁵ Amnesty International's Crisis Response Director Tirana Hassan said “[t]he numbers speak for themselves – it is no exaggeration to say that almost half a million Rohingya have had to flee their homes in just under a year”.⁶



About 100 Rohingya, including women and children, were known to have drowned between 25 August and 14 September.⁷ The latest incident happened on 28 September, when another boat capsized in rough waters. The bodies of 23 people were retrieved, but 40 others were missing and presumed drowned. Many were likely to be children too weak for the strong currents.⁸

Women and children form majority of refugees

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugee (UNHCR) reported that the vast majority of refugees were women, including mothers with newborn babies, and families with children, in poor condition, exhausted, hungry, and desperate for shelter.⁹ Bangladesh spokesperson for the World Food Programme (WFP) Dipayan Bhattacharyya declared that “[the refugees] are coming in nutritionally deprived; they have been cut off from a normal flow of food for possibly more than a month”.¹⁰

The United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) reported that 240,000 children were among the newly arrived refugees, and almost 1,400 of them crossed the border alone: “What they need most is food, clean water, somewhere safe to take refuge from the rain, medicine, and to be protected from people like child traffickers. They need this now. Immediately”.¹¹

⁴ Inter Sector Coordination Group – ISCG (11 Sep 17) Situation Report: Influx (August 2017)

⁵ HRW (11 Sep 17) Burma: Ensure Aid Reaches Rohingya; UNHCR (08 Sep 17) Bangladesh: Refugee camp capacity exhausted; thousands in makeshift shelters

⁶ Amnesty International (14 Sep 17) Myanmar: Scorched-earth campaign fuels ethnic cleansing of Rohingya from Rakhine State

⁷ UNHCR (08 Sep 17) Bangladesh: Refugee camp capacity exhausted; thousands in makeshift shelters; Channel News Asia (14 Sep 17) Rohingya boat toll nears 100 as bodies wash ashore

⁸ Coconuts Yangon (29 Sep 17) Boat capsizing compounds tragedy for Rohingya refugees; 60 feared dead

⁹ UNHCR (08 Sep 17) Bangladesh: Refugee camp capacity exhausted; thousands in makeshift shelters

¹⁰ Reuters (07 Sept 17) Exclusive: U.N. expects up to 300,000 Rohingya could flee Myanmar violence to Bangladesh

¹¹ UNICEF (21 Sep 17) Shocking stories from the Rohingya children's crisis

Humanitarian crisis

In Bangladesh, the resources of aid agencies and communities neared exhaustion.¹² More than half of the refugees now live in squalid conditions, crammed into makeshift sites composed of plastic sheets, lacking clean drinking water and sanitation.¹³ The hazardous conditions were intensified by some of the worst monsoon floods in recent years.¹⁴

The drastic scarcity of aid has taken its toll. On 15 September, at least 2 children and a woman were killed in a fight that broke out as aid was being distributed. On 24 September, during his 3-day visit to Bangladesh, UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi asked mothers gathered in the makeshift camps what their children needed most. They replied “everything”.¹⁵ Emergency Coordinator at Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF) Robert Onus said the scale of the crisis was “...impossible to describe unless you see it with your own eyes”.¹⁶

The Bangladesh government sought help to deal with the influx.²⁰ PM Sheikh Hasina said Bangladesh wanted refugees to return home and called for Burma to allow their safe repatriation.²¹ She offered to create “safe zones” for Rohingya in Arakan State, but rights groups warned that safety could not be ensured and segregation could only worsen the conflict.²²

Thousands still trapped amid violence

Refugees reported that while many people from Maungdaw Township could escape to Bangladesh, tens of thousands of displaced Rohingya were still trapped in Rathedaung and Buthidaung townships. They were hiding in the fields and hills without food or vital aid.²³

In Rathedaung Township, there were 21 Muslim villages and 3 camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs). Since 25 August, 16 of those villages and all 3 camps were emptied and in many cases burnt, forcing an estimated 28,000 Rohingya to flee. The 5 surviving Muslim villages and their inhabitants were cut off by hostile Arakanese Buddhists, and lacked food. They were also terrified, having repeatedly received death threats, and were begging for a secure passage to safety.²⁴

The Tula Toli Massacre

The 30 August massacre took place at Tula Toli village (also known as Min Gyi), north of Maungdaw. Burmese armed forces reportedly killed civilians, emptied the village, and set houses on fire. On 7 September, Zahir Ahmed described how he hid in nearby jungle and saw Burmese soldiers corner residents on the river bank, shoot adults, and throw babies and toddlers into the water. His wife and children, including the youngest daughter, 6-month old Hasina, were among them.¹⁷

On 12 September, Rashida, a 25 year-old Rohingya woman who survived Tula Toli, said Burmese soldiers separated the women and children from the men, pushed them to the river's shore, and started shooting. Rashida collapsed on the ground cradling her 1-month-old baby. When all residents seemed to be dead, soldiers dug a mass grave. Rashida was still alive but her head was smashed with a machete and her baby taken away. She later found herself in a house with 7 other women. They were beaten and raped for countless hours there. When soldiers thought their victims were dead, they set fire to the house and left.¹⁸

On 19 September, satellite imagery confirmed the demolition of Tula Toli village. The only part of the village that appeared still intact was inhabited by Arakanese Buddhists.¹⁹

¹² Reuters (07 Sep 17) Exclusive: U.N. expects up to 300,000 Rohingya could flee Myanmar violence to Bangladesh; UNHCR (08 Sep 17) Bangladesh: Refugee camp capacity exhausted; thousands in makeshift shelters

¹³ Al Jazeera (18 Sep 17) Cox's Bazar: Chaos all around at Rohingya camps; HRW (23 Sep 17) 'Safe Zones' for Rohingya Refugees in Burma Could Be Dangerous

¹⁴ Reuters (25 Aug 17) Worst monsoon floods in years kill more than 1,200 across South Asia; Al Jazeera (18 Sep 17) Cox's Bazar: Chaos all around at Rohingya camps

¹⁵ UNHCR (24 Sep 17) As refugee crisis grows, Rohingya struggle in roadside settlements

¹⁶ Al Jazeera (18 Sep 17) Cox's Bazar: Chaos all around at Rohingya camps

¹⁷ The Guardian (7 Sep 17) Massacre at Tula Toli: Rohingya recall horror of Myanmar army attack

¹⁸ VICE News (12 Sep 17) "They struck us until we were lifeless"

¹⁹ The Guardian (19 Sep 17) Myanmar: satellite imagery confirms Rohingya village of Tula Toli razed

²⁰ HRW (23 Sep 17) 'Safe Zones' for Rohingya Refugees in Burma Could Be Dangerous

²¹ Al Jazeera (22 Sep 17) Bangladesh PM wants Rohingya safe zones in Myanmar

²² Al Jazeera (22 Sep 17) Bangladesh PM wants Rohingya safe zones in Myanmar; HRW (23 Sep 17) 'Safe Zones' for Rohingya Refugees in Burma Could Be Dangerous

