

Date: August 27, 2024

Press Note: Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (ROHRIngya)

Escalating Crisis: Renewed Violence/ Second Wave Against Rohingya

August 27, 2024 - The Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (ROHRIngya) issues an urgent call to the international community in response to the rapidly escalating/ intensifying violence and grave human rights abuses perpetrated against the Rohingya population in Rakhine State, Myanmar.

The Rohingya community in Rakhine State, Myanmar, yet again, is facing severe and escalating violence, particularly in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships. The Rakhine militant group, known as the Arakan Army (AA), has intensified its attacks against the Rohingya population under the guise of expanding its control over the region. These attacks have resulted in the deaths of hundreds of civilians, primarily women and children. The situation has been exacerbated by indiscriminate aerial drone strikes that have killed and injured hundreds of Rohingya civilians attempting to flee across the Naf River to Bangladesh. Survivors report widespread devastation, with entire villages being targeted, severe shortages of food, and lack of access to medical care due to the ongoing conflict between the Myanmar Military and the Arakan Army. The urgency of the crisis left the Rohingya people desperate, displaced, and in dire need of international intervention.

Our ongoing independent investigations have uncovered a disturbing pattern of atrocities committed by both the Myanmar military junta and the Arakan Army (AA) since November 2023.

Key incidents include:

- On May 1, 2024, Arakan Army carried out a brutal massacre at Houya Seri Village, killing 135 Rohingya civilians, including infants, children, pregnant women, and the elderly. The entire village was raised to the ground after the massacre.
- On May 17, 2024, Arakan Army launched a large-scale campaign of forced displacement in Buthidaung town, resulting in over 200,000 Rohingya residents being displaced, hundreds killed, and many forced into AA-controlled territories. AA said they had taken control of the town from Military on 16 May before burning down the entire town to the ground. Reports and testimonies from the ground indicate that AA has abducted Rohingya men for ransom and conscripted youths. Independent findings from UN agencies and the media house Reuters have verified the city's burning.
- April 2024 - An Arakan Army assault on Buthidaung's main hospital resulted in significant casualties.
- Forced recruitment/ conscription - Both the Arakan Army and Myanmar military forces have been implicated in the forced recruitment/ conscription of Rohingya civilians, especially the youth, who are reportedly being used as human shields.
- On August 5, 2024, the Arakan Army launched a new wave of attacks on Rohingya civilians attempting to flee to Bangladesh, resulting in over 200 deaths and the displacement of thousands. Rohingya victims who lost their family members to these gruesome, indiscriminate attacks said they were targeted with aerial attacks while they were trying to escape to Bangladesh from an Arakan Army siege.
- On June 27, MSF said they had suspended their medical activities in Northern Rakhine state as their facilities were targeted for indiscriminate attacks and arson. The escalating violence has precipitated a severe humanitarian crisis, with widespread and critical shortages of food and medicine reported in affected areas.

Date: August 27, 2024

- Disinformation campaign targeting Rohingya - The Arakan Army and its affiliates have been observed spreading baseless propaganda, falsely labelling Rohingyas as “Muslim terrorists” and “Muslim militants”. A notable example of this was an article published by The New Indian Express, an Indian news outlet. The article, titled “Islamic Terror Groups Holding Over 1600 Hindus and 120 Buddhist Hostages in Myanmar,” was based on an unsubstantiated statement shared on social media by Arakan Army spokesperson Khne Thu Kha. While the spokesperson later deleted the statement, the article had already been widely circulated in India, potentially inciting hatred against Rohingyas refugees.

The United Nations' highest court in 2020, the International Court of Justice, has ruled that Rohingyas are a protected group as victims of Genocide, and all parties in Myanmar must protect the group from further harm. However, defying the world’s highest court rules, both the Myanmar military and Arakan Army have continuously targeted the Rohingyas in Myanmar for slaughter, killings, and further destruction of their existence.

ROHRIngya calls upon the international community to take urgent action to address this humanitarian crisis. The following steps must be taken:

1. **Immediate Ceasefire:** We demand an immediate cease of hostilities by both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, as well as a commitment to a lasting peace agreement. All civilian areas must be protected and must not be used as battlegrounds.
2. **Humanitarian Access:** We call for humanitarian aid organisations to have unrestricted access to deliver essential assistance to the affected Rohingya populations.
3. **Accountability:** We urge the prosecution of those responsible for war crimes and crimes against humanity.
4. **Protection of Civilians:** We appeal to the international community to implement protective measures to safeguard Rohingya civilians from further violence and displacement.

The Rohingya Human Rights Initiative urges the global community to stand in solidarity with the Rohingya people. Immediate and decisive action is needed to prevent further atrocities and to alleviate the immense suffering of the community.

By the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (ROHRIngya)

The Rohingya Human Rights Initiative (ROHRIngya) is a non-governmental, non-profit organisation formed by young Rohingya activists in New Delhi, India. The R4R was formed as a result of continuous inhumane treatment and legal and social discrimination against the Rohingya people. Myanmar’s military junta used the 1982 Citizenship Law to strip the Rohingyas and some other ethnic minorities of citizenship in Myanmar. The main mission of R4R is to highlight, prevent, and address human rights violations against the Rohingya community. R4R carries out its activities in India and monitors the conditions of Rohingyas in India, Myanmar, and Bangladesh. R4R’s works include research and advocacy, prompt action addressing human rights violations, emergency relief efforts, educational initiatives, empowerment of youth and women, and peacebuilding activities leveraging sports and culture.

Website: <https://www.rohringya.org>

Twitter: @ROHRINGYA

Linked In: @ROHRINGYA