A new report based on testimony of Rohingya women refugees provides horrifying details of atrocities by Myanmar security forces during recent “clearance operations” in northern Rakhine State.

“Witness to Horror” by Kaladan Press Network, is based on interviews with twenty-one women from nine villages in Maungdaw, who had fled to Bangladesh since the operations began in October 2016.

Almost all the women had lost their husbands, who were either missing or killed by Myanmar troops, some in massacres of up to forty people. Half of the women had lost their children, in acts of appalling cruelty. Babies and young children had been burned alive, stamped to death, shot in front of them, or had their throat slit.

Interviewees described how at least seventy women had been raped by Myanmar security forces, mostly when gathered at gunpoint in large groups outside their villages. Women and girls were pulled away to be raped in nearby houses, fields, forest or military camps. At least six rape victims were killed, some horribly mutilated.

Similarity of testimony by women from different villages show a clear pattern of abuses against civilians on a widespread scale, providing evidence that the abuses were committed systematically, with full command responsibility.

The report also exposes official cover-up of the atrocities. Villagers were rounded up by Myanmar troops and forced to testify in front of video cameras that it was Rohingya militants who had committed abuses against them.

“The Myanmar authorities are hiding the truth at every level,” said Razia Sultana, a Rohingya woman lawyer who carried out the interviews for the report. “The Myanmar government must stop denying the atrocities, and hold their military to account.”

Kaladan Press is calling for an independent international investigation into the abuses, for unfettered humanitarian access, and for recognition of the Rohingya people’s fundamental rights so they can return home in safety.

“Women have had the courage to speak out. The world must listen,” said Razia.