²³ HRW (11 Sep 17) Burma: Ensure Aid Reaches Rohingya

²⁴ The Bangkok Post (18 Sep 17) 'We will kill you all'; Rohingya beg for safe passage

Tensions prevented local communities and international agencies from delivering vital supplies to the Rohingya community. On 12 September, Soe Chay – an Arakanese woman from Ywa Thit ward, Myebon Township – was robbed, beaten up and publicly humiliated for giving rations to Rohingya. She said a group of men punched and kicked her, cut off her hair, tied her with a rope and paraded her through the village with a sign reading “I am a national traitor”.²⁸ On 20 September, Buddhist mobs attacked an International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) aid shipment headed to Maungdaw Township. Nearly 300 people gathered at Set Yoe Kya jetty, Sittwe, and threw petrol bombs at the ICRC vessel. Sittwe police used tear gas to disperse the mob, arrested 8 people and opened an investigation into the violence.²⁹ On 22 September, a bomb exploded inside a mosque of Mee Kyaung Zay village, Buthidaung Township.³⁰

“Textbook example of ethnic cleansing”

On 11 September, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called the situation in Arakan State “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing”.³¹ He noted that the situation could not be fully assessed because Burmese authorities have been refusing access to independent investigators, but said the UN had received “multiple reports and satellite imagery of Burmese security forces and local militia burning Rohingya villages, and consistent accounts of extrajudicial killings, including shooting fleeing civilians”.³² On 13 September, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres confirmed that the mass displacement of Rohingya amounted to ethnic cleansing [see *International relations*].³³

On 25 September, HRW determined that the actions committed by security forces against the Rohingya minority in northern Arakan State amounted to crimes against humanity. Specified crimes included forced population transfer or deportation, murder, rape or other sexual violence and persecution, being “committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack”.³⁴

Rohingya survivors — many of whom suffered from burns and bullet wounds — described systematic and coordinated attacks against the civilian population, as well as mass-scale targeted burnings.³⁵

Sexual violence

UN medics and other health workers said that dozens of women showed injuries consistent with violent sexual attacks among the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. The social stigma surrounding sexual violence prevented many victims from coming forward, but some survivors described the rape as being used as a “calculated tool of terror to force targeted populations to flee”. Many women said they were raped in front of their children; many were beaten before they were raped and/or gang raped; many had bite marks on their breasts and genitals. Doctors noted that the treated injuries suggested “more aggressive” attacks on women than previously seen [see *Reports*], despite the fewer reported cases.²⁵

Irine Loria – IOM protection officer for gender-based violence – said that the sexual violence this time appeared to be different in nature and more opportunistic: “Before it seems rape was being used as a tool. People were paraded naked in public, humiliated [see *February Bulletin*]... This time it appears it is more about pushing them out as fast as possible”.²⁶

Arakan State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Phone Tint dismissed accounts of sexual violence against Rohingya women saying “Look at those women who are making these claims - would anyone want to rape them?”²⁷

²⁵ Reuters (24 Sep 17) U.N. medics see evidence of rape in Myanmar army 'cleansing' campaign; Straits Time (24 Sep 17) Gang rape horrors haunt Rohingya refugees

²⁶ Straits Time (24 Sep 17) Gang rape horrors haunt Rohingya refugees

²⁷ BBC (11 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Seeing through the official story in Myanmar; BBC (06 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Suu Kyi says 'fake news helping terrorists'

²⁸ DVB (18 Sep 17) Arakanese woman publicly humiliated for being a 'traitor'

²⁹ The Irrawaddy (21 Sep 17) Sittwe Police Arrest 8 and Use Tear Gas to Disperse Mob Blocking Aid Shipment; The Bangkok Post (21 Sep 17) Myanmar Buddhist mob attacks aid shipment for Rohingya

³⁰ DVB (22 Sep 17) Bomb explodes at Buthidaung mosque

³¹ Reuters (11 Sep 17) U.N. brands Myanmar violence a 'textbook' example of ethnic cleansing

³² BBC (11 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: UN sees 'ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar

³³ Frontier Myanmar (14 Sep 17) UN Security Council calls for 'immediate steps' to end Rakhine violence

³⁴ HRW (25 Sep 17) Crimes against Humanity by Burmese Security Forces Against the Rohingya Muslim Population in Northern Rakhine State since August 25, 2017

³⁵ Amnesty International (14 Sep 17) Myanmar: Scorched-earth campaign fuels ethnic cleansing of Rohingya from Rakhine State

Burmese security forces entered villages and indiscriminately fired against the Rohingya residents.⁴² Some of the injured Rohingya refugees said they were hit while at home, while others said they were shot when running for safety from their villages or hiding from Burmese soldiers in the fields.⁴³

Refugees testified that as survivors fled, Burmese security forces and Buddhist mobs set fire to their houses.⁴⁴ Some of the injured recounted how the military burned down their homes while they were inside.⁴⁵ Other eyewitnesses said that soldiers burned their relatives alive.⁴⁶

The Burmese government repeatedly denied any abuse and claimed security forces were carrying out lawful counterterrorism operations. HRW South Asia Director Meenakshi Ganguly commented that “[l]awful operations against armed groups do not involve burning the local population out of their homes.”⁴⁷

Government's “terrorist” narrative

The Burmese government repeatedly denied any accusation of human rights violations committed by security forces. Dismissing these allegations as “fake news”, the authorities created a “terrorist” narrative that failed to take into account the testimonies of thousands of civilians trapped in the violence.⁴⁸ Authorities alleged that Rohingya militants and villagers burnt their own houses and planted landmines at the border, and avoided mentioning the many Rohingya asylum seekers fleeing into Bangladesh.⁴⁹

Arson, govt to take over burnt land

2 Sep: Satellite imagery showed the destruction of at least 450 buildings in the urban area of Maungdaw Town. Damage signatures were consistent with fire and concentrated in 2 areas inhabited by Rohingya [see *Reports*]. The State Counsellor Office Information Committee once more alleged that Rohingya militants burned the homes but did not provide evidence.³⁶

8-9 Sep: About 12 Muslim villages and 1 IDP camp were burned down in Rathedaung Township. It was unclear who set fire to the villages. Local sources reported that destroyed villages included Ah Htet Nan Yar – where 300 to 400 Rohingya who escaped other burnings had been sheltering – and Auk Nan Yar, some 65 km north of Sittwe.³⁷

11 Sep: The BBC reported that, during a government-organized visit to Maungdaw Township, ethnic Arakanese Buddhist men set fire to the Muslim village of Gawdu Thar Ya. One of the men admitted they torched the houses with the help of the police. However, Arakan State Minister for Security and Border Affairs Col Phone Tint claimed that “Bengali terrorists” had burned the houses of Rohingya who refused to offer one man per household as a fighter.³⁸

13 Sep: President’s Office spokesperson Zaw Htay confirmed that 176 villages (nearly 40%) of 471 villages targeted in clearance operations were empty, and at least 34 others partially abandoned.³⁹

19 Sep: HRW reported that, after the clearing of monsoon clouds on 16 September, new satellite imagery revealed 214 villages were burned, much greater than previously known.⁴⁰

27 Sep: Minister for Social Development, Relief and Resettlement Win Myat Aye reportedly said that the government will take over the burned land because, “according to the law, burnt land becomes government-managed land”. There was no mention of what access to their old villages any returning Rohingya could expect.⁴¹ An economic zone is planned for Maungdaw [see *Economy*].

