



# Rohingya Voices

ATMOSPHERIC REPORT

CONFIDENTIAL - NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION

JANUARY 2025

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The information and analysis presented in this report represent the perceptions of the individuals interviewed, and these findings have not been independently verified by this analytical unit. While extensive efforts have been undertaken to ensure accuracy and reliability, it is important to acknowledge that, due to the complex and dynamic nature of the situation in Rakhine State, there are limitations related to the data and findings. The perspectives presented in this report are not representative of the perspectives of these communities as a whole. Therefore, no guarantees can be made regarding the completeness of the information presented. This report is crafted with the intention to provide valuable insights and foster a comprehensive understanding of the prevailing environment in Rakhine State. By shedding light on various perspectives and experiences, it aims to contribute to a nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. However, it is imperative for users of this report to approach its contents with caution. Users are strongly advised to independently verify critical information where necessary.

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## KEY FINDINGS

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### / PERCEPTIONS OF HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

**Rohingya community members in villages** in Rakhine State reported a lack of assistance and said that people — especially women — urgently needed maternity care and vaccinations.

- Compared to December, the reported concerns of Rohingya villagers in Rakhine State did not change significantly, but concerns about food, healthcare, and agricultural support appeared to become more pressing.

- Respondents in Buthidaung Township reported urgently needing chlorination support and said that displaced Rohingya people were suffering infectious diseases including diarrhoea due to consumption of unsafe water.

**Rohingya community members in camps** in Rakhine State expressed concerns about shortages of food and said they urgently needed humanitarian assistance.

- Respondents Pauktaw said that, due to the lack of the food assistance, children and women were suffering from malnutrition.

- In January, respondents in camps reported more urgently needing food (especially rice), shelters, hygiene assistance, and medicines.

**Rohingya community members in Bangladesh** expressed concerns about a lack of food, cooking gas, and kitchen utensils for newly-arrived Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar.

- Respondents in Bangladesh also reported urgently needing shelters for newly-arrived Rohingya and hygiene kits, especially for women.

- Compared to December, the reported concerns and humanitarian issues of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh did not change significantly.

## KEY FINDINGS

## / PERCEPTIONS OF ARMED AND GOVERNANCE ACTORS

**Rohingya community members in villages** in Rakhine State voiced concerns over State Administration Council (SAC) air and artillery attacks on Rohingya villages. As well, compared to December, respondents expressed greater concern about United League of Arakan/Arakan Army (ULA/AA) movement restrictions, forced labour, and forced displacement, especially in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships.

- Respondents in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships reported that the AA held meetings with Rohingya religious and community leaders, and warned meeting attendees to report any movement of Rohingya armed actors in their areas. Respondents said that ULA/AA members threatened to burn down villages or force villagers to leave if they failed to report as required.

- According to respondents in Maungdaw Township, on 10 January, the AA met directed villagers in Mingalargyi village to build bomb shelters to protect against SAC airstrikes, and to prepare for fire incidents by keeping water and sand ready. It reportedly threatened to take action if villagers did not comply.

**Rohingya community members in camps** in Rakhine State reported concerns over the SAC pressuring Camp Management Committee (CMC) members to organise forced recruitment and money collection to provide salaries for Rohingya conscripts and their families.

- Respondents in Sittwe Township expressed greatest concern over robbery and extortion by Arakan Liberation Party (ALP) members and Rakhine criminal gangs.

- Respondents in Pauktaw and Sittwe townships expressed concerns about potential fighting between the SAC and ULA/AA in Sittwe Township, saying that this could interrupt livelihoods and cause them to face severe hardships.

**Rohingya community members in Bangladesh** said Rohingya armed actors held a meeting in Cox's Bazar camps to organise recruitment of young people, and that some Rohingya people joined voluntarily to fight the ULA/AA in Rakhine State.

- Respondents also expressed concerns over kidnappings and abductions by Bangladeshi gangs, which they said involved targeting children and young people and demanding ransoms from their families.

## KEY FINDINGS

## / PERCEPTIONS OF INTERCOMMUNAL TENSIONS

**Rohingya community members in villages** in Rakhine State expressed concerns about potential tensions between Rohingya and Rakhine villagers.

- Respondents in Minbya Township reported tensions between Rohingya villagers and Rakhine IDPs displaced from Maungdaw Township.

- Respondents in Pauktaw and Kyauktaw townships reported that there was regular interaction between Rohingya and Rakhine people but expressed concerns over potential tensions in the future.

**Rohingya community members in camps** in Rakhine State reported that Rohingya camp residents had good relationships with their Rakhine neighbours.

- Compared to other areas, respondents in Sittwe Township camps expressed greater concerns about physical abuse by Rakhine people; they said that Rakhine people intentionally attacked and robbed Rohingya people who passed by Rakhine villages, especially near Min Gan (Rakhine) ward.

**Rohingya community members in Bangladesh** expressed that tensions between refugees and host communities were rising due to kidnappings for ransom by Bangladeshi criminal gangs.

- Respondents said that due to tensions and concerns about kidnapping and abduction, some Rohingya refugees working in Bangladeshi villages had temporarily stopped going to their workplaces.

- Respondents on Bhasan Char Island said that camp authorities and Bangladeshi NGO workers at clinics often threatened and abused (verbally and physically) Rohingya refugees when they accessed healthcare services or submitted applications to visit Cox's Bazar refugees camps.

## RISK INDICATORS OF INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN RAKHINE STATE

### Violence



Violence includes any violent incident occurring between Rakhine and Rohingya communities, including those involving armed actors, civilians, or any combination thereof.

Violence did not appear to change significantly in January, but violence by the SAC, AA, and others continued to impact communities, particularly in northern Rakhine State.

- On 4 January, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) **attacked** an auto-rickshaw near Mro Yu village, on the Maungdaw-Rathedaung Zay Di Pyin mountain route in Rathedaung Township, killing a local passenger and seriously injuring two others.
- On 7 January, local media **reported** that ARSA, the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), and the Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA) were active in areas bordering Bangladesh — in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships and in the Mayu Mountains — and increasingly in Rathedaung Township, and frequently targeted civilians with abduction, extortion, and other attacks, raising concerns among civilians.

### Cohesion



Cohesion includes actions, stated sentiments, and other conditions that foster positive intercommunal relations.

Social cohesion between ethnic Rohingya and Rakhine communities did not appear to change in January in many areas of Rakhine State.

- Respondents in Pauktaw, Myebon, and Kyauktaw townships said that there was regular communication between Rohingya and Rakhine neighbours, and that they could go to Rakhine villages.

### Tension



Tension includes actions that do not rise to the level of violence, as well as fears of violence or such actions.

Tensions between ethnic Rohingya and Rakhine communities did not appear to change in January in many areas of Rakhine State.

- Respondents in Minbya Township reported that they had good relationships with their Rakhine neighbours. However, they said that Rakhine IDPs displaced from Maungdaw Township had attacked and killed Rohingya farmers in November 2024, leading Rohingya villagers to feel unsafe in Rakhine village and be cautious about working there. Similarly, respondents in Sittwe Township said that Rakhine people had detained and beaten two Rohingya people (a mother and son), leading Rohingya people to be cautious about going to Rakhine areas.

