

# "TOOLS OF GENOCIDE"

**National Verification Cards and the  
Denial of Citizenship of Rohingya  
Muslims in Myanmar**

SEPTEMBER 2019





# "TOOLS OF GENOCIDE"

**National Verification Cards and the  
Denial of Citizenship** of Rohingya  
Muslims in Myanmar

## Cover:

D.M., 65, shows a family photo taken by Myanmar authorities during an annual household survey. D.M. fled Myanmar with his three sons following Myanmar Army-led attacks in 2016. Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 2019.

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, August 2019



Fortify Rights works to ensure human rights for all. We **support** human rights defenders and affected communities, **investigate** violations, and **engage** people with power on solutions. We believe in the importance of working with individuals, communities, and movements pushing for change, the influence of evidence-based research, and the power of strategic truth-telling. We are an independent, nonprofit organization registered in the United States and Switzerland.



*"A.Z.," 78, shows proof of his residence in Myanmar: "I have the family photo. I have my documents for my land. I have my family card." He fled Myanmar Army-led attacks in northern Rakhine State 16 days after they began. "They were burning villages," he recalled. "I did not take the NVC card. Once you take it, you become Bengali... [O]ur movements [in Myanmar] were seriously restricted. We were not even allowed to go to the next neighborhood."*

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto,  
Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019

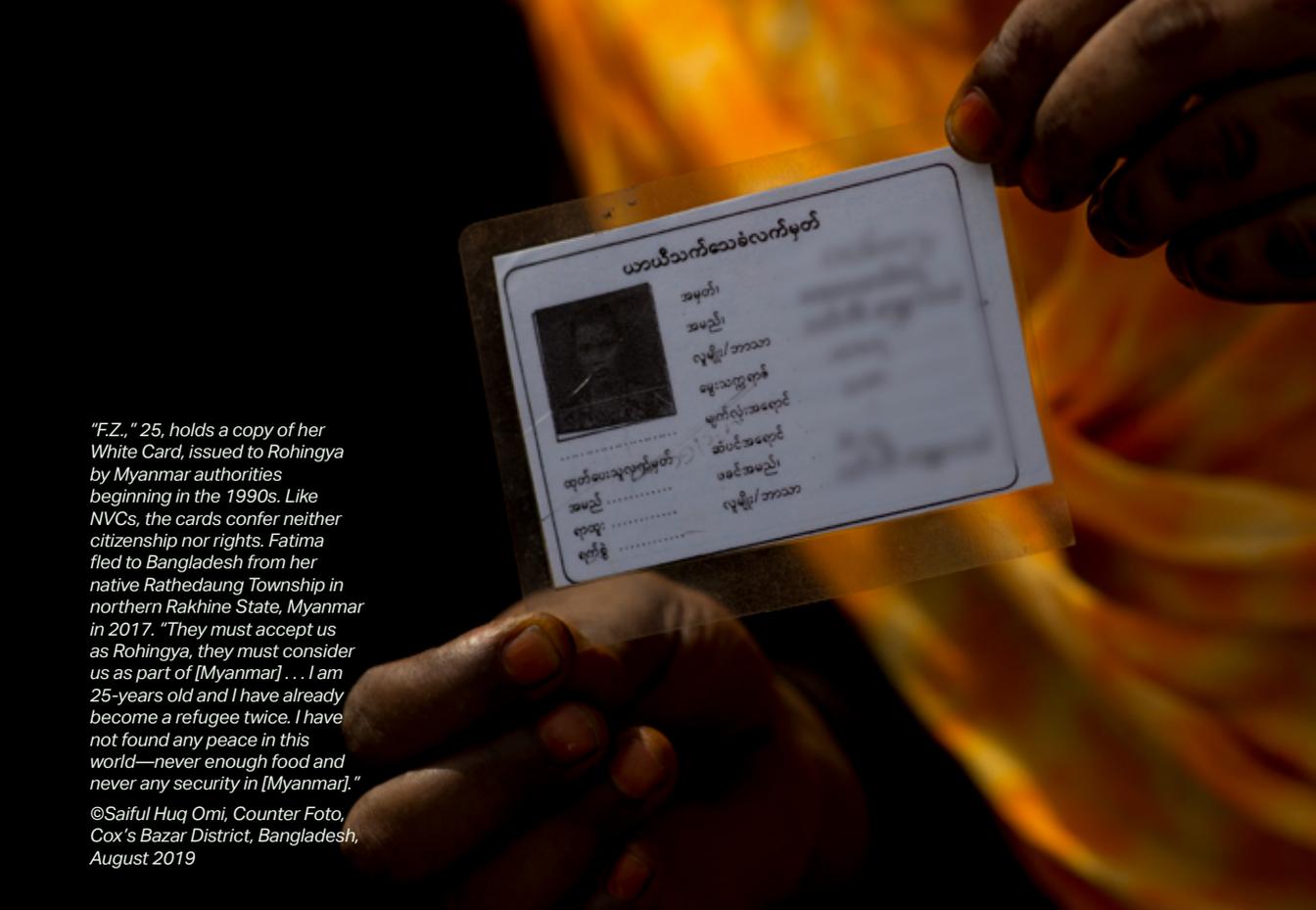


Handwritten notes and a form in Burmese script. The form includes a grid with columns for 'ပျို့အယ်သင်္ကေတ' (Symbol), 'နိုင်ငံသား' (Nationality), 'နိုင်ငံခြားသား' (Foreigner), 'လူမျိုး' (Race), 'နိုင်ငံသား' (Nationality), 'ဘာသာ' (Religion), and 'မှတ်ချက်' (Remarks).