³⁶ HRW (09 Sep 17) Burma: Satellite Images Show Urban Destruction

³⁷ Reuters (09 Sep 17) New fires ravage Rohingya villages in northwest Myanmar: sources; Reuters (10 Sep 17) After insurgents’ truce, Myanmar says ‘we don’t negotiate with terrorists’

³⁸ BBC (11 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Seeing through the official story in Myanmar; BBC (06 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Suu Kyi says ‘fake news helping terrorists’

³⁹ The Guardian (13 Sep 17) Myanmar says 40% of Rohingya villages targeted by army are now empty

⁴⁰ HRW (15 Sep 17) Burma: Military Torches Homes Near Border; HRW (19 Sep 17) Burma: Satellite Imagery Shows Mass Destruction

⁴¹ Reuters (27 Sep 17) Government will take over burned Myanmar land: minister

⁴² Amnesty International (14 Sep 17) Myanmar: Scorched-earth campaign fuels ethnic cleansing of Rohingya from Rakhine State

⁴³ HRW (08 Sep 17) Burma: Rohingya Describe Military Atrocities

⁴⁴ BBC (02 Sep 17) Myanmar conflict: Bangladesh police allow Rohingya to flee; HRW (08 Sep 17) Burma: Rohingya Describe Military Atrocities; Amnesty International (14 Sep 17) Myanmar: Scorched-earth campaign fuels ethnic cleansing of Rohingya from Rakhine State

⁴⁵ Al Jazeera (25 Sep 17) Inside the hospital treating Rohingya refugees

⁴⁶ CNN (02 Sep 17) Rohingya refugees: Why I fled

⁴⁷ HRW (08 Sep 17) Burma: Rohingya Describe Military Atrocities

⁴⁸ BBC (06 Sep 17) Myanmar conflict: The view from Yangon; Reuters (09 Sep 17) New fires ravage Rohingya villages in northwest Myanmar: sources

⁴⁹ BBC (06 Sep 17) Myanmar conflict: The view from Yangon; Reuters (06 Sep 17) Exclusive – Myanmar laying landmines near Bangladesh border: government sources in Dhaka; Reuters (06 Sep 17) Exclusive: Bangladesh protests over Myanmar’s suspected landmine use near border

Landmines

9 Sep: Amnesty International (AI) reported that Burmese security forces planted internationally banned antipersonnel landmines along the border with Bangladesh. In the previous week, landmines had seriously injured at least 3 civilians, including 2 children, and killed a man.⁵⁰ Two new landmine incidents were reported on 10 Sep, offering further evidence that security forces deliberately targeted locations that Rohingya refugees use as crossing points.⁵¹

On 27 August, the State Counsellor's Office Information Committee enforced the use of the term "terrorists" and warned of actions against media describing the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) as "insurgents".⁵² On 5 September, Aung San Suu Kyi commented that "terrorists" were to blame for "a huge iceberg of misinformation calculated to create a lot of problems between different countries", while the Burmese government was allegedly protecting all the people in Arakan State in the best way possible.⁵³ On 10 September, President's Office spokesperson Zaw Htay dismissed a month-long unilateral ceasefire declared

by ARSA to enable the delivery of aid to thousands of IDPs in Arakan State, writing on Twitter that they had "no policy to negotiate with terrorists".⁵⁴

With international pressure mounting, on 11 September, the Burmese Foreign Affairs Ministry said Burma shared the global concerns at the displacement and suffering of "all communities" in Arakan State. However, they maintained that terrorists were to blame for the violence, alleging that the 25 August attacks were deliberately timed to sabotage the release of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State – also known as Annan Commission [see *August Bulletin*].⁵⁵

Social media disinformation propaganda

Since 25 August, anti-Rohingya and anti-Muslim rhetoric has been on the rise, with misleading narratives being presented as part of highly divisive and dangerous propaganda.⁵⁶

Ambiguous information and pictures have been presented by both sides of the competing narrative, increasing tensions. No less than President's Office spokesperson Zaw Htay posted an altered image on his Twitter account. The post claimed to show Muslims setting fire to their houses, but further investigation revealed that the people pictured were Hindus staying at a government shelter in Maungdaw Township.⁵⁷ Similar photos went viral on social media, and were distributed among journalists on a government-organized visit to Maungdaw Township. International journalists concluded that "they had faked the photos to make it look as though Muslims were doing the burning".⁵⁸

On 24-25 September, the Tatmadaw reportedly discovered 45 bodies in mass graves near Yebawkya village, Maungdaw Township. Hours after the bodies were unearthed, the Office of the Commander-in-Chief said that the victims were Hindus "cruelly and violently killed by ARSA extremist Bengali terrorists". The State Counsellor's Office Information Committee echoed these accusations.⁵⁹ Rights groups heavily criticized the quick conclusion and accused the Burmese government of complicity in the dissemination of fake news about the conflict.⁶⁰

The social media campaign hardened attitudes on both sides, ultimately worsening the conflict. The power of this misleading information has been fuelled by the government's denial of access to Arakan

⁵⁰ Amnesty International (09 Sep 17) Myanmar Army landmines along border with Bangladesh pose deadly threat to fleeing Rohingya

⁵¹ Amnesty International (10 Sep 17) Myanmar: New landmine blasts point to deliberate targeting of Rohingya

⁵² Reuters (27 Aug 17) Gunfire heard near Bangladesh border as thousands flee Myanmar violence; BBC (06 Sep 17) Myanmar conflict: The view from Yangon

⁵³ The Telegraph (06 Sep 17) Aung San Suu Kyi lashes out at 'misinformation' from 'terrorists' as 126,000 Rohingya flee Burma; Reuters (09 Sep 17) New fires ravage Rohingya villages in northwest Myanmar: sources

⁵⁴ Reuters (10 Sep 17) After insurgents' truce, Myanmar says 'we don't negotiate with terrorists'

⁵⁵ The Guardian (11 Sep 17) Myanmar treatment of Rohingya looks like 'textbook ethnic cleansing', says UN

⁵⁶ The Quint (25 Sep 17) Anti-Rohingya Propaganda Relying On Fake Images Of Children

⁵⁷ The Irrawaddy (22 Sep 17) Analysis: Media, Misinformation and Misleading Photos in Rakhine Crisis

⁵⁸ BBC (11 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Seeing through the official story in Myanmar

⁵⁹ Coconuts Yangon (25 Sep 17) Myanmar army says 28 Hindus found in Maungdaw mass graves; Coconuts Yangon (29 Sep 17) Myanmar is 'playing politics' with slain Hindus: HRW

⁶⁰ Coconuts Yangon (29 Sep 17) Myanmar is 'playing politics' with slain Hindus: HRW

State for independent observers, including the fact-finding mission established by the UN Human Rights Council to investigate the allegations of human rights abuse in the country.⁶¹