### Perceptions



'Perceptions' includes the expressed sentiments of Rohingya people (e.g. respondents).

Respondents in Rakhine State did not express perceptions of intercommunal relations that differed significantly from December 2024. Respondents in Sittwe Township expressed hopes that the relationship between Rakhine and Rohingya people would improve after the ULA/AA fully controlled Sittwe Township.

## RISK INDICATORS OF INTERCOMMUNAL VIOLENCE IN RAKHINE STATE (CONT.)

## Statements



Statements include any official or public statements made by armed or governance actors, activists, or community representatives.

Various actors issued statements in response to dynamics involving Rohingya people.

- On 5 January, the Rohingya Christian community in Cox's Bazar refugees camps **issued** a statement, expressing concerns about tensions between Rohingya Muslim and Christian communities in the camps. Respondents told this analytical unit that Rohingya Christian community members were fearful and seeking protective measures against violence from other camp members.
- On 11 January, the ULA/AA **issued** a statement on a series of SAC airstrikes over Kyauk Ni Maw village in Ramree Township, claiming that SAC was targeting civilians, markets, hospitals, clinics, and residential areas.
- On 20 January, Justice for All **called** on UNHCR to take immediate action in response to an alarming rise in kidnappings of Rohingya refugees around the camps in Teknaf, Bangladesh. According to the statement, over 30 individuals — including a six-year-old child — had been abducted and dozens more were being victimized daily.

## Hate speech



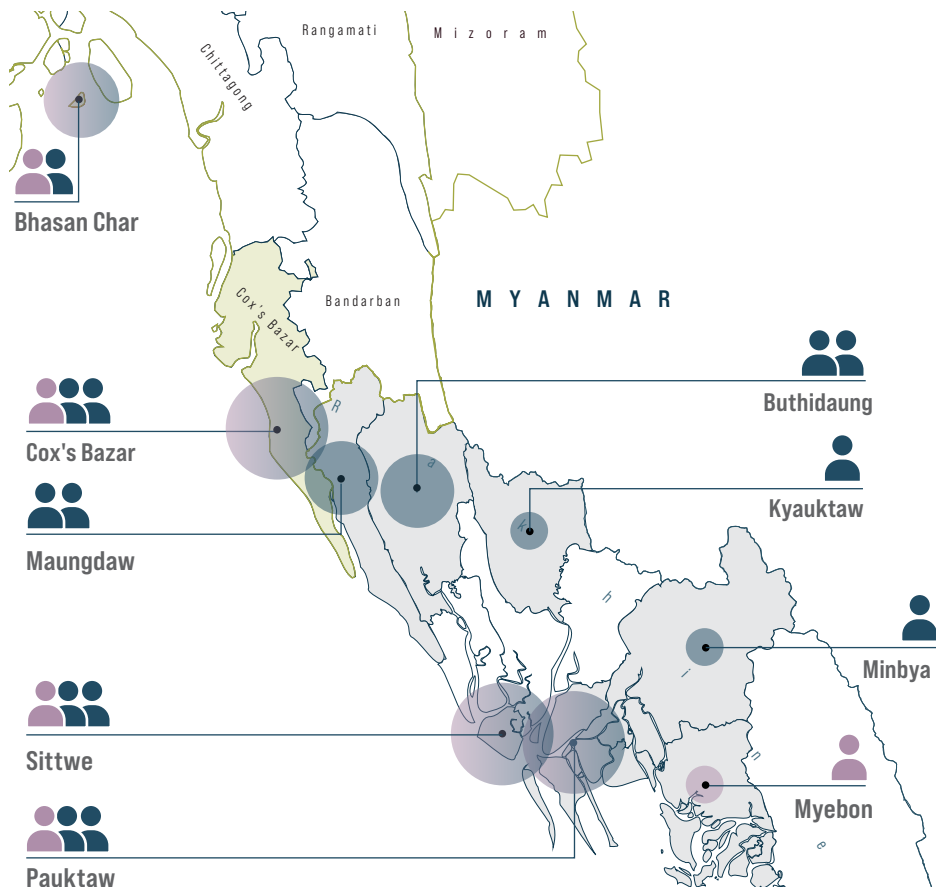
Hate speech includes abusive or threatening speech or writing that expresses prejudice on the basis of Rohingya identity.

Hate speech did not change significantly in January.

- Respondents in Sittwe Township expressed concerns about Rakhine people accusing them of willingly being conscripted by the SAC, and about some Rakhine people warning that they would take revenge after the ULA/AA fully controlled Sittwe Township.

## RESPONDENTS

RESPONDENTS WERE BASED IN THE FOLLOWING AREAS OF RAKHINE STATE AND BANGLADESH:



### Gender of the respondents



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## METHODOLOGY

This document is structured around highlighting the perceptions and concerns of different Rohingya communities in Rakhine State, broadly categorised as communities in camps and communities in villages, as well as Rohingya communities in Bangladesh, in Cox's Bazar or Bhasan Char. The perceptions of these communities are structured around three key topics on which 18 Rohingya respondents were asked to share their perspectives:

- Armed and governance actors;
- Humanitarian assistance; and
- Intercommunal relations.

As this update is based on a small sample size of 18 respondents, the observations found here should not be assumed as representative. Rather, this snapshot illustrates the perceptions of community members, and the value of this qualitative approach is in the context-specific knowledge it provides.



## KEY CONTEXT DEVELOPMENTS

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These context updates are not meant to be a comprehensive overview of the developments in Rakhine State over the past month. Instead, these are intended to provide a brief background on the key developments impacting the context in Rakhine State and Bangladesh and the Rohingya communities living there.

2  
January

Local media [reported](#) that the AA attacked ARSA members hiding near Waela Mountain, along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Maungdaw Township, though the scale of casualties was unclear. The same source added that four Rohingya armed groups — ARSA, RSO, ARA, and Arakan National Defence Front (ANDF) were hiding near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border and often attacked civilians including Rohingya villagers.

4  
January

Local media [reported](#) that local authorities from the Arakan People's Government (APG) — the ULA administrative body — delivered food aid to Rohingya villagers in the Ah Nauk Ye IDP camp in Pauktaw Township.

9  
January

Local media [reported](#) that the SAC carried out a series of airstrikes over Kyauk Ni Maw village in Ramree Township, killing 41 people and injuring 52 others. According to this report, the airstrikes hit Taung Pine, Myauk Pine, and Ah Lel Pine wards of the village, destroying 500 houses. On 12 January, ULA/AA officials reportedly [met](#) with victims and provided food assistance.