Handwritten text includes:

- လမ်း -
- ကျေးရွာ -
- မတ်ပုံတင်အမှတ်စဉ်
- ၆၆/၁၀၀

ပျို့အယ်သင်္ကေတ	နိုင်ငံသား	နိုင်ငံခြားသား	လူမျိုး	နိုင်ငံသား	ဘာသာ	မှတ်ချက်
၈	စပါးသည်					
၉						
၁၀						
၁၁						
၁၂						
၁၃						
၁၄						
၁၅						
၁၆						



*"F.Z., " 25, holds a copy of her White Card, issued to Rohingya by Myanmar authorities beginning in the 1990s. Like NVCs, the cards confer neither citizenship nor rights. Fatima fled to Bangladesh from her native Rathedaung Township in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar in 2017. "They must accept us as Rohingya, they must consider us as part of [Myanmar]. . . I am 25-years old and I have already become a refugee twice. I have not found any peace in this world—never enough food and never any security in [Myanmar]."*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019*

# SUMMARY

The United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention warns of certain indicators that “provide an environment conducive to the commission of atrocity crimes,” including “increased politicization of identity” and discriminatory “measures or legislation” targeting protected groups. In addition to certain prohibited acts, such as killing members of a group, genocidal States often use legal and administrative tools to facilitate the destruction of a targeted group “in whole or in part.”

In Myanmar, successive governments have implemented measures and legislation to erase Rohingya Muslims’ identity and rights, creating an enabling environment for genocide.

This report documents how the Government of Myanmar is using discriminatory administrative measures to deny Rohingya the right to nationality. The government has forced or coerced Rohingya to accept National Verification Cards (NVCs), which effectively identify Rohingya as “foreigners,” and Myanmar authorities tortured Rohingya and imposed restrictions on Rohingya freedom of movement in the context of implementing the NVC process.

*N.F., 20, fled from Rathedaung Township in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State. She is single and alone in Bangladesh, depending entirely on humanitarian aid.*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019*



This report finds that the NVC process violates customary international law as well as core human rights treaties to which Myanmar is a party, including the International Covenant on Economic, Social, and Cultural Rights, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, and may have contributed to the commission of genocide and crimes against humanity.

The Rohingya are a predominantly Muslim ethnic minority group indigenous to Buddhist-majority Myanmar. Using a citizenship law entered into force in 1982, the government denies access to full citizenship for individuals who do not belong to “national” ethnic groups determined by the State. The State relies on an arbitrary and disputed list of 135 recognized national ethnic groups. As Rohingya are not among the “national ethnic groups” specified by the Myanmar government, the law effectively strips them of access to full citizenship rights.

Over the years, successive governments in Myanmar also created a series of administrative “citizenship scrutiny” processes to progressively limit rights for Rohingya.

The latest iteration of these processes is the NVC.

*N.F. holds a copy of her White Card issued by the Myanmar government.*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019*



Implemented under the Aung San Suu Kyi government, the NVC process requires Rohingya to register as “Bengali” or another foreign identity, relegating Rohingya to the status of “foreigner,” denying them access to full citizenship and contributing to their administrative erasure.

“On the NVC form it asked, ‘Where are you from?’ ‘Which border did you enter?’ ‘How did you come to Myanmar?’,” a 30-year-old Rohingya man from Maungdaw Township in Myanmar’s Rakhine State told Fortify Rights. “We are not migrants. The document that you have to fill out for the NVC makes us feel shame. It says we are outsiders.”

This report is based on 628 interviews from 2014 to 2019 conducted by Fortify Rights, including with 304 Rohingya women, in Rakhine State, Myanmar; Cox’s Bazar District, Bangladesh; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. Fortify Rights interviewed eyewitnesses and survivors of human rights violations in Myanmar as well as members of civil society organizations and humanitarian aid workers.

“The NVC is a tool of genocide,” a Rohingya refugee in Bangladesh told Fortify Rights in English, later adding, “We want our citizenship restored first, and there should be equality, safety, and security in our motherland.”

## **NATIONAL VERIFICATION CARDS, HUMAN RIGHTS VIOLATIONS, AND ATROCITY CRIMES**

The Myanmar government has used the NVC process to violate the rights of Rohingya, and the process itself has resulted in human rights violations.

“I was beaten everywhere— my head, back, chest, and all over my body,” a Rohingya farmer, 62, told Fortify Rights, describing beatings by Myanmar authorities. The same authorities threatened the man to accept an NVC, saying, “If you don’t accept the NVC, we will kill you.”

In another instance, on July 17, 2017, Myanmar Army soldiers and government officials entered Baw Tu Lar village—also known as Bandola village—in Rakhine State’s Maungdaw Township and forced groups of Rohingya to accept NVCs, in some cases at gunpoint.

