

MYANMAR



THE ISSUE:

In August 2017, an armed group known as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) launched coordinated attacks on security force posts in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar. In response, the Myanmar security forces, led by the Myanmar Army (“Tatmadaw”), attacked the entire Rohingya population in villages across northern Rakhine State. In the ten months after August, the Tatmadaw drove more than 700,000 women, men, and children—more than 54 per cent of the Rohingya who lived in northern Rakhine State at the outset of this crisis in 2017—into neighboring Bangladesh.

An overwhelming population of the affected communities in Bangladesh, including about 500,000 Rohingya, are school-aged children who have no access to accredited education and are vulnerable to forced recruitment into armed groups, child labor, sexual exploitation, and child marriage.

The Myanmar Security Forces carried out a relentless and systematic campaign in which they unlawfully killed thousands of Rohingya, including young children; raped and committed other sexual violence against hundreds of Rohingya women and girls; tortured Rohingya men and boys in detention sites; pushed Rohingya communities toward starvation by burning markets and blocking access to farmland; and burned hundreds of villages in a targeted and deliberate manner.

Crimes against humanity continue against the estimated 600,000 Rohingya who are still living in Rakhine State. Their rights to equality, a nationality, freedom of movement, and access to adequate healthcare, education, and work opportunities are routinely violated. Seven years after they were forced from their homes, some 128,000 people remain confined to squalid detention camps within Rakhine State, reliant on humanitarian assistance for their survival. The Rohingya have long faced systematic persecution; for example, the 1982 Citizenship Law stripped many of their Myanmar citizenship and deprived them of their right to a nationality.

The Myanmar Military and the Arakan Army (AA), an ethnic Rakhine armed group, have clashed on and off for years—though the last year marked a clear escalation in the violence, with nearly 45,000 people displaced in Rakhine and Chin states as of December 2019. Amnesty has documented serious human rights violations against civilians committed by the military, including unlawful attacks, arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, and forced labor. Many of these constitute war crimes.

Shan State in northern Myanmar has also seen decades of conflict and violence. In 2011, conflict renewed in northern Myanmar between the military and ethnic armed organizations (EAOs). Despite efforts to end the fighting—including through a national peace process—conflict has continued, with civilians often bearing the brunt. Amnesty has documented war crimes and other serious violations by the Myanmar military in the ongoing conflict, including arbitrary arrests, detention on military bases, torture and other ill-treatment, and unlawful attacks.

TALKING POINTS:

- We say “never-again,” yet the international community continues to watch and fail to put an end to the systematic and widespread persecution of the Rohingya population, which has resulted in war crimes and crimes against humanity.
- As President, I would seek to bring justice to the millions of Rohingya and other ethnic minorities in Myanmar who have been displaced at the hands of the Myanmar military. Whether through supporting international accountability mechanisms or through multilateral sanctions, I will make sure that we protect the most vulnerable and support our values through our engagements.
- More than half a million Rohingya children have yet to see the inside of a classroom since they arrived in the refugee camps of Bangladesh more than two years ago. That’s almost an entirely lost generation in a volatile region where extremist groups are operating. We should support, sustain, and increase humanitarian assistance—including access to education—to help give the Rohingya and other refugees in the region a better future.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

- The United States should use all of its diplomatic and political levers to push for a United Nations Security Council referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court to bring those most responsible for atrocity crimes to justice.
- The United States should create a global coalition to respond to the Myanmar human rights crisis, calling for multilateral targeted sanctions against senior military officials responsible for atrocities.
- The United States should increase and sustain its support for humanitarian assistance—including access to education—for refugees in Bangladesh and in Myanmar.

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