10  
January

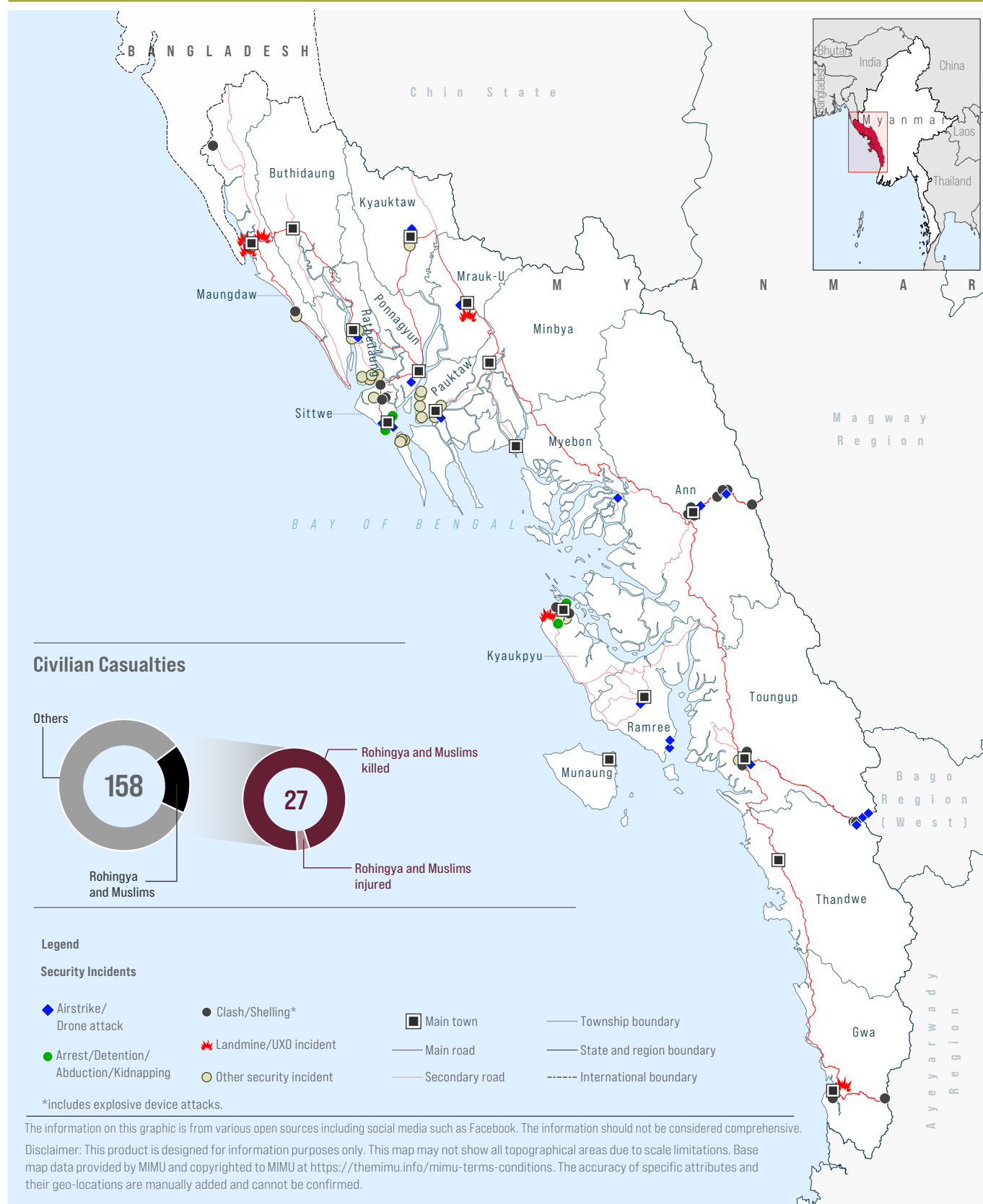
Local media [reported](#) that the SAC had greatly increased its troop presence in Sittwe, Kyaukphyu, and Munaung townships, still under its control, and deployed approximately 1,000 Rohingya conscripts in Sittwe town.

23  
January

Local media [reported](#) that the ULA/AA planned to allow Rohingya villagers sheltering in Hla Poe Kaung transit camp to return to their homes in Shwe Zar village tract. The same source said that on 21 January, the ULA/AA met with Rohingya villagers from Dar Gyi Zar, Thu U Lar, Tha Yet Oke, Kyar Gaung Taung, and Pwint Hpyu Chaung villages and told them that each household was required to pay 40,000 Myanmar Kyat (~15.47 GBP) for road repairs in Maungdaw Township.