Aung San Suu Kyi's national address

On 19 September, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi gave a much anticipated national address on the crisis in Arakan State, raising international concern and criticism. Many of her claims seemed in conflict with the Annan Commission's final report and other independent accounts.⁶²

AUNG SAN SUU KYI	THE ANNAN COMMISSION AND OTHER INDEPENDENT SOURCES
<p>"We want to find out why this exodus is happening".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annan Commission: Several issues were identified over the refugee exodus, including the lack of citizenship for Rohingya, economic challenges, and military action on Arakan State.⁶³ ➤ 31 Aug, UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee: "The situation had worsened considerably (...), with credible multiple [sic] sources reporting violations which include Rohingyas being indiscriminately killed and injured by military gunfire, even while fleeing".⁶⁴ ➤ 11 Sep, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein: The UN received "multiple reports and satellite imagery of Burmese security forces and local militia burning Rohingya villages, and consistent accounts of extrajudicial killings, including shooting fleeing civilians".⁶⁵ ➤ 19 Sep, HRW: Between 25 Aug and 16 Sep, 214 villages in Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships were burned down.⁶⁶
<p>Burma "does not fear international scrutiny". Monitors are invited to "study the peaceful areas for themselves".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annan Commission's report: Humanitarian and media access to northern Arakan State is highly restricted.⁶⁷ ➤ 20 Jan, UNSR Yanghee Lee: "There is one word that has hung heavily on my mind during this visit – reprisals. (...) In one case, an individual directly told me they thought they would be arrested following our conversation".⁶⁸ ➤ 29 Jun, Burmese government: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs ordered embassies not to issue visas to the UN fact-finding mission members.⁶⁹ ➤ 4 Sep, Amnesty International: Aid activities have been restricted in Arakan State since early August, and suspended since 25 August.⁷⁰
<p>"After several months of seemingly quiet and peace, on 25 August, 30 police outposts were attacked".</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 21 Jul, UNSR Yanghee Lee: "The general situation for the Rohingya has hardly improved since my last visit in January, and has become further complicated in the north of Rakhine. I continue to receive reports of violations allegedly committed by security forces".⁷¹ ➤ 11 Aug, UNSR Yanghee Lee: The military boost of security in Arakan State, which took place on 10 August, "is a cause for major concern".⁷²
<p>Since 5 September, there have been "no armed clashes and there have been no</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 8-9 Sep, Reuters: Dozen Muslim villages and one IDP camp were burned down in Rathedaung Township.⁷³ ➤ 11 Sep, BBC: Journalists on a government-organized visit saw Arakanese men setting fire to the Muslim village of Gawdu Thar Ya, Maungdaw.⁷⁴

⁶¹ BBC (06 Sep 17) Myanmar conflict: The view from Yangon; The Telegraph (06 Sep 17) Aung San Suu Kyi lashes out at 'misinformation' from 'terrorists' as 126,000 Rohingya flee Burma; OHCHR (21 Jul 17) End of Mission Statement by Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

⁶² CNN (20 Sep 17) 5 dubious claims Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi made in her speech; The Guardian (20 Sep 17) Fact check: Aung San Suu Kyi's speech on the Rohingya crisis; BBC (20 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Suu Kyi speech criticised by global leaders

⁶³ Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (24 Aug 17) Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine- Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State

⁶⁴ UN News (31 Aug 17) Myanmar: Worsening cycle of violence in Rakhine must be broken urgently, UN expert warns

⁶⁵ BBC (11 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: UN sees 'ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar

⁶⁶ HRW (19 Sep 17) Burma: Satellite Imagery Shows Mass Destruction

⁶⁷ Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (24 Aug 17) Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine- Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State

⁶⁸ OHCHR (20 Jan 17) End of Mission Statement by Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

⁶⁹ Myanmar Times (30 Jun 17) No entry to UNHRC fact-finding mission in Rakhine; RFA (29 Jun 17) Myanmar Says it Will Not Grant Visas For UN Fact-finding Mission on Rakhine

⁷⁰ Amnesty International (4 Sep 17) Myanmar: Restrictions on international aid putting thousands at risk

⁷¹ OHCHR (21 Jul 17) End of Mission Statement by Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

⁷² UN News (11 Aug 17) UN rights expert urges restraint in security operation in Myanmar's Rakhine state

⁷³ Reuters (10 Sep 17) After insurgents' truce, Myanmar says 'we don't negotiate with terrorists'; Reuters (09 Sep 17) New fires ravage Rohingya villages in northwest Myanmar: sources

clearance operations”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 15 Sep, HRW: “The Burmese military is deliberately burning ethnic Rohingya villages near the Bangladesh border”.⁷⁵ ➤ 19 Sep, HRW: Between 25 Aug and 16 Sep, 214 villages in Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships have been burned down.⁷⁶
The “great majority” of Muslims stayed in the conflict areas and “more than 50% of the villages of Muslims are intact”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ 7 Sep, UNSR Yanghee Lee: “More than 1,000 people, mostly from the Rohingya community, may have been killed”.⁷⁷ ➤ 19 Sep, HRW: Satellite imagery showed the destruction of 214 villages in Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships, with more than 90% of the structures in each village damaged.⁷⁸ ➤ 26 Sep, UN: An estimated 480,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Burma to Bangladesh since 25 August.⁷⁹
“All people in Arakan State have access to health care services and education”.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annan Commission: Restrictions to movement have resulted in “a wide range of detrimental effects, including reduced access to education, health and services. (...) Access to health is particularly low within the Muslim community. In some areas, Muslim face discriminative obstacles that prevent available lifesaving services from being accessed.”⁸⁰
Burma is willing to take back refugees “at any time” subject to a “verification” process.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Annan Commission: Approximately 4,000 Muslims out of 1 million stateless Muslims in Arakan State were granted citizenship to date. Many are reluctant to submit their documents for fear of being left undocumented. Others have lost their previous documents.⁸¹ ➤ 1 Jul, UNSR Yanghee Lee: “There (...) appear to be incidents of Rohingya being targeted by unknown assailants for applying to be verified as a citizen”.⁸²

Other responses

Despite hostility growing throughout the entire country and several towns imposing official restrictions on Muslims,⁸³ Karen Women's Organization condemned the violence committed by the Tatmadaw against the Rohingya civilians. In a statement issued 18 September, they urged national and international authorities to act and put an end to the military impunity for human rights abuse.⁸⁴

On 29 September, Bangladeshi Buddhist leaders declared “we, the Buddhists outside Myanmar, are saying that what Myanmar is doing is a human rights violation ... and the Buddhist religion does not support it at all. We cannot support it as human beings. The religion says every living creature of the universe should be happy and the Rohingyas are not excluded from living creatures”.⁸⁵

HUMAN RIGHTS

Myanmar People's Tribunal releases final verdict

On 22 September, the Permanent People's Tribunal found that Burma was guilty of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, stating “[t]he State of Myanmar is fully responsible for genocide against the Rohingya people, and is further responsible not only for genocidal intent against the Kachin and the Muslim minority, but also and more specifically for crimes of war against the Kachin and crimes against humanity against the Kachin and the Muslim groups”.⁸⁶