“[The soldiers] closed the door and surrounded us, holding guns,” a Rohingya man, 61, told Fortify Rights. Myanmar authorities forced him and four of his seven family members to accept the NVC. “They separated men and women . . . The threats to receive an NVC are real. It’s a horrible situation for us.”

Just weeks later, in August 2017, the Myanmar military began attacking civilians in northern Rakhine State, forcing at least some Rohingya residents of Baw Tu Lar village to flee to Bangladesh.

Beginning in October 2016 and August 2017—in response to Rohingya militant attacks on police—Myanmar security forces and civilian perpetrators razed several hundred Rohingya villages and committed massacres and mass rape of Rohingya women, men, and children throughout northern Rakhine State, forcing nearly 800,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh. In July 2018, Fortify Rights exposed how Myanmar authorities made “extensive and systematic preparations” for the attacks against Rohingya and that the crimes constituted genocide and crimes against humanity.

Likewise, in September 2018, the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (FFM), established by the United Nations Human Rights Council in March 2017 to investigate crimes committed by Myanmar security forces, concluded that there was “sufficient information to warrant the investigation and prosecution of senior officials in the Tatmadaw [military] chain of command” for the crime of genocide and crimes against humanity against Rohingya in Rakhine State.

As part of its findings, the FFM reported how “[p]ressure to accept the NVC increased in the months leading up to August 2017” and that Border Guard Police and Myanmar Army soldiers held a “series of more targeted and aggressive meetings” with Rohingya elders in mid-August 2017, demanding residents accept NVCs. According to the FFM, these meetings took place in villages where “some of the most brutal ‘clearance operations’ subsequently took place.”

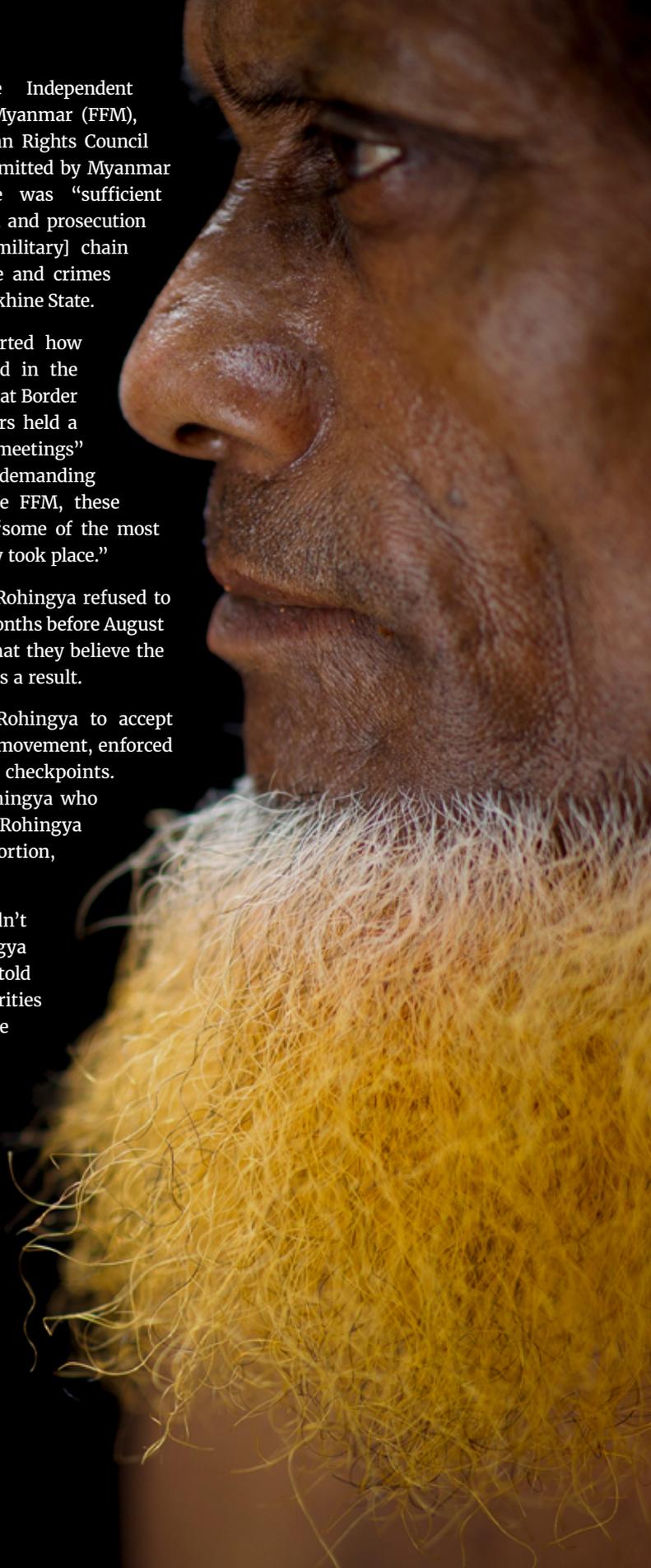
In cases documented by Fortify Rights, Rohingya refused to accept NVCs *en masse* in the weeks and months before August 2017, and Rohingya told Fortify Rights that they believe the Myanmar Army attacked them, in part, as a result.