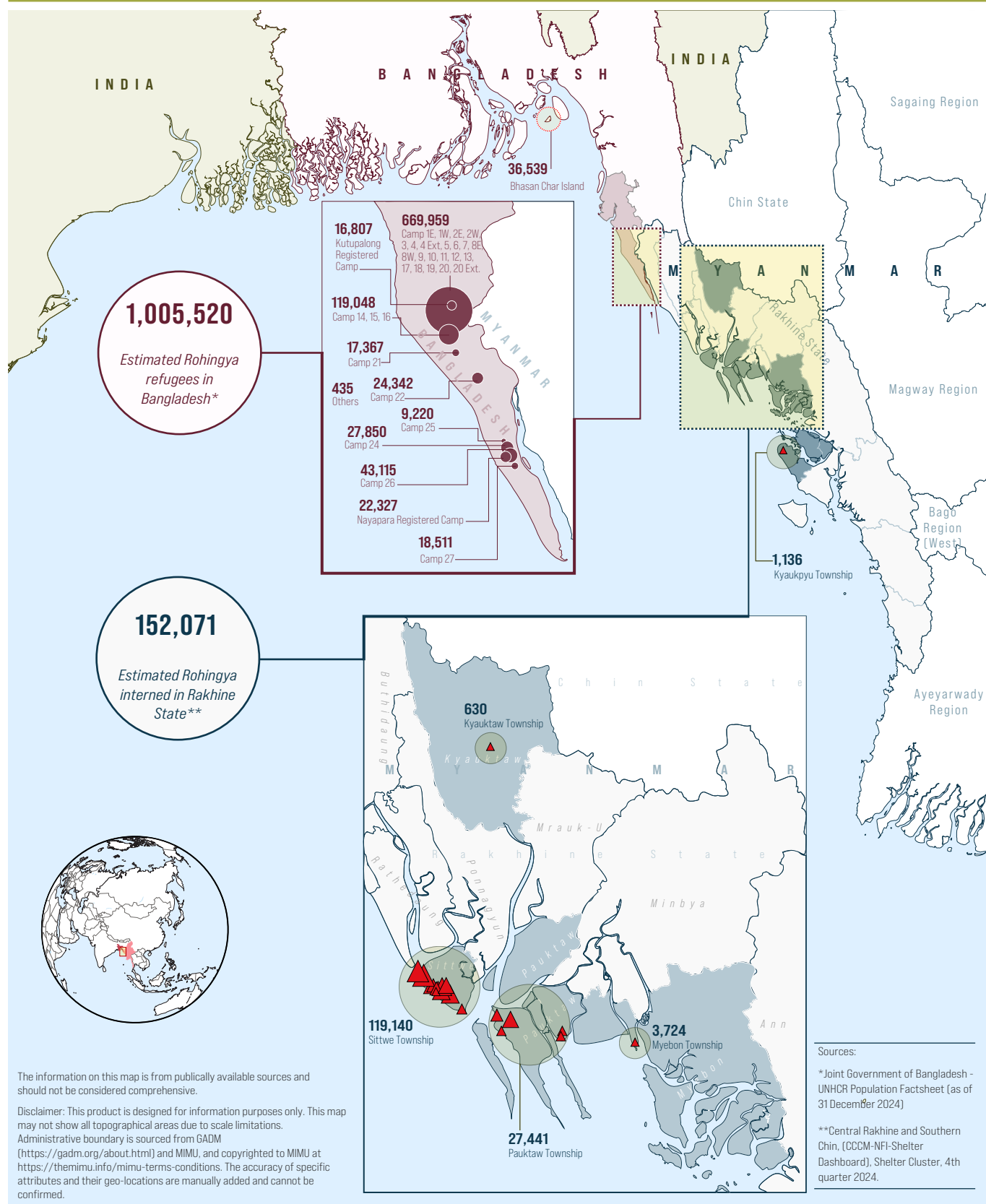
## KEY SECURITY INCIDENTS

JANUARY 2025



## ROHINGYA CAMPS IN RAKHINE STATE AND BANGLADESH

JANUARY 2025



## ROHINGYA VOICES

## Rakhine State

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN CAMPS

Rohingya people in four townships of central Rakhine State — Sittwe, Pauktaw, Myebon, and Kyaukpyu — have been living in camps since 2012, when they were displaced by violence often termed ‘inter-communal’ but which also involved state security forces. While these are sometimes called IDP camps, they differ from other IDP camps in Myanmar, mainly in that the movement of their residents is heavily restricted. In addition to living in impoverished areas and being limited in movement by SAC checkpoints outside their camps, fear of violence by neighbouring Rakhine communities has historically been a factor preventing many of these people from seeking work, healthcare, or goods outside camps, making them heavily reliant on humanitarian assistance. In some cases — such as in Pauktaw and Myebon townships — the AA offensive since November 2023 has removed the presence of SAC troops, but introduced a new actor (the ULA/AA) which requires ‘taxes’ and may expose camp members to other types of abusive practices. There are also contextual differences between these camps, including their composition: Kyauk Ta Lone (in Kyaukpyu Township) is a mix of ethnic Rohingya and Kaman, with Kaman in the majority, whereas the other camps are entirely or mainly Rohingya.

KYAUK TA LONE RELOCATION SITE,  
KYAUKPYU TOWNSHIP



## / PRIMARY CONCERNS

## SITTWE TOWNSHIP

Respondents in Sittwe Township expressed concerns over a lack of humanitarian assistance and said that, due to the lack of regular income and humanitarian assistance, IDPs were facing debt problems and some IDPs sold their ration books to pay the debt. One respondent said that single mothers and widows found greater difficulties finding jobs outside of the camps and thereby accessing regular income.

“My monthly salary cannot cover the cost of my family expenses. I have to pay debt each month. As I have four children and no husband now, I need to struggle to get income for my family. [...] I face hardship covering education fees and medical expenses for my children. Many of my neighbours sold their ration books to pay their debts and face difficulties accessing humanitarian assistance and fulfilling the needs of their households. Many IDPs in our camp are facing starvation due to lack of income and assistance.”

- 42, FEMALE, SITTWE

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN CAMPS

## / PRIMARY CONCERNS

## MYEBON TOWNSHIP

As with respondents in Sittwe Township, respondents in Taung Paw 'ward' ('officially closed' camp) in Myebon Township expressed concern over lack of regular income. One said that access to healthcare services was extremely difficult for Rohingya people because there were no doctors or clinics in the township and the ULA/AA had restricted movement to other townships.

"In the past, we could travel from Sittwe Township to Yangon easily. But now, even with valid ID cards, we can't travel to Sittwe Township. Under the ULA/AA administration, we face many restrictions. We are worried that after the fighting in Rakhine State, the AA will impose more restrictions on Rohingya people. Access to healthcare is the most concerning issue for us. For example, one of my family members is suffering from an eye disease but we cannot access healthcare services for treatment."

- 48, FEMALE, MYEBON

## PAUKTAW TOWNSHIP

As with respondents in camps in Sittwe and Myebon townships, respondents in Pauktaw Township expressed concerns over lack of humanitarian assistance, access to sufficient foods, and healthcare services. They said that this lack of access rendered elderly people more vulnerable. Another respondent expressed the urgent need for healthcare support and vaccinations for pregnant women and infants.

"The main challenge for us is that we are not getting any assistance. Organisations did not come to provide assistance here under the AA administration. We cannot access healthcare services, so we need healthcare services and vaccinations for both pregnant women and infants. They haven't received vaccinations for over a year now."

- 64, MALE, PAUKTAW

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

## ... HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Respondents in Sittwe Township said that one organisation was providing assistance to repair toilet facilities in Thet Kae Pyin camp. However, respondents expressed concerns over a lack of assistance with food, healthcare services, shelter repair, and hygiene kits in January. One said that they prefer agencies to give food assistance such as rice, beans, and cooking oil, rather than cash for food, as the cash assistance is insufficient to buy basic food items in the market. Another respondent said that due to lack of sufficient foods and general challenges, Rohingya parents forced their under aged daughters to marry.

"Due to the lack of sufficient food and livelihood challenges, parents forced their teenage daughters to marry before they turned 18. Some girls were forced to marry at the ages of 12, 13, or 14; later some couples got divorced as the husband also couldn't provide the required food and basic necessities for them."

- 42, FEMALE, SITTWE

ROHINGYA CAMPS, SITTWE TOWNSHIP



A respondent in Taung Paw 'ward' in Myebon Township reported that many children were suffering malnutrition and food aid was urgently needed. She said that, facing household difficulties, parents forced their children to work — in markets, or farming or fishing.



## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN CAMPS

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

“We urgently need food. Women and children are facing malnutrition. Parents force their children to work in farming, in the market and shops owned by Rakhine people, and on fishing boats with other fishermen. They are also working as hard labourers in the markets. We heard that the AA has invited all organisations to carry out humanitarian assistance in the camps, but organisations do not want to come to our area because of security concerns and the need to negotiate with the AA. I have eight family members in my household and I sell snacks. If I have to buy rice, then I can’t afford medicines, healthcare, or other expenses for my household.”

- 48, FEMALE, MYEBON

Respondents in Pauktaw Township said that on 4 January, ULA/AA senior officials met with Rohingya religious and community leaders and provided 40 bags of rice to Rohingya IDPs in Ah Naung Ye camp. One said that a skin disease was spreading in camps but there were no medicines or treatment to control it. Due to the lack of humanitarian assistance in Rohingya IDP camps, women reportedly worked as day labourers to get a small income.