⁷⁴ BBC (11 Sep 17) Rohingya crisis: Seeing through the official story in Myanmar

⁷⁵ HRW (15 Sep 17) Burma: Military Torches Homes Near Border

⁷⁶ HRW (19 Sep 17) Burma: Satellite Imagery Shows Mass Destruction

⁷⁷ Frontier Myanmar (08 Sept 17) Myanmar violence may have killed more than 1,000: UN rapporteur

⁷⁸ HRW (19 Sep 17) Burma: Satellite Imagery Shows Mass Destruction

⁷⁹ The Economic Times (27 Sep 17) Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh now 700,000 plus: UN

⁸⁰ Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (24 Aug 17) Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine- Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State

⁸¹ Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (24 Aug 17) Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine- Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State

⁸² OHCHR (21 Jul 17) End of Mission Statement by Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

⁸³ Coconuts Yangon (12 Sep 17) ‘Muslim-free zones’ are on the rise in Myanmar: BHRN; Coconuts Yangon (26 Sep 17) Muslims can no longer travel freely in Kayin State

⁸⁴ Karen Women's Organization (18 Sep 17) Karen Women's Organisation Press Statement on Burmese Military Persecution of the Rohingya people

⁸⁵ Channel News Asia (29 Sep 17) Bangladesh's Buddhists throw support behind Rohingyas despite lingering fears

⁸⁶ People's Tribunal on Myanmar (22 Sep 17) Preliminary judgment and dispositions

The Rome-based body is a non-binding organization designed to expose serious crimes not addressed by other established bodies [see *March Bulletin*].⁸⁷ The 7-member panel tribunal, featuring legal experts as its judges, called together all the parties concerned. It listened to individual and expert witnesses and offered the defendants the possibility to make their own arguments heard. No representative of the Burmese government attended although they were invited to participate.⁸⁸

The Permanent People's Tribunal issued 17 recommendations to foster peace and human rights in Burma, urging the Burmese government to end the violence, grant humanitarian and media access to conflict areas, ensure that all people are considered full citizens, abolish the military representation in Parliament, amend the 2008 Constitution, and prosecute the perpetrators of human rights violations.⁸⁹

Tatmadaw drops charges against journalists

On 30 September, defense lawyer Khin Maung Myin confirmed that Bahan Township Court dropped the charges against The Voice Daily's chief editor Kyaw Min Swe and columnist Kyaw Zwa Naing under both the Media Law and Section 66(d) of the Telecommunications Law after the Tatmadaw withdrew the cases.⁹⁰ The 2 journalists were accused of defaming the Tatmadaw by publishing a satirical article on Burma's armed conflict and peace process [see *June Bulletin*].

On 15 September, Hsipaw Township Court dropped charges of unlawful association against 3 journalists from The Irrawaddy and Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB) and 3 other men who were arrested with them. The journalists were detained in Hsipaw Prison for 67 days. They were arrested while covering a drug-burning event organized by the Ta'ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) in northern Shan State to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking [see *June Bulletin*]. The lawyer of The Irrawaddy's Lawi Weng said that the court dropped the case because the TNLA is engaged in peace talks with the government.⁹¹

Burmese journalists arrested in Bangladesh while covering Rohingya crisis

On 7 September, photo-journalist Minzayar Oo and his assistant Hkun Lat were arrested while on assignment in Cox's Bazar for the German magazine GEO to cover the Rohingya refugee crisis [see *Key Story*]. The police said that the charges against them include spreading "false information" and "false impersonation" because they entered Bangladesh on tourist visas instead of journalist visas. Cox's Bazar police chief said that they are also charged with spying for "collecting information on the Rohingya for Myanmar". On 22 September, the journalists were released on bail but are still facing trial on all three charges and thus, cannot leave Bangladesh.⁹²

MILITARY

International engagement with the Tatmadaw in the wake of Rohingya crisis

12 Sep: US Senator John McCain, the chair of the Senate Armed Services Committee, announced his decision to abandon legislative plans to support expanded military cooperation between the US and Burma because of Burma's treatment of the Rohingya.⁹³

19 Sep: United Kingdom's (UK) Prime Minister Theresa May announced that the UK will end all engagement with the Tatmadaw until military action against civilians in Arakan/Rakhine state ceased.⁹⁴

⁸⁷ The Irrawaddy (09 Mar 17) People's Tribunal Emphasizes Solidarity Across Ethnic, Religious Lines

⁸⁸ People's Tribunal on Myanmar (22 Sep 17) Preliminary judgment and dispositions

⁸⁹ People's Tribunal on Myanmar (22 Sep 17) 17 Recommendations of the Peoples' Tribunal On Myanmar

⁹⁰ DVB (30 Sep 17) Military drops remaining charges against The Voice Daily duo

⁹¹ The Irrawaddy (15 Sep 17) Court Drops Charges Against Three Journalists

⁹² Reporters Without Borders (25 Sep 17) Two Burmese journalists arrested in Bangladesh while covering Rohingya exodus

⁹³ Frontier Myanmar (14 Sep 17) US Senate panel chairman dumps plan to expand cooperation with Tatmadaw

⁹⁴ The Guardian (19 Sep) UK to suspend training of Burmese military over treatment of Rohingya

On 20 September, the Tatmadaw said it would recall the officers as soon as possible and will “never, ever send any trainees to Britain (in the future)”.⁹⁵

21 Sep: During a meeting between Burma’s navy commander-in-chief Admiral Tin Aung San and Indian Defence Minister Nirmala Sitaraman and the chiefs of India’s army, navy and air force, Indian officials said that India is considering supplying arms to Burma’s government to show support.⁹⁶

27 Sep: Israel’s High Court ruled on a petition against Israel’s sales of weapons to Burma/Myanmar [see *January Bulletin*]. However, the court decision must remain a secret because the judges hearing the case issued a gag order on it at the request of the state.⁹⁷ The petitioners pointed out that Israel was the only Western state supplying weapons to the country. On the other hand, the lawyer representing the state argued that the court should not interfere in Israel’s foreign relations.⁹⁸

28 Sep: US Ambassador to the United Nations Nikki Haley called on countries to suspend providing weapons to Burma until the Tatmadaw puts sufficient accountability measures in place.⁹⁹

29 Sep: Australian Department of Defence spokesperson said that Australia will continue its \$300,000 military cooperation program with Burma to “promote professionalism and adherence to international laws.”¹⁰⁰

ETHNIC AFFAIRS AND CONFLICT

Armed conflict continues in northern Shan State

Amid growing international concern over the crisis in Arakan State [see *Key Story* and *International relations*], the Tatmadaw escalated its offensive in northern Shan State where the Ta’ang National Liberation Army (TNLA) maintains a presence. Ethnic leaders said that the Tatmadaw reinforced its troops in the area, increasing its LID 88, 77 and 33, as well as 2 military operations commands. Rights groups reported several military abuses against civilians trapped in the violence [see *Reports*].¹⁰¹