The authorities continue to pressure Rohingya to accept NVCs by imposing added restrictions on movement, enforced through ubiquitous military and police checkpoints. Security forces do not always grant Rohingya who hold NVCs with permission to pass, and Rohingya often encounter violence, threats, extortion, and other abuses at the checkpoints.

“[T]he security forces beat me as I couldn’t show them an NVC,” a 58-year-old Rohingya man from Maungdaw Township told Fortify Rights, describing how the authorities stopped him at a checkpoint while he was attempting to travel to another township. “They tortured me with a rod, they extorted money, and they sent me back, threatening me that I must take the NVC.”

*O.M. is a 55-year-old Rohingya father of eight children, and a landowner in Rakhine State, Myanmar. Before fleeing Myanmar to escape military-led attacks in 2017, he was a farmer. “Some years ago, the army gave us documents before the last election. They asked us to vote for them and promised that if we did, then we wouldn’t be tortured . . . But right after the vote ended, they started to torture us again. . . . [W]hen the immigration people came to our village and asked us to take the NVC cards, we didn’t want to take it. We ran away from the village and took shelter in the nearby hills.”*

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox’s Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019





Furthermore, Rohingya are increasingly only able to access livelihoods if they hold an NVC, creating severe economic pressure on any Rohingya who refuse to identify as a “Bengali” or other foreign identity.

“Last year, in September 2018, the authorities told me I could not fish,” a Rohingya fisher, 30, told Fortify Rights. “Without the NVC, we cannot move or work, so I had no choice but to take the NVC.”

Even with NVCs, Rohingya are systematically denied freedom of movement. The government continues to confine nearly 500,000 Rohingya to isolated, poor villages and to 24 squalid internment camps located in five townships in Rakhine State.

## **NATIONAL VERIFICATION CARDS, HUMANITARIAN ORGANIZATIONS, AND ROHINGYA IDENTITY**

The Myanmar government-imposed restrictions to force Rohingya to accept NVCs also impact the work of international humanitarian aid organizations operational in northern Rakhine State. Rohingya aid workers are required by the government to hold an NVC to travel and carry out their work. Fortify Rights documented how at least five humanitarian aid organizations coerced Rohingya to accept NVCs.

“My country director said, ‘How can you stay with [our organization] without travel authorization?’ I was advised that it is better to take the NVC to carry out my duties,” a Rohingya aid worker in northern Rakhine State told Fortify Rights. “[The agency] said, if not, they will not hire me again next year. I started considering my job security, and if I talk to you honestly, I had to take the NVC.”

*N.M., 75, shows his original White Card receipt. The Myanmar government issued the receipts to Rohingya after revoking their White Cards in March 2015. Like the White Card, the receipts confer no rights. “[Myanmar soldiers] asked us to take the NVC cards. We refused and said, ‘We can only take the card if you write down that we are Rohingya.’ The security forces said, ‘We cannot do it as you are just Bengalis,’ but we made it very clear to them that even if we are beaten to death, we would not take the NVC.”*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox’s Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019*

Rohingya and foreign aid workers in northern Rakhine State also told Fortify Rights that Rohingya staff were unable to identify as Rohingya within their organizations and in the workplace.

“I was not able to say I was Rohingya in my place of work,” a 37-year-old Rohingya told Fortify Rights. “I was unable to say it at meetings or to people I would work with.”

Current senior staff of humanitarian organizations operational in northern Rakhine State spoke about an ongoing “culture of silence” and “an environment of self-censoring” and said that the incidents documented by Fortify Rights are not the result of explicit policies within the organizations.

However, senior U.N. officials and diplomats have privately and publicly supported the NVC process and its earlier iterations, despite that the process violates the Rohingya right to a nationality, the principle of non-discrimination, and other fundamental rights. Most recently, in January 2019, U.N. Special Envoy to Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener issued a statement in which she failed to use the term “Rohingya” and “encouraged the internally displaced people she met to consider applying for [NVC] registration.”

The FFM, on the other hand, described the NVC process in September 2018 as “protracted, cumbersome and increasingly coercive.”

*H.K., 75, from Maungdaw Township in Myanmar's Rakhine State shows a copy of her household list provided by Myanmar authorities as part of annual household surveys, which are commonly abusive exercises. Many Rohingya have no other form of identification. "I saw no one was taking the NVC... I was afraid and also decided not to take it."*

