

## New Report - Burma: End 'Ethnic Cleansing' of Rohingya Muslims

Human Rights Watch 22 April 2013 Burmese authorities and members of Arakanese groups have committed crimes against humanity in a campaign of ethnic cleansing against Rohingya Muslims in Arakan State since June 2012, Human Rights Watch said in a new report released today.

The 153-page report, "'All You Can Do is Pray': Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State," describes the role of the Burmese government and local authorities in the forcible displacement of more than 125,000 Rohingya and other Muslims and the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Burmese officials, community leaders, and Buddhist monks organized and encouraged ethnic Arakanese backed by state security forces to conduct coordinated attacks on Muslim neighborhoods and villages in October 2012 to terrorize and forcibly relocate the population. The tens of thousands of displaced have been denied access to humanitarian aid and been unable to return home.

"The Burmese government engaged in a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya that continues today through the denial of aid and restrictions on movement," said Phil Robertson, deputy Asia director. "The government needs to put an immediate stop to the abuses and hold the perpetrators accountable or it will be responsible for further violence against ethnic and religious minorities in the country."

Following sectarian violence between Arakanese and Rohingya in June 2012, government authorities destroyed mosques, conducted violent mass arrests, and blocked aid to displaced Muslims. On October 23, after months of meetings and public statements promoting ethnic cleansing, Arakanese mobs attacked Muslim communities in nine townships, razing villages and killing residents while security forces stood aside or assisted the assailants. Some of the dead were buried in mass graves, further impeding accountability. (...)

All of the state security forces operating in Arakan State are implicated in failing to prevent atrocities or directly participating in them, including local police, Lon Thein riot police, the inter-agency border control force called Nasaka, and the army and navy. (...)

Displaced Rohingya told Human Rights Watch how in October security forces stood by or joined with large groups of Arakanese men armed with machetes, swords, homemade guns, and Molotov cocktails who descended upon and attacked their villages. In some cases, attacks occurred simultaneously in townships separated by considerable distance. (...)

In the deadliest incident, on October 23, at least 70 Rohingya were killed in a daylong massacre in Yan Thei village in Mrauk-U Township. Despite advance warning of the attack, only a small number of riot police, local police, and army soldiers were on duty to provide security, but they assisted the killings by disarming the Rohingya of their sticks and other rudimentary weapons they carried to defend themselves. (...)

Considerable local organizing preceded and backed October's attacks. The two groups most influential in organizing anti-Rohingya activities were the local order of Buddhist monks (the *sangha*) and the regionally powerful Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP), which was

founded in 2010 by Arakanese nationalists. Between June and October, these groups and others issued numerous anti-Rohingya pamphlets and public statements, explicitly or implicitly denying the existence of the Rohingya ethnicity, demonizing them, and calling for their removal from the country, at times using the phrase “ethnic cleansing.” (...)

More than 125,000 Rohingya and non-Rohingya Muslims, and a smaller number of Arakanese, have been in displaced person camps in Arakan State since June. While President Thein Sein’s government has hosted high-profile diplomatic visits to displacement sites, it has also obstructed the effective delivery of humanitarian aid. (...)

Under international law, crimes against humanity are crimes committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack by a government or organization on a civilian population. Among the crimes against humanity committed against the Rohingya since June were murder, deportation and forcible transfer of the population, and persecution.

“Ethnic cleansing,” though not a formal legal term, has been defined as a purposeful policy by an ethnic or religious group to remove by violent and terror-inspiring means the civilian population of another ethnic or religious group from certain geographic areas.

Central to the persecution of the Rohingya is the 1982 Citizenship Law, which effectively denies Burmese citizenship to Rohingya on discriminatory ethnic grounds. (...)

“Burma should accept an independent international commission to investigate crimes against humanity in Arakan State, locate victims, and provide redress,” said Robertson. “Burma’s donors need to wake up and realize the seriousness of the Rohingya’s plight, and demand that the government urgently stop abuses, promote the safe return of displaced Muslims, and ensure accountability to end the deadly cycle of violence in Arakan State.” **Read [full article](#)** .

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**[All you can do is pray: Crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma’s Arakan State](#)**

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