31 Aug & 2 Sep: Troops from Tatmadaw LIB 216 ordered trucks of local villagers to carry their supplies, and forced villagers to guide them between villages in Ho Pong Township [see *Reports*].¹⁰²

10 Sep: Soldiers from Tatmadaw LIB 514 arbitrarily arrested, tied up, and severely tortured a village secretary of Nam Khok village, Nar Pong tract, Ho Pong Township [see *Reports*].¹⁰³

10 Sep: Soldiers from Tatmadaw and the local Nam Pwng pro-government militia started indiscriminately shelling and shooting after a land mine exploded near Wan Loi Yoi, Pa Karng tract, Mong Yai Township. All the residents of Wan Loi Yoi fled their houses [see *Reports*].¹⁰⁴ After the incident, Tatmadaw detained 3 civilians upon suspicion of unlawful association. A civilian was beaten and forced to carry military bags. They were released after a community elder vouched for them.¹⁰⁵

11 Sep: The Tatmadaw clashed with TNLA Battalion 987 near Loi Ka Lay village, Kyaukme Township.¹⁰⁶

⁹⁵ GNLM (21 Sep 17) Tatmadaw: ‘We will never again send trainees to Britain’

⁹⁶ Reuters (21 Sep 17) India presses on with Myanmar defense supplies in show of support

⁹⁷ Mizzima (28 Sep 17) Israel’s High Court rules on Myanmar military sales, decision to remain secret

⁹⁸ Haaretz (26 Sep 17) Israel Refuses to Stop Arms Sales to Myanmar, Despite Its Campaign of Rape, Torture and Massacres Against the Rohingya

⁹⁹ Reuters (29 Sep 17) U.S. says countries should suspend providing weapons to Myanmar

¹⁰⁰ ABC News (29 Sep 17) Australia to continue military training in Myanmar despite ethnic cleansing allegations

¹⁰¹ SHAN (19 Sep 17) Armed Conflict Resumes in Northern Shan State: After a month lull, conflict continues between the TNLA and Tatmadaw

¹⁰² SHRF (21 Sep 17) Ongoing torture, killing, arbitrary arrests during midnight raids by Burma Army in Ho Pong township

¹⁰³ SHRF (21 Sep 17) Ongoing torture, killing, arbitrary arrests during midnight raids by Burma Army in Ho Pong township

¹⁰⁴ SHRF (14 Sep 17) Indiscriminate Burma Army shelling, shooting cause 300 villagers to flee in Mong Yai, northern Shan State

¹⁰⁵ The Irrawaddy (19 Sep 17) TNLA Accuses Myanmar Army of Abusing Civilians

¹⁰⁶ SHAN (19 Sep 17) Armed Conflict Resumes in Northern Shan State: After a month lull, conflict continues between the TNLA and Tatmadaw

13 Sep: Fighting broke out between the Tatmadaw and TNLA troops in 3 separate locations of Namtu, Namhsan and Kyaukme Townships.¹⁰⁷

17 Sep: The Tatmadaw arrested 5 civilians in Namkham Township, releasing 3 of them the same day and the other 2 on 18 September.¹⁰⁸

18 Sep: The Tatmadaw and TNLA clashed in Kutkai Township.¹⁰⁹

TNLA officials said that during the past few months except for a month in August and early September, sporadic armed engagement has been the order of the day with both the Tatmadaw and the Restoration Council of Shan State/Shan State Army-South (RCSS/SSA-S) – a signatory of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement (NCA).¹¹⁰

In a related development, on 11 September, Ta'ang and Shan leaders met in Chiang Mai, Thailand, to discuss and resolve the inter-ethnic conflict. Shan State parliamentarian Tar Hla Pe said that the meeting was the “first step in finding solutions to help the local people”.¹¹¹

Tatmadaw soldiers confess to murdering 3 Kachin civilians

On 19 September, 6 Tatmadaw soldiers reportedly confessed to murdering Maran Brang Seng, 22, Nhkum Gam Awng, 31, and Labya Naw Hkum, 27 – Kachin internally displaced persons (IDPs) living in Mai Hkwang IDP camp, Mansi Township. The 3 men were arrested by Tatmadaw LIB 319 while collecting firewood on 25 May. Three days later, villagers found their dead bodies with knife and bullet wounds [see *May Bulletin*].¹¹²

DISPLACEMENT

India defends deportation plan

On 18 September, after an appeal was filed with the Indian Supreme Court to challenge the Indian government's plan to deport all the 40,000 Rohingya in the country [see *August Bulletin*], the government said that it had evidence showing that Rohingya have ties to “terror organizations”.¹¹³

On 21 September, Indian Home Minister Rajnath Singh said: “The Rohingya are not refugees... No Rohingya has received asylum in India nor has anyone applied for it. They are illegal immigrants.”¹¹⁴ He spoke at a seminar organized by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) which took up the case of the Rohingya on humanitarian grounds but refused to comment on the minister's remarks.¹¹⁵

Minister Rajnath Singh also said that India would not violate any international laws by deporting the Rohingya, as the country was not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention.¹¹⁶ Rights groups responded that India is legally bound by the UN principle of “non-refoulement” – meaning that asylum seekers cannot be deported to life-threatening places.¹¹⁷

¹⁰⁷ SHAN (19 Sep 17) Armed Conflict Resumes in Northern Shan State: After a month lull, conflict continues between the TNLA and Tatmadaw

¹⁰⁸ The Irrawaddy (19 Sep 17) TNLA Accuses Myanmar Army of Abusing Civilians

¹⁰⁹ SHAN (19 Sep 17) Armed Conflict Resumes in Northern Shan State: After a month lull, conflict continues between the TNLA and Tatmadaw

¹¹⁰ SHAN (19 Sep 17) Armed Conflict Resumes in Northern Shan State: After a month lull, conflict continues between the TNLA and Tatmadaw

¹¹¹ The Irrawaddy (12 Sep 17) Leaders Meet to Resolve Shan State Conflict

¹¹² Network Media Group (20 Sep 17) Tatmadaw officials admit to killing Kachin villagers

¹¹³ Al Jazeera (18 Sep 17) India: Rohingya have 'terror' ties

¹¹⁴ The Indian Express (21 Sep 17) Rohingya are not refugees, nor have they taken asylum... They are illegal immigrants, says Rajnath Singh

¹¹⁵ Hindustan Times (21 Sep 17) Rohingya Muslims are illegal immigrants, deporting them not against law: Rajnath

¹¹⁶ The Indian Express (21 Sep 17) Rohingya are not refugees, nor have they taken asylum... They are illegal immigrants, says Rajnath Singh

¹¹⁷ BBC (25 Sep 17) Are the Rohingya India's 'favourite whipping boy'?