*@Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019*





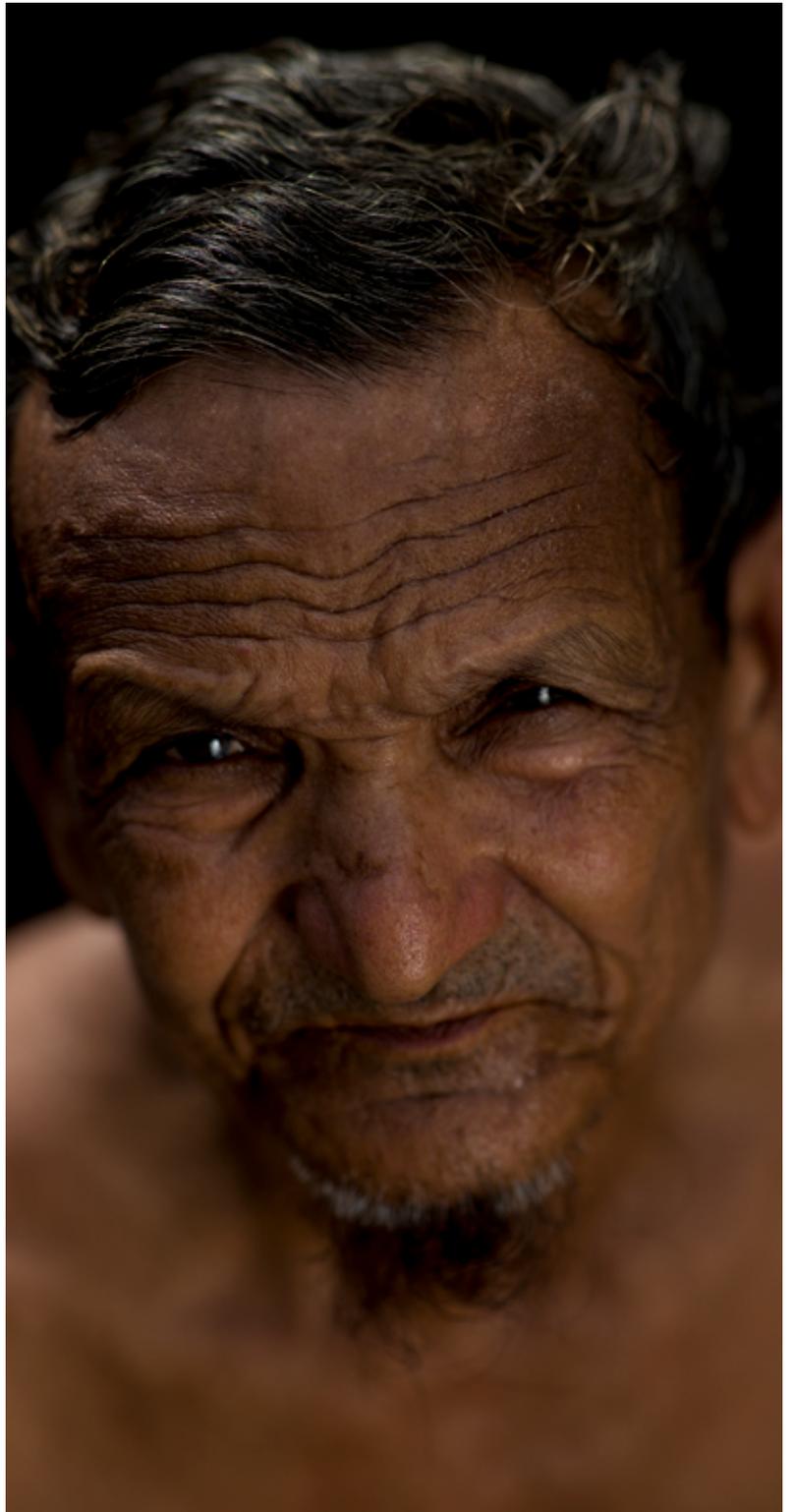
H.K., 75.

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019

"F.Z.," 25.

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto,  
Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh,  
August 2019





*N.M., 75.*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019*



*During Myanmar military-led attacks against Rohingya that began in August 2017, 35 members of M.S.'s family were killed, and others were seriously harmed. "I have my identity card with me," he said. "My family members have the family photo, family cards, and we even have the documents for the land. While all these prove my life in [Myanmar], the NVC would call me Bengali. But I am a Rohingya. I am not a Bengali, and I will never except the NVC. I will only go back [to Myanmar] if three of our demands are met—they give us our citizenship as a Rohingya; they give us compensation for all the destruction they have caused; and complete security of life is ensured for us. Unless we have that, we are not going back."*

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto,  
Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 2019.



*M.S. holds his White Card issued by the Myanmar government.*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 2019*

## **JUSTICE AND ACCOUNTABILITY**

The human rights violations documented in this report should be taken into consideration by investigators evaluating potential international crimes committed by Myanmar state security forces.

In a historic decision on September 6, 2018, the International Criminal Court (ICC) granted the Office of the Prosecutor jurisdiction to investigate and possibly prosecute the crime against humanity of deportation of Rohingya to Bangladesh as well as the crimes against humanity of persecution and other inhumane acts. Furthermore, in March 2019, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) passed a resolution to bring a case, led by the Government of The Gambia, against Myanmar to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for the crime of genocide against Rohingya.

Nevertheless, the Government of Myanmar consistently denies allegations of human rights violations against Rohingya and has failed to properly investigate and prosecute perpetrators of mass atrocity crimes. The government continues to refuse to cooperate with international human rights monitors, including the FFM and U.N. Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee.



*D.M., 65, holds his original household list from an annual household survey conducted by the Myanmar authorities. For many Rohingya, this is their only form of identification. D.M. and his three sons fled to Bangladesh following Myanmar Army-led attacks in 2016. "All my family members are from [my] village in Maungdaw. My father was born there, I was born there, my great grandfather was also born there . . . Those of us who can read saw that the NVC card [application] mentions that we would be called Bengalis if we take the card," he said. He and his three sons refused to take the card. "Then October 9 [2016] happened. The Army came to our village and burned all our homes. I am grateful to Bangladesh for giving us shelter and a home."*

*©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 2019*

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

As Myanmar approaches elections in 2020, issues of citizenship and ethnic identity will continue to factor prominently in the national discourse.