“On 4 January, the AA provided 40 bags of rice. Currently children, women, and elderly people need medicines; 95% of people are suffering from skin diseases such as scabies

but there is no medicine or treatment to control the disease. There is also a lack of vaccines in our camp. We all need food. Many Rohingya women work in Rakhine villages. Some cook or wash clothes for Rakhine people and some work as fishmongers.”

- 64, MALE, PAUKTAW

### ... ARMED AND GOVERNANCE ACTORS

Respondents in Sittwe Township expressed concern over SAC forces’ extortion, forced recruitment, and physical and verbal abuse at checkpoints and said that SAC forces often confiscated food items from Rohingya people at these checkpoints. They reported that camp residents were required to pay money to CMCs monthly if they could not provide a family member for SAC conscriptions. They said that in Thet Kae Pyin camp, due to difficulties in paying money to SAC forces, camp residents had requested the CMC to allow delayed payment until they received cash assistance from an organisation.

“The SAC authorities regularly interact with the CMC to organise conscription, and to collect money from residents who are unable to provide a family member to join the SAC forces. We need to pay 20,000 Myanmar Kyat

[~7.73 GBP] per household for conscription if we can’t provide a family member for conscription, and the CMC also collects money from IDPs to provide the salary for those conscripts. As we are facing hardship with food and limited regular income sources, we cannot afford to pay that every month.”

- 42, FEMALE, SITTWE

Respondents in Pauktaw Township and in Taung Paw ‘ward’ in Myebon Township reported that they needed permission from the ULA/AA to travel outside of their township and that the ULA/AA collected ‘tax’ from Rohingya shop owners and farmers, as well as human traffickers. They said that the ULA/AA allowed human traffickers to host people who wanted to travel to Malaysia in Sin Thet Maw village and said that some of those people had even come from Cox’s Bazar refugee camps to travel to Malaysia.

“People coming from elsewhere in Rakhine State, or from Bangladesh to travel to Malaysia, have to go through the AA tax office. ULA/AA members take photos of them, record their personal information, and collect tax from them. Once the traffickers organise 100 people, the AA sends them to Ponnagyun Township and then to Myawaddy Township through human trafficking networks.”

- 64, MALE, PAUKTAW

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN CAMPS

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

“We need permission from the AA to travel outside of the township. The AA openly allows human trafficking, and Pauktaw Township has become a hub. The AA collects taxes from human traffickers and they host people from different places in Sin Tet Maw village and then AA members and traffickers send them to Ponnagyun Township [and then] to Mon state. [...] We think the AA is intentionally allowing human trafficking in order to drive out the Rohingya people from Rakhine State.”

- 28, FEMALE, MYEBON

## ... INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS

Respondents in Sittwe Township expressed greatest concern over robbery committed by ALP members and Rakhine criminal gangs. One said that displaced Rohingya people, especially men, were robbed by those groups in January, increasing concerns among Rohingya people. The same source reported that on 10 January,

ALP members robbed a phone from a Rohingya man in Min Gan ward, who they beat badly and seriously injured.

“When we go to urban Sittwe, we are not safe because some Rakhine men and ALP members with uniforms like police shirts rob money and phones from Rohingya people. Rohingya people are very concerned about traveling from camps to Sittwe town due to rising cases of robbery and extortion in Min Gan [Rakhine] ward by ALP members in or out of uniform. They are intentionally targeting Rohingya people. Many people experienced robbery in January, and there are increasing concerns about it. We hope that after the ULA/AA captures Sittwe Township, those crimes and discrimination might decline.”

- 26, MALE, SITTWE

Respondents in Pauktaw Township and in Taung Paw ‘ward’ (‘officially closed’ camp) in Myebon Township reported having good relations with Rakhine and Chin neighbours and said that there was no tensions

between different groups. However, respondents said that they still had concerns about potential tensions and expressed concerns that the ULA/AA might change its policies on Rohingya people after gaining full control of Rakhine State.

“There is no tension between Rakhine and Rohingya people. The relationship between Rohingya and Rakhine people is good, and also with the Chin community. But we are sceptical about the future, as the AA could persecute and discriminate against Rohingya people. The AA also blames Rohingya people for cooperating with the SAC. In Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships, the AA arrested many Rohingya villagers. The AA needs to officially recognise the Rohingya; otherwise, it is very likely that Rohingya will face persecution under the AA administration and there might be increased tensions and misunderstanding between Rakhine and Rohingya communities in the future.”

- 48, FEMALE, MYEBON

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN VILLAGES

Rohingya people living in villages of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Rathedaung, Mrauk-U, Minbya, Kyauktaw, Pauktaw, and Sittwe townships have historically had greater ability to move around — and therefore greater access to income and services — than Rohingya camp residents, but their movement is still heavily constrained. In 2021, the SAC restarted the practice of requiring Rohingya villagers to provide documentation if they need to travel to other villages (a recommendation letter from a VA) or cross township lines (a recommendation letter and a so-called Form 4). While the ULA/AA has not imposed analogous movement restrictions since it took over these areas (all except Sittwe), since early 2024 it has reportedly limited Rohingya people's movement in order to reduce tensions between Rohingya and Rakhine communities. Because Rohingya villagers (as opposed to camp members) interact more with the ULA/AA, they are often exposed to 'taxation', recruitment, and other abusive practices by the group. Those travelling for healthcare, work, or other purposes in Sittwe Township also have greater interaction with SAC troops, making them more vulnerable to extortion and other abuses by these actors as well.

### MAYYU RIVER, BUTHIDAUNG TOWNSHIP



### / PRIMARY CONCERNS

Respondents in Buthidaung, Pauktaw, Sittwe, Kyauktaw, and Minbya townships expressed concerns over SAC air and artillery attacks on civilians in Rakhine State. Respondents in Sittwe and Pauktaw townships reported hearing that the ULA/AA would launch an attack on the SAC in Sittwe Township in coming months, and expressed concern that attacks between the SAC and ULA/AA could make it more difficult to access livelihoods.

"I heard that the AA will soon launch an attack on Sittwe. If it is true, then we will have to prepare bomb shelters and trenches. If there is fighting in Sittwe Township, all the work will be stopped and we will not have any income as the SAC often fires artillery towards Pauktaw Township. Currently if we work on a boat, we can earn around 200,000 Myanmar Kyat [~77.34 GBP] per month. But we are concerned that we will lose our jobs if fighting resumes in our area."

- 34, MALE, PAUKTAW

As with camp residents elsewhere, Rohingya villagers in Sittwe Township expressed concerns over difficulties accessing income. Respondents said that, due to limited income and lack of job opportunities, elderly people faced challenges accessing healthcare.

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN VILLAGES

## / PRIMARY CONCERNS

One respondent said that SAC forces restricted access to fishing in the sea in Sittwe Township.

“As for my family, my wife and I had jobs before. But now we are jobless. We don’t have enough money to buy the required food and commodities for our family. We prioritised the cost of our two children’s needs rather than ours. Due to lack of income, elderly people find more difficulties accessing healthcare. People are using the roots of trees as traditional medicines because they cannot afford to buy medicines. People skip meals and only eat rice without vegetables or meat to cope with the challenges.”