Related developments:

Sri Lanka: Amid a total rejection of Rohingya asylum-seekers by the Sri Lankan government, communal tension increased. The capital, Colombo, saw many rallies demanding the government not accept any Rohingya refugees.¹¹⁸ On 26 September, Sri Lankan monks and extremist nationalist protesters forced 31 Rohingya Muslim asylum-seekers to flee a UN safe house in Colombo. Akmeemana Dayarathne – a Buddhist monk who led the protest – told the gathering “These Rohingyans are a group of terrorists. They have slaughtered our Buddhist monks in Myanmar.”¹¹⁹

Thailand: The government announced that its navy will push Rohingya refugees back out to sea as fears grow of a new wave of boat people across Asia's waters. The Internal Security Operations Command, chaired by PM Gen Prayut Chan-o-cha, announced authorities will enforce a 3-step action plan: intercepting Rohingya boats that come too close to the Thai coast; providing vital supplies on the condition the occupants agree to further travel to Malaysia or Indonesia; seizing any boat that manages to land on Thai shores, and putting those men, women and children into indefinite detention.¹²⁰

HUMANITARIAN

Shan and Kachin IDPs call for continued aid

Starting October, refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in Shan and Kachin States will no longer be able to receive food support [see *August Bulletin*].¹²¹

On 30 August, Shan Human Rights Foundation (SHRF) called for continued humanitarian support for camps along the Burma-Thailand border for 6 camps located near or at Mae Hong Son province, Chiang Mai province, and Chiang Rai province.¹²²

On 25 September, a spokesperson for the “rescue committee” established by churches in Tanai, Kachin State to aid the displaced said that IDPs in the area will face a shortage of rations by the end of the month.¹²³ On 29 September, the National League for Democracy’s (NLD) newly-formed Central Women’s Committee announced plans to visit Kachin IDP camps in Myitkyina, Waingmaw, Mohnyin, and Mogaung townships on 4 October for its first mission. The committee said that its members chose Kachin State over Arakan/Rakhine State because Kachin IDPs “are in a forgotten situation”.¹²⁴

ECONOMY

Arakan State government signs MoU for economic zone in Maungdaw

On 20 September, it was reported that Arakan/Rakhine State government signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Naff River Galaxy Infrastructure Development Group to develop a proposed economic zone in Maungdaw, the location of current anti-Rohingya atrocities. The company was a consortium of “about seven” businesses from Maungdaw and Rangoon/Yangon.¹²⁵

Land conflict epidemic: 1,000 families displaced by Myohta Industrial Park

On 27 September, the International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH) warned of a land conflict epidemic as a result of growing investments and inadequate laws. Citing the Myohta Industrial Park project which displaced more than 1,000 households from 14 villages in Ngazun Township, Mandalay

¹¹⁸ Asian Times (26 Sep 17) Sri Lanka's communal divide takes toll on Rohingya refugees

¹¹⁹ Reuters (27 Sep 17) Protesters force Rohingya refugees to flee Sri Lanka safe house

¹²⁰ Human Rights Watch (22 Sep 17) Thailand Needs to Stop Inhumane Navy 'Push-Backs'

¹²¹ SHAN (05 Sep 17) Termination of Humanitarian Aid: Shan refugees in the limbo; The Irrawaddy (31 Aug 17) Faced with Aid Cuts, Shan IDPs Call for Continued Support; DVB (25 Sep 17) Tanai IDPs face looming food shortages, aid workers say

¹²² SHAN (05 Sep 17) Termination of Humanitarian Aid: Shan refugees in the limbo

¹²³ DVB (25 Sep 17) Tanai IDPs face looming food shortages, aid workers say

¹²⁴ The Irrawaddy (29 Sep 17) NLD Central Women's Committee to Support Kachin IDPs

¹²⁵ Frontier Myanmar (20 Sep 17) Crisis puts more pressure on Rakhine's troubled economy

Region, FIDH revealed that local farmers were offered compensation at 6% of the market price of their land. Those who refused to sell were threatened with arrest and imprisonment¹²⁶ [see *Reports*].

On 28 September, Mandalay Myotha Industrial Development (MMID) Chairman Aung Win Khaing said that the involvement of World Bank and the International Finance Corporation (IFC) was proof that MMID adhered to its human rights responsibilities in the industrial park development. On 29 September, IFC said that “IFC is not investing in the industrial park being developed by the MMID”.¹²⁷

Other developments:

18 Sep: It was reported that Myanmar Metals, a mining firm listed on the Australian Stock Exchange, is in the process of acquiring mining rights for Shan State’s Bawdwin mining site amid the drug and arms trade, as well as the ongoing conflict in Shan State [see *Ethnic Affairs and Conflict*]. Myanmar Metals described Bawdwin mining site as “one of the largest underdeveloped” zinc, lead, silver, and copper deposits in the world.¹²⁸

Sep 19: Thailand's Ministry of Commerce plans to offer a loan of B4.5 billion (US\$136 million) for the construction of a 2-lane road connecting the Dawei Special Economic Zone (SEZ) to Thailand. As it will be government loan, it must and will be discussed in National Parliament.¹²⁹

NATURAL RESOURCES

Thai Human Rights Commission hears complaint against coal mine in Southern Burma

On 11 September, the National Human Rights Commission of Thailand (NHRCT) heard a complaint against the Ben Chaung Coal Mine located in the Thanintharyi Region, Burma/Myanmar. Representatives of indigenous Karen communities alleged that 3 Thai companies’ mine operations have harmed the health and livelihood of the local communities. Waste emitted from the mine resulted in illness and polluted local water supplies, killing crops and fish. Livelihoods were also affected by the illegal confiscation of agricultural land to support mining activities.¹³⁰

After the initial hearing, NHRCT will conduct field visits in cooperation with Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC). They would then make a report and submit it to the Thai government.¹³¹

PARLIAMENT WATCH

Anti-Hate Speech Law draft submitted to Parliament

On 26 September, Burma/Myanmar’s Ministry of Religious Affairs and Culture submitted the initial draft of an Anti-Hate Speech Law to the National Parliament, where it will be discussed. In 2016, the Burmese Interfaith Friendship Group submitted the original Anti-Hate Speech draft law, which had been redrafted since. Interfaith Group representative Hla Tun said that those who share hate speech online or deliver public speeches that incite hatred would be targeted by the new law.¹³²

¹²⁶ Frontier Myanmar (29 Sep 17) Outcry over Mandalay megaproject after more than 1,000 families displaced; Myanmar Times (28 Sep 17) Developer brushes off concerns about Myotha Industrial Park

¹²⁷ Frontier Myanmar (29 Sep 17) Outcry over Mandalay megaproject after more than 1,000 families displaced

¹²⁸ The Irrawaddy (18 Sep 17) Analysis: Australian Miner Eyes Opportunity Amid Conflict in Shan State

¹²⁹ Eleven Myanmar (19 Sep 17) Myanmar parliament to Thai loan for Dawei SEZ road

¹³⁰ Karen News (17 Sep 17) Thai Human Rights Commission Holds Hearing on Coal Mine Pollution and HR Violations in Southern Burma

¹³¹ Karen News (17 Sep 17) Thai Human Rights Commission Holds Hearing on Coal Mine Pollution and HR Violations in Southern Burma

¹³² DVB (26 Sep 17) Anti-Hate Speech draft law submitted to parliament

International condemnation of the violence in Arakan State

The reports of atrocities committed by Burmese security forces in northern Arakan State [see *Key story*] provoked a chorus of international criticism:

11 Sep: UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein called the situation in Arakan State “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing” [see *Key story*].¹³³

13 Sep: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the mass displacement of Rohingya amounted to ethnic cleansing and urged Burmese authorities “to suspend military action, end the violence, uphold the rule of law and recognise the right of return of all those who had to leave the country”.¹³⁴

13 Sep: The entire UN Security Council, including China, expressed concern about excessive force during security operations in Arakan State and called for “immediate steps” to end the violence. It was the first time in 9 years that the Security Council was able to agree on a common stance on Burma.¹³⁵

14 Sep: The European Parliament (EP) adopted a resolution on Burma, strongly condemning the attacks in Arakan State. The resolution urged Burmese security forces to “cease the killings, harassment and rape of Rohingya people, and the burning of their homes”. It called for independent monitors and aid agencies “to be granted access to all conflict areas and displaced people, without discrimination”. It requested Aung San Suu Kyi “to condemn unequivocally all incitement to racial or religious hatred and to combat social discrimination and hostilities against the Rohingya minority”.¹³⁶

14 Sep: EP’s International Trade Committee postponed its visit to Burma “as it was clear that the current political and human rights' situation in the country...does not allow for a fruitful discussion on a potential EU-Myanmar investment agreement. It is clear that under these conditions, the ratification of an investment agreement with Myanmar is not possible”.¹³⁷

18 Sep: In a notable departure from the international outcry, the Indian government said it had evidence showing some Rohingya have ties to “terror organizations” and pose a security threat that justifies their mass deportation [see *Displacement*].¹³⁸

19 Sep: Marzuki Darusman, head of the UN fact-finding mission on Burma [see *March Bulletin*], said that investigators were gathering evidence from refugees and medics in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh. He noted that initial information “reflects in general the reporting of the international media so far on what is happening there”.¹³⁹

19 Sep: State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi cancelled her attendance at the UN General Assembly.¹⁴⁰ UK, US, French, Canadian and Australian leaders urged Aung San Suu Kyi to put an end to the violence, and emphasized the need for humanitarian access.¹⁴¹

20 Sep: At a meeting of the UN Security Council, US Vice President Mike Pence said that President Donald Trump suggests taking “strong and swift action” to end the violence against Rohingya.¹⁴²

¹³³ Reuters (11 Sep 17) U.N. brands Myanmar violence a 'textbook' example of ethnic cleansing

¹³⁴ Frontier Myanmar (14 Sep 17) UN Security Council calls for 'immediate steps' to end Rakhine violence

¹³⁵ Frontier Myanmar (14 Sep 17) UN Security Council calls for 'immediate steps' to end Rakhine violence

¹³⁶ European Parliament (14 Sep 17) European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2017 on Myanmar, in particular the situation of Rohingyas (2017/2838(RSP))

¹³⁷ European Parliament (14 Sep 17) European Parliament resolution of 14 September 2017 on Myanmar, in particular the situation of Rohingyas (2017/2838(RSP))

¹³⁸ Al Jazeera (18 Sep 17) India: Rohingya have 'terror' ties

¹³⁹ Reuters (19 Sep 17) U.N. starting to gather testimony on Myanmar violations: investigator

¹⁴⁰ Reuters (13 Sep 17) U.N. chief, Security Council call on Myanmar to end violence

¹⁴¹ Al Jazeera (19 Sep 17) Suu Kyi urged to condemn violence against the Rohingya; The Guardian (19 Sep 17) Julie Bishop says Rohingya must be protected despite 'cash for return' policy

¹⁴² Reuters (20 Sep 17) Trump urges 'strong and swift' U.N. action to end Rohingya crisis

22 Sep: The Permanent People’s Tribunal concluded that genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes have been committed in Burma [see *Human Rights*].¹⁴³

24 Sep: Malaysia “disassociated itself” from the statement issued by the ASEAN Chairman condemning the attacks on Burmese security forces and “all acts of violence which resulted in loss of civilian lives, destruction of homes and displacement of large numbers of people”. Malaysia said that the statement misrepresented the “reality of the situation” and did not identify the Rohingya as one of the affected communities.¹⁴⁴

27 Sep: UK Foreign Ministry Mark Field met Aung San Suu Kyi and “strongly emphasised the need for Burma to heed the Security Council’s call to end violence and allow humanitarian access”.¹⁴⁵

28 Sep: During a UN Security Council public meeting on Burma, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said that the violence in Arakan State had spiraled into the “world’s fastest developing refugee emergency, a humanitarian and human rights nightmare”. He warned that “the crisis has generated multiple implications for neighboring States and the larger region, including the risk of inter-communal strife. We should not be surprised if decades of discrimination and double standards in treatment of the Rohingya create openings for radicalization”.¹⁴⁶ However, the UN Security Council failed to agree on a joint resolution, as China and Russia were opposed.¹⁴⁷

29 Sep: The UN Human Rights Council extended the mandate of the UN fact-finding mission into the violence in Burma [see *March Bulletin*].¹⁴⁸

REPORTS

“Atrocity Alert No. 70: Myanmar (Burma) and Central African Republic, 20 September 2017” Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect <https://goo.gl/DpT7uB>

“Beyond Panglong: Myanmar’s National Peace and Reform Dilemma” Transnational Institute <https://goo.gl/ravVhs>

“BLUE BOOK 2017: EU Development Cooperation in Myanmar” European Union <https://goo.gl/1jXGSu>

“Burma: Satellite Imagery Shows Mass Destruction” Human Rights Watch <https://goo.gl/tGE9YU>

“Indiscriminate Burma Army shelling, shooting cause 300 villagers to flee in Mong Yai, northern Shan State” Shan Human Rights Foundation <https://goo.gl/Jqxisq>

“Land of sorrow: Human rights violations at Myanmar’s Myotha Industrial Park”, International Federation for Human Rights <https://goo.gl/5u5EUy>

“Myths and risks of the EU-Myanmar Investment Protection Agreement” bilateral.org <https://goo.gl/xX7HFY>

“Ongoing torture, killing, arbitrary arrests during midnight raids by Burma Army in Ho Pong township” Shan Human Rights Foundation <https://goo.gl/3FfsNL>

“Statement by Mr. Marzuki Darusman, Chairperson of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar established by Human Rights Council resolution 34/22” UN Human Rights Council <https://goo.gl/stuvHK>

¹⁴³ Permanent People’s Tribunal (22 Sep 17) Preliminary Judgment and Dispositions

¹⁴⁴ Reuters (25 Sept 17) Malaysia’s dissent on Myanmar statement reveals cracks in ASEAN facade

¹⁴⁵ BBC (28 Sep 17) UK minister urges Aung San Suu Kyi to act over Rohingya

¹⁴⁶ Reuters (29 Sep 17) Myanmar violence could spread, displace more Rohingya: U.N. chief

¹⁴⁷ The Telegraph (29 Sep 17) The UN has failed the Rohingya – it’s time for every nation to step up and end this horror

¹⁴⁸ UN News (29 Sep 17) UN Human Rights Council wraps current session, adopts texts on Myanmar, Yemen, Burundi