In order to address the protracted crisis and prevent further atrocities in Rakhine State, the Government of Myanmar should immediately abolish the NVC process and restore equal access to full citizenship rights for Rohingya through a speedy administrative process developed in meaningful consultation with the Rohingya community in Myanmar, Bangladesh, and the diaspora.

As part of this process, the government should amend the 1982 Citizenship Law to bring it in line with international law and standards and ensure equal access to full citizenship rights, regardless of ethnicity, race, or religion.

Until Myanmar makes appropriate changes in its law and policies to provide Rohingya equal access to full citizenship, the Government of Bangladesh with support from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees should suspend plans to return Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. Plans

to facilitate refugee returns should be predicated on access to full citizenship and basic rights and freedoms for Rohingya in Myanmar.

To address crimes committed against Rohingya and pave the path for future protections, the international community should ensure justice for atrocity crimes in Myanmar and press the U.N. Security Council to refer Myanmar to the ICC or, alternatively, to establish an *ad hoc* international criminal tribunal. The international community should impose an arms embargo on the Myanmar military and targeted sanctions against military-owned enterprises and those found to be responsible for human rights violations in Rakhine State.

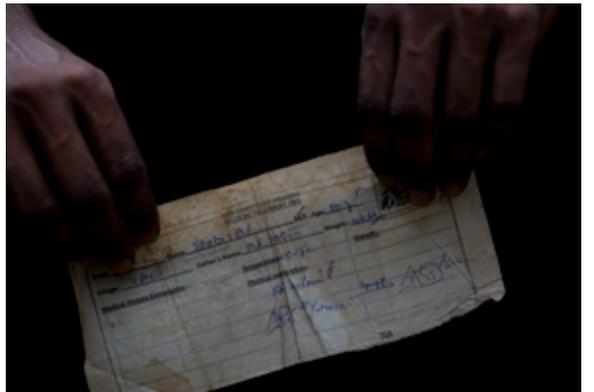
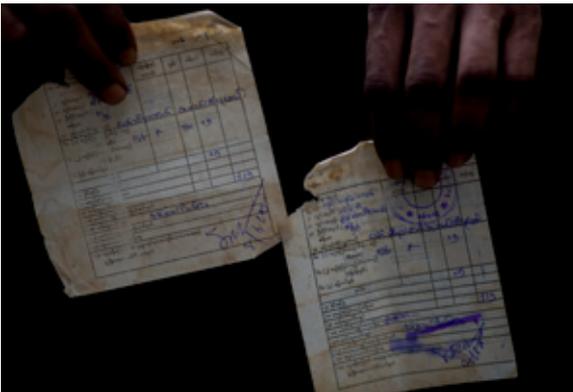
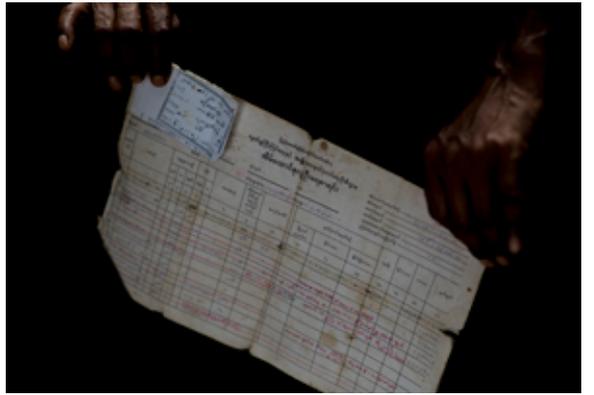
International humanitarian agencies operational in northern Rakhine State should establish a common position and a coordinated, rights-respecting response to the NVC process in order to protect the rights of Rohingya and other communities and enable Rohingya to opt out of the NVC process, if they choose, without fear of reprisals or loss of opportunities.

Rohingya human rights defenders in Myanmar and throughout the world are advocating for these and other objectives. Their work is described in chapter IV of this report.

*A.R., 85, was a farmer in Myanmar and is the father of six. Two of his sons were killed during the Myanmar Army-led attacks in August 2017. "Once you take the [NVC] card, you become just a guest in [Myanmar]. I can feed you rice now, but even before you are done eating, I can ask you to leave my home, as you are just a guest a for us. I did not want to become a guest."*

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 2019





# METHODOLOGY



This report is based on 628 interviews, including interviews with 304 women, conducted from 2014 to 2019 by Fortify Rights in Rakhine State, Myanmar; Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh; and Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. This includes 104 qualitative interviews conducted by Fortify Rights from October 2018 to August 2019 with eyewitnesses and survivors of human rights violations in Myanmar as well as with members of civil society organizations and humanitarian aid workers. This figure also includes 29 previously unpublished testimonies collected by Fortify Rights from Rohingya confined to internment camps in Sittwe Township, Rakhine State and located in other parts of Myanmar, Bangladesh, and Malaysia in 2014 and 2015.