- 30, MALE, SITTWE

Respondents in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships expressed concerns about the ULA/AA restricting their use of mobile phones and Bangladesh SIM cards; they said that permission from ULA/AA village representatives was required to use these. Respondents in Buthidaung Township also said that a lack of healthcare workers had seriously affected displaced Rohingya women in childbirth — forcing them to rely on traditional midwives. They also expressed concerns about ULA/AA movement restrictions that affected their access to farmlands. Another respondent in Buthidaung Township said that the ULA/AA had allowed Rohingya villagers displaced from Myaung Nar, Ba Gone Nah and

Ka Kyet Bet villages to return to their homes, so these people urgently needed shelters and construction materials.

“As the AA prohibits Rohingya villagers from using Bangladesh SIM cards, we have to get permission from its appointed representatives to use mobile phones. [...] Due to a blockade on transportation, there is a shortage of goods in Buthidaung Township. In the first week of January, the AA relocated Rohingya villagers from their villages and some were forced to stay near the mountain. They urgently need shelter and construction materials, such as tarpaulin sheets, nails, ropes, and bamboo.”

- 26, MALE, BUTHIDAUNG

## MAUNGDAW TOWNSHIP





## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN VILLAGES

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

## ... HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Like respondents in camps, Rohingya villagers in Sittwe Township said no organisations had provided assistance, and reported hearing that some organisations had temporarily stopped their projects in villages due to concerns about fighting in the township. One respondent said that a village administrator collected data of farmers in Bu May village in order to provide agriculture support such as fertilisers and seeds, but most respondents in Sittwe and Pauktaw townships said that food, hygiene kits, and medicines were pressing needs.

“Some people are getting stressed and depressed due to general hardships. People are struggling to access food. So, the most pressing need is food. Women need dignity kits and sanitary materials as their families have no income and cannot buy these. For children and elderly people, warm clothes and medicines are required.”

- 30, MALE, SITTWE

Likewise, respondents in Minbya and Kyauktaw townships reported that Rohingya villagers there had not received humanitarian assistance and urgently needed food. A Rohingya farmer in Kyauktaw Township said that many people in his village relied on income from farming and urgently needed agricultural support.

“We have not received humanitarian assistance. As most of us are farmers, we need support for agricultural supplies. The price of paddy is declining and farmers are losing their profit from agriculture, while the agricultural supplies such as fertilisers and seeds are very expensive and only available in limited stocks in the market. So, people cannot afford to grow paddy and vegetables in this season.”

- 56, MALE, KYAUKTAW

Respondents in Buthidaung Township said that while some NGOs provided low-profile humanitarian assistance in ULA/AA-controlled areas, these organisations faced challenges in getting permissions from the ULA/AA, which required them to provide project documents with potentially sensitive information. Respondents said that Rohingya villagers who had been forcibly relocated from their villages by the ULA/AA urgently needed shelter and food support. One respondent in Buthidaung Township also said that villagers were suffering from infectious diseases due to consumption of contaminated and unsafe water and needed chlorine support to kill harmful bacteria in water sources.

“Rohingya villagers in Myaung Nar, Ba Gone Nah, and Ka Kyet Bet villages need shelters and food. In the past, NGOs used to provide chlorination to kill bacteria in the water, but due to

lack of NGOs presence in the region, people are suffering from various diseases such as diarrhea, malaria, and scabies from consumption of unsafe water.”

- 26, MALE, BUTHIDAUNG

## ... ARMED AND GOVERNANCE ACTORS

Respondents in Minbya and Kyauktaw townships reported that the ULA/AA regularly met with Rohingya community leaders and VAs but prohibited Rohingya people from opening shops in Rakhine markets. They also said that the ULA/AA ‘taxed’ human traffickers and allowed them to operate freely. One respondent in Minbya Township expressed concern over the ULA/AA seizing land and giving it to Rakhine villagers. He also said that the ULA/AA recruited 10-15 Rohingya people per village and required other villagers to provide 500,000 Myanmar Kyat (~193.35 GBP) for each of those recruits’ expenses.

“The ULA/AA grabbed lands from Rohingya villagers and allowed Rakhine villagers to use those lands. For example, farmland from our neighbouring villages such as Thar Dar and Paik Thae were confiscated by the AA and later given to Rakhine villagers. They also ordered a [whole]



## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN VILLAGES

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

Rohingya village to move out, which is a gross violation of human rights. Every month, we are forced to pay taxes to the AA. Though their discrimination is not as much as the SAC's, it is still quite noticeable.”

- 20, MALE, MINBYA

Respondents in Pauktaw Township reported that the ULA/AA administration favoured Rakhine villagers, allowing them to do business freely while restricting Rohingya villagers. One respondent said that the ULA/AA did not issue cow butcher licences to Rohingya people (which the SAC had permitted), complicating access to Halal beef. Respondents also said that ULA/AA members were actively involved in human trafficking, and that villagers needed to pay ULA/AA for permission to travel outside of the township.

“Rakhine people are allowed to do any type of business, while Rohingya face several restrictions. [...] The AA discriminates against Rohingya people, restricting freedom of movement and not allowing us to participate in decision making. The AA indirectly forced Rohingya to leave for other countries and is actively involved in human trafficking; they allow traffickers freely in Pauktaw Township by taking money from them.”

- 34, MALE, PAUKTAW

Respondents in Maungdaw Township said that the AA increased security in border areas — forcing every village to provide two people per night to act as sentries — and prevented Rohingya people from returning from Bangladesh. Respondents in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships said that ULA/AA also forced them to work, including unloading goods from boats, digging bunkers, and cleaning AA camp compounds. They said that young Rohingya people were concerned about the ULA/AA collecting lists of Rohingya people who finished matriculation exams and religious studies.

“[The AA] also began collecting a list of Rohingya young people who completed matriculation exams and religious studies. As it didn't explain the reason for collecting the list, Rohingya young people are worried about it. In the first week of January, the AA collected lists like this in Kyauk Hlay Karr, Tha Yet Oke, Ngan Chaung, Paung Zar, Hla Baw Zar, and Kyet Yoe Pyin villages in Maungdaw Township.”

- 39, MALE, MAUNGDAW

Another respondent in Maungdaw Township said that the ULA/AA held several meetings with Rohingya villagers and warned them to report movement of Rohingya armed actors

immediately, or face serious actions if they did not. In some villages, the ULA/AA reportedly displaced Rohingya residents because it suspected there to be armed actors hiding there.

“The AA held several meetings in Rohingya villages and warned villagers to report movement of Rohingya armed actors. They warned that if villagers failed to do so, entire villages would be burned down. On 7 January, the AA ordered villagers from Ngan Chaung village to leave the village because of suspicion of RSO activities in the village. [...] Rohingya are worried about their activity as the ULA/AA warned us that we would be forced to leave our villages if they found any movement of Rohingya armed actors.”

- 40, MALE, MAUNGDAW

As in Maungdaw, respondents in Buthidaung Township said that the ULA/AA threatened them and detained young Rohingya people. Respondents said that they felt insecure because the AA had appointed informants to monitor the situation of Rohingya villages.

“The AA also threatened to destroy entire villages if anyone communicated with Rohingya armed groups. They used polite words in the meeting, but their actions afterward were harsh.

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN VILLAGES

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

The AA accused young people of joining the SAC, arrested them, and punished them. [...] As the AA is deliberately targeting Rohingya people in order to drive us out from Rakhine State, I have a negative view on its administration.”

- 26, MALE, BUTHIDAUNG

Respondents in Sittwe Township said that the SAC had collected population data in Rohingya villages, and they expressed concerns over physical and verbal abuse by SAC forces at checkpoints in the township. The SAC reportedly continued its forced recruitment of Rohingya villagers, with each village required to provide

four men and to pay salaries for conscripts and their families, and forced conscripts to do hard labour.

“Each checkpoint collects between 1,000 and 20,000 Myanmar Kyat [~0.38 to 7.73 GBP]. Every village is required to provide four men as SAC conscripts. The villagers need to provide a monthly salary for the conscripts’ families. They use the Rohingya conscripts to do hard work such as digging holes, carrying loads, cleaning checkpoints, and asking money from people crossing checkpoints.”

- 30, MALE, SIITWE



BUTHIDAUNG TOWNSHIP

## ... INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS

As with camp residents, Rohingya villagers voiced concerns about potential intercommunal violence. Rohingya villagers in Minbya Township said that there was no tension between their Rakhine neighbours and Rohingya villagers, but that there was an attack by Rakhine IDP from Maungdaw who are sheltering in villages in Minbya Township.

“In November, three Rohingya farm labourers were killed by Rakhine IDPs who are from Maungdaw Township, sheltering here. Those Rakhine IDPs are hostile and attack Rohingya villagers when we pass their villages. Due to that attack, we feel unsafe to go and work in some Rakhine villages.”

- 20, MALE, MINBYA

As with Rohingya villagers in Minbya Township, respondents in Sittwe Township reported that two Rohingya villagers (a mother and son) were attacked by Rakhine villagers near a Rakhine market in Sittwe Township in the last week of December, increasing concerns among Rohingya villagers about going to Rakhine villages. Respondents said that there were several incidents of robbery and extortion by Rakhine taxi drivers and Rakhine criminal gangs and expressed concern about potential tensions between communities.

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN VILLAGES

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

“On 16 Dec, a mother and a son went to sell vegetables at the Rakhine market in Sittwe town and they were beaten badly by Rakhine men and abducted at the Rakhine village. Rakhine villagers accused them of destroying their vegetable field and demanded 100,000 Myanmar Kyat [~38.68 GBP] upon release as compensation for damaging their vegetables. Some Rakhine taxi drivers have links with Rakhine criminal gangs and they coordinate to extort and rob motorbikes and phones from Rohingya people while travelling with such drivers. We are concerned about potential tensions between

communities as the SAC pressured us against the ULA/AA. Some Rakhine people even told us that they would take revenge on us after the ULA/AA controls Sittwe Township.”

- 30, MALE, SITTWE

Respondents in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships expressed greatest concern over potential intercommunal violence due to Rohingya armed actors' movement and attacks on Rakhine people. They reported having very limited interaction with Rakhine people as the

ULA/AA restricted Rohingya people's movement and business ties with Rakhine people.

“There is tension between two communities, and some Rakhine people took revenge against Rohingya villagers by burning down their houses. The ULA/AA administration also discriminates against Rohingya villagers and favours Rakhine villagers. Rohingya are not allowed to go to the town or do business in Rakhine villages.”

- 33, MALE, BUTHIDAUNG

## MAUNGDAW TOWNSHIP





## ROHINGYA VOICES

## Bangladesh

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN COX'S BAZAR AND BHASAN CHAR

The Myanmar military's 2017 'clearance operations' displaced some 700,000 Rohingya people from (mainly northern) Rakhine State into Bangladesh, where these people joined hundreds of thousands of Rohingya people displaced by earlier waves of violence. Upwards of one million Rohingya people now live in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar and neighbouring areas. However, these camps have offered no respite from violence; particularly since 2019, competition between — and little policing of — ARSA, RSO, and other criminal actors in the camps have left Rohingya refugees dead, injured, and fearful, and may be the cause of deadly fires that have destroyed thousands of homes. In addition, stringent restrictions by Bangladesh authorities mean that camp residents are not allowed to leave the camps to access markets, or seek work, healthcare, or education in neighbouring communities, and violence by Bangladeshi communities has often prevented even informal movement. Bangladesh's Armed Police Battalion (APBn) has frequently used violence, extortion, forced labour, and arbitrary detention to enforce restrictions. Rohingya refugees are heavily reliant on humanitarian assistance, particularly since Bangladeshi authorities demolished businesses in the camps in 2022.

In 2020, Bangladeshi authorities began relocating Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char, a silt island in the Bay of Bengal that is exposed to dangerous weather events and which offers almost nothing in the way of work or subsistence opportunities. Bhasan Char residents are largely prevented from leaving due to formal restrictions and the difficulties associated with travelling back to the mainland, meaning that the only income opportunities are a small number of NGO positions, and the only healthcare option (except in dire emergencies) is a single 20-bed hospital. Reporting suggests that humanitarian assistance is greater on Bhasan Char than in Cox's Bazar camps, but is still inadequate.

## / PRIMARY CONCERNS

## COX'S BAZAR

Respondents reported that on 17 January, a massive [fire](#) in camp 26 in Cox's Bazar killed two children, injured several people, and [destroyed](#) at least 100 shelters. Respondents expressed greatest concern about the lack of protection in camps, especially for children and the Rohingya Christian community. Respondents said that kidnappings and abductions increased in the camps in January, and they reported several cases targeting young Rohingya people. According to local media, on 15 and 16 January, a Rohingya religious leader was [kidnapped](#) by a local gang and only released after being badly beaten, and a Rohingya child was kidnapped and ransom was [demanded](#) from the victim's family.

"The kidnapping cases increased in January. People feel unsafe and avoid leaving the camp at night due to concerns about the risk of kidnapping for ransom by local criminal gangs. There is no serious action by the camp authorities on those cases, and the protection team in the camp did not intervene in these cases or provide any proper protection for children. The criminal gangs shot videos torturing victims and demanded money from the victims' families. If

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN COX'S BAZAR AND BHASAN CHAR

## / PRIMARY CONCERNS

families failed to pay, they killed and dumped bodies of those victims near the camps.”

- 37, MALE, COX'S BAZAR

## BHASAN CHAR

As with respondents in Cox's Bazar, Rohingya refugees on Bhasan Char Island expressed concerns about the lack of the protection, especially for women. One respondent in Bhasan Char said that there was no privacy or safety for women and girls, and reported child rape cases and limited privacy among residents because they shared toilet and bathroom facilities. She also expressed concerns over the lack of the proper support of hygiene kits, and particularly menstrual pads for women.