Lastly, the report draws on select findings from forthcoming research conducted in July and August 2018 by a team of Rohingya researchers supported and guided by Fortify Rights in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh. The Rohingya research team interviewed a total of 495 Rohingya refugees, including 264 women, residing in 33 different sections of the refugee camps in southeastern Bangladesh.

Fortify Rights conducted qualitative interviews with Rohingya in the Rohingya language with the assistance of an English-Rohingya interpreter. Everyone interviewed for this report gave free, prior, and informed consent to be interviewed and for their testimony to be publicized. No one interviewed for this report received compensation, and all were informed of the purpose of the interview, its voluntary nature, and how the information might be used. Fortify Rights reimbursed the modest travel costs for three Rohingya to meet in a secure location. The locations of some interviews, names of survivors, eyewitnesses, and others, the location details of the interviews, and other identifying details are withheld or changed in this report for security reasons.



On August 7, 2019, Fortify Rights sent a letter to the Government of Myanmar requesting further information on the NVC process. Myanmar President Win Myint, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, Commander Major General Teza Kyaw of the Myanmar Army Northern Command, Minister of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr. Win Myat Aye, Minister for Labor, Immigration and Population Thein Swe, and the Chairperson of Myanmar National Human Rights Commission Win Mra received a copy of the letter. At the time of writing, Fortify Rights had not received a response. The letter is included as Annex III of this report.

A.R, 30.

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019



A.R., 85.

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019



N.B., 25.

©Saiful Huq Omi, Counter Foto, Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh, August 2019



# MAP OF MYANMAR AND BANGLADESH



# QUANTITATIVE-DATA SNAPSHOTS

In July and August 2018, Fortify Rights supported a team of Rohingya researchers in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh to collect and analyze quantitative data related to the situation of Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh. The group surveyed 495 Rohingya refugees, including 264 women, residing in 33 different sections of the refugee camps in southeastern Bangladesh. Below are select findings of this Rohingya-led research related specifically to the denial of citizenship and National Verification Cards (NVCs).<sup>1</sup>

## Denial of Documentation

100 percent of Rohingya respondents reported being prevented from obtaining official documentation in Myanmar (i.e. documentation that would confer rights, such as a National Registration Card).



100%

## Coercive Documentation

99.8 percent of Rohingya respondents reported feeling pressure to accept unwanted documentation (e.g., NVCs or other unwanted documentation).



99.8%

## Denial of Citizenship

100 percent of Rohingya respondents reported being prevented from obtaining citizenship in Myanmar.



100%

## Restrictions on Movement

99.6 percent of Rohingya respondents reported being prevented from traveling in Myanmar (e.g., not being able to travel from one township to another without authorization or permission from the State).



99.6%

## Prevented from Working

99.6 percent of Rohingya respondents in Bangladesh reported being prevented from working in Myanmar (for example prevented from accessing fields, fishing boats, etc., or prevented from travelling to work).



99.6%

<sup>1</sup> Fortify Rights, forthcoming participatory research study conducted in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, July and August 2018.

# CHRONOLOGY OF EVENTS:

## ROHINGYA CITIZENSHIP, 1948-2019

Myanmar passes the Union Citizenship Act, 1948, through which Rohingya have access to citizenship, reflected in the issuing of National Registration Cards (NRCs). Prime Minister U Nu recognizes Rohingya as indigenous to Myanmar.

1948

### 1970s

The Myanmar government issues Foreign Registration Cards (FRCs) to some Rohingya under the Emergency Immigration Act, ostensibly to address unauthorized migration from India and Bangladesh. FRC holders are recognized as foreigners.

1977

The Myanmar military initiates Operation *Naga Min* (Dragon King) to identify and register residents of three states and two divisions as either citizens or foreigners. Beginning in Rakhine State in February 1978, the Myanmar Army reportedly razes Rohingya villages and commits severe human rights violations, forcing more than 200,000 Rohingya into Bangladesh. Myanmar authorities, at the time, blame the situation on "wild Muslim extremists" and "rampaging Bengali mobs."

1978

Myanmar President Senior General Ne Win agrees to "repatriate" Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh. Bangladesh and Myanmar force hundreds of thousands of Rohingya back to Myanmar.

Myanmar passes new 1982 Citizenship Law effectively denying Rohingya full citizenship. Former President Senior General Ne Win says the law was intended to "clarify the position of guests and mixed bloods" and that "only pure-blooded nationals will be called citizens."

1982

The Myanmar government begins issuing Citizenship Scrutiny Cards, Associate Citizenship Scrutiny Cards, and Naturalized Citizenship Scrutiny Cards in line with the ethnic-based 1982 Citizenship Law. The government refuses to provide cards to Rohingya.

1989

19  
90

○ Myanmar holds multiparty national elections, in which the Rohingya vote, contributing to the victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD). The Myanmar military fails to acknowledge the results and puts NLD-leader Aung San Suu Kyi under house arrest.

○ The Myanmar military launches Operation *Pyi Thaya* (Clean and Beautiful Nation) in Rakhine State, committing killings and rape and razing villages and mosques, forcing tens of thousands of Rohingya to Bangladesh.