“There was no safety and privacy for girls and women. We often heard the child rape cases here. In my flat there are eight households, and we are required to share toilet and bathroom facilities. We have no privacy. We only have access to use pieces of cloth for menstruation in camp and we cannot properly clean and dry them due to limited space in camp and because we share bathrooms with other residents. Women often suffered bacterial and fungal infections, causing skin rashes and itching, due to unsanitary materials.”

- 45, FEMALE, BHASAN CHAR

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

## ... HUMANITARIAN ASSISTANCE

Respondents in Cox's Bazar reported that new Rohingya arrivals urgently needed shelter support and gas for cooking. Respondents reported hearing that an organisation would issue registration cards called “Joint Assistance cards” — different from those issued to Rohingya refugees who arrived in Cox's Bazar in 2017 — with which new arrivals could access humanitarian assistance and temporary shelter in camps.

“We heard that from 20 January, [an organisation] will resume issuing registration cards for new arrivals. But we heard that this card is different from the card that they issued for Rohingya who arrived at camp in 2017. They will only issue one card for whole households. But for existing refugees they provide registration to people over 18 years old and identify them as forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals / Persons of Concerns.”

- 38, MALE, COX'S BAZAR

One respondent reported an urgent need for medical treatment for chronic diseases. He said that although one organisation was providing medical treatment for Hepatitis B and C patients, the support was very limited and patients needed to meet specific requirements to access the treatment.

“Healthcare services in camps are extremely limited, and NGO clinics and hospitals only provide basic healthcare. [An organisation] is implementing a program to provide medical treatment for patients with Hepatitis B and C, but only very few patients can access the medications as others cannot meet the criteria. To access this program, patients need to be over 40 years old, the disease condition must be at the severe stage, and there are other requirements. As many refugees are suffering from this disease, we need to seek treatment at an early stage to prevent the disease's spread among refugees.”

- 37, MALE, COX'S BAZAR

As with respondents in Cox's Bazar, respondents on Bhasan Char expressed concern over adequate healthcare services, especially for children and women. One said that there was no sea ambulance for patients to seek treatment at Noakhali hospital and no ophthalmologist though many residents suffered from eye diseases.

“There is no proper healthcare for us, and there is no sea ambulance for patients who need to seek treatment at the Noakhali hospital. There are a few opticians but no ophthalmologist to treat [conditions] and perform eye surgeries.”

- 45, FEMALE, BHASAN CHAR



## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN COX'S BAZAR AND BHASAN CHAR

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

## ... ARMED AND GOVERNANCE ACTORS

Respondents in Cox's Bazar reported that, on 6 January, Rohingya armed actors such as ARSA, RSO, ARA, and Islamic Mahez held a meeting at camp 9, in Balukhali. Nearly 200 Rohingya refugees reportedly attended the meeting, where armed actors discussed fighting against the AA in Rakhine State and organised recruitment of young people from all camps. Respondents in Cox's Bazar said that

Bangladeshi authorities continued to prohibit Rohingya street vendors and shop owners from selling goods in camps, threatened Rohingya people, and physically abused them. Respondents said that due to the increasing cases of kidnapping and abduction committed by Bangladeshi gangs, Rohingya day labourers were not able to access their workplaces in host village areas or outside the camps, further limiting their small income source.

"The authorities demolished shops owned by Rohingya and prohibited selling goods in camps. The Rohingya daily labourers are also unable to access their workplaces due to concerns about kidnapping and abduction by local gangs. As we receive [only] basic foods such as rice, cooking oil, and beans, we need regular incomes to fulfil our families' needs, but now due to those incidents people face more limited access to small income sources."

- 37, MALE, COX'S BAZAR

## COX'S BAZAR



Respondents in Cox's Bazar also expressed concerns that Bangladeshi authorities were pushing back Rohingya people who had fled from Rakhine State. On 6 January Bangladeshi authorities **detained** 36 Rohingya people, and on 12 January they **arrested** 56 more, for trespassing and reportedly planned to send them back to Myanmar. In addition, a new arrival said that the camp-in-charge (CIC) did not allow Rohingya newcomers to work with NGOs even though some had been offered work as teachers with NGO-led community learning centres. One respondent on Bhasan Char said that camp authorities and security police often verbally abused Rohingya refugees and did not permit them to visit Cox's Bazar.

## ROHINGYA COMMUNITIES IN COX'S BAZAR AND BHASAN CHAR

## / REFLECTIONS ON ...

"The authorities in camp are very rude and they often verbally abuse us. Every day, hundreds of people go to the CIC office to submit applications to visit their families in Cox's Bazar. It takes at least four to six months to know whether they permit us to visit or not, and most of the time they reject the applications. I submitted applications four times in the past six months to visit my mother in Cox's Bazar, but they refused me for no reason."

- 47, MALE, BHASAN CHAR

## ... INTERCOMMUNAL RELATIONS

Respondents said that they had very limited interaction with host communities, due to concerns about attacks, abductions, or kidnapping by community members or Bangladeshi criminal gangs. However, respondents expressed concerns over attacks on the Rohingya Christian community by some Rohingya Muslims. Respondents said that there are around 300 Rohingya Christian refugees in camps 13 and 27, and some of them were sheltering in UNHCR transit centres due to security concerns. On 7 January, the APBn arrested a Rohingya Christian for allegedly insulting the prophet Mohammed. One respondent said that Muslim religious leaders and some refugees urged the community

to attack and kill Rohingya Christian people and on 7 January, several Rohingya people threw stones at shelters belonging to Christian refugees.

"The Christian community is a vulnerable community in Cox's Bazar as they are often attacked by Rohingya Muslim religious leaders and Rohingya armed groups. Some religious leaders preached to kill them and some Muslims — we believe they are ARSA members — hung posters to kill Christian youth and activists. It is a very concerning situation as there was deadly violence in 2020 in Cox's Bazar [in which] several Christians were killed or seriously injured by Rohingya Muslims."

- 37, MALE, COX'S BAZAR

Respondents on Bhasan Char said that although they had regular communication with local businessmen, they experienced discrimination and verbal abuse by Bangladeshi NGO staff — especially at clinics — and CIC staff.

"We have regular communication with local businessmen, but NGO staff — especially the Bangladeshi staff at clinics — verbally abuse us. They don't think we are human. They are very rude, and they act like we are not humans. Because of their abuses, Rohingya refugees, especially women, do not want to go to the clinic, and they go to see doctors in emergency

situations. The Bangladeshi NGO workers also discriminate against Rohingya volunteers."

- 45, FEMALE, BHASAN CHAR

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## ROHINGYA VOICES

### ATMOSPHERIC REPORT

Contributing information sources to this document include public and non-public humanitarian information. The content compiled is by no means exhaustive and does not necessarily reflect the position of its authors or funders. The provided information, assessment, and analysis are designated for humanitarian purposes only and as such should not be cited.

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