19  
91

○ Beginning in September, the governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh as well as the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) force more than 150,000 Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar.

19  
92

○ The Government of Myanmar begins issuing Temporary Registration Cards (TRCs), also known as "White Cards," to Rohingya and other minorities. The cards confer no citizenship rights but later enable Rohingya to participate in the 2010 nationwide elections.

19  
95

○ The military holds a widely criticized national referendum on a military-drafted constitution, leading the military to establish a formal role in the political life of the nation.

20  
08

○ Aung San Suu Kyi is released from a final stint under house arrest.

20  
18

2011

The military-backed Union Solidarity and Development Party wins flawed national elections and former military general Thein Sein becomes President.

Violent incidents between Buddhists and Muslims in Rakhine State spiral into targeted, state-sanctioned attacks on Rohingya and other Muslims in 13 of 17 townships in the state, ultimately displacing more than 200,000 Rohingya. More than 125,000, mostly displaced Rohingya, are confined to dozens of internment camps throughout the state.

2012

Myanmar authorities under President Thein Sein begin a "citizenship verification" process targeting displaced Rohingya in Rakhine State, identifying them as "Bengali" or "Bengali/Islam."

2014

Myanmar conducts a national census that deliberately excludes Rohingya Muslims.

## 2012-2015

More than 170,000 mostly Rohingya flee Rakhine State and the Bangladesh border area, boarding ships largely operated by human trafficking syndicates.

Mass graves of Rohingya trafficking victims discovered in Thailand and Malaysia.

## JUNE 25

Myanmar government begins issuing Identity Cards of National Verification (ICNV), ostensibly to identify applicants who meet requirements for citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law. Some Rohingya are coerced to accept the cards, that confer no rights

2015

Myanmar government bars Rohingya from voting or running for office in national elections, and the opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) fails to field a single Muslim candidate. The NLD wins in a landslide victory, gaining a parliamentary majority.

Myanmar's NLD transitions to power. Aung San Suu Kyi becomes State Counsellor, *de facto* head of state, circumventing the 2008 military-drafted constitution that effectively barred her from the presidency. The NLD government rebrands the ICNV process as National Verification Cards (NVCs) and establishes the Rakhine State Peace and Development Central Committee to issue NVCs.

## OCTOBER 9

2016

Rohingya militants kill nine Myanmar police officers in Maungdaw and Rathedaung townships. Myanmar security forces raze dozens of villages in Maungdaw Township, killing, raping, and arresting Rohingya *en masse*, forcing the displacement of more than 90,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh during the next two months.

## NOVEMBER 2016 TO AUGUST 2017

Myanmar authorities increase military presence in northern Rakhine State, systematically train and arm non-Rohingya residents, confiscate sharp and blunt objects from Rohingya civilians, and evict humanitarian agencies, laying the groundwork for genocide and crimes against humanity.

### MARCH 24

The U.N. Human Rights Council establishes the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) on Myanmar to investigate human rights violations and abuses in Rakhine, Kachin, and Shan states. The Myanmar government refuses to cooperate.

### AUGUST 24

The government-appointed Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by former U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan, makes 88 recommendations to improve the situation in Rakhine State.

### AUGUST 25

Rohingya militants, rebranded as the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), attack police outposts in northern Rakhine State, reportedly killing 12 officials. The Myanmar military responds, killing thousands of Rohingya civilians throughout northern Rakhine State in a matter of days and razing hundreds of villages. More than 700,000 Rohingya flee to Bangladesh—the fastest refugee outflow since the Rwandan genocide. Rohingya militants also kill and threaten civilians.

### SEPTEMBER 6

The International Criminal Court (ICC) rules that it may exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh.

### SEPTEMBER 18

The FFM releases a 444-page report cataloging Myanmar military-led atrocity crimes in Myanmar and calls for the ICC or an international criminal tribunal to investigate and prosecute Myanmar security forces for genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity against Rohingya, Kachin, Shan, and others.

### AUGUST 5

The FFM issues a report exposing the Myanmar military's financial ties, calls for targeted sanctions and arms embargoes.

### AUGUST 22

The FFM issues a report on rape and sexual violence committed by Myanmar security forces with genocidal intent.

Bangladesh and Myanmar governments announce "repatriations" of Rohingya refugees will begin August 22. No Rohingya were consulted, and as of the time of writing, none have returned to Myanmar under the plan.

*Genocidal States often use legal and administrative tools to facilitate the destruction of a targeted group "in whole or in part."*

Based on more than 600 interviews from 2014 to 2019, ***"Tools of Genocide": National Verification Cards and the Denial of Citizenship of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar*** exposes how the Government of Myanmar tortured or otherwise forced or coerced Rohingya to accept National Verification Cards (NVCs) that effectively deny their right to nationality and contribute to the erasure of their ethnic identity.

Coming in the wake of Myanmar Army-led attacks against Rohingya in Rakhine State, this report raises important questions about how NVCs and the denial of citizenship may have contributed to the commission of genocide and crimes against humanity. Through 24 detailed recommendations, it provides a pathway for the international community and the Government of Myanmar to address the root cause of the crisis: the restoration of equal access to full citizenship rights for Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.



**FORTIFY  
RIGHTS**

