



Special Advisory Council for MYANMAR

SAC-M Expresses Serious Concern Over Risk of Grave Violations in Maungdaw and Calls on All Armed Actors to Ensure Protection of Civilians

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SAC-M is seriously concerned over the impact on civilians of armed conflict in Maungdaw township, northern Rakhine state, after the United League of Arakan / Arakha Army (AA) issued an advanced notice and emergency announcement on 16 June 2024 warning of imminent assaults on remaining Myanmar military junta camps in Maungdaw and advising all residents to evacuate Maungdaw immediately.

The majority of civilians in Maungdaw are Rohingya, many of whom are already displaced due to armed conflict and attacks in other parts of northern Rakhine state. In recent weeks, all communities in Rakhine have reportedly suffered human rights violations and violations of international humanitarian law at the hands of the Myanmar military junta, the AA and other armed actors. Rohingya in northern Rakhine again find themselves at heightened risk of being subjected to human rights atrocities.

SAC-M emphasises that all armed actors have obligations under international humanitarian law to ensure the protection of civilians at all times during armed conflict. Issuing evacuation notices does not absolve actors of these obligations. The obligation to protect civilians during armed conflict extends to ensuring unhindered access to humanitarian assistance. The AA leadership has claimed it is committed to the protection of civilians.

Today, the United Nations (UN) High Commissioner for Human Rights presented his most recent report on the situation in Myanmar to the UN Human Rights Council during its 56th session. The High Commissioner expressed his concern about the situation in Maungdaw and emphasised that the Rohingya have nowhere left to flee. Member States of the Council will adopt an annual resolution during the session on the rights of Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar.

The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) continues to collect evidence of the most serious violations of international law in Myanmar. This is not limited to violations allegedly committed by the military junta.



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SAC-M calls again on the international community to take urgent steps to address impunity in Myanmar and advance accountability, by securing a jurisdiction where the evidence collected by the IIMM can be used in criminal prosecutions. The Security Council or the assembly of state parties to the Rome Statute should refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court (ICC). The National Unity Government of Myanmar (NUG) accepted the jurisdiction of the ICC in Myanmar in 2021, but the Court has not acted on this. If the ICC cannot be seized on the situation in Myanmar, then the international community should establish a special international criminal tribunal for Myanmar.

The military junta is by far the primary source of violence and violations of international law in Myanmar, including alleged genocide committed against the Rohingya. Rohingya in Myanmar are at ongoing risk of genocide, according to an interim ruling ordered by the International Court of Justice in 2020. The junta has continued to target Rohingya in Rakhine, including by using Rohingya as human shields and forcibly conscripting Rohingya into the armed conflict.

The AA is reported to have committed serious attacks against Rohingya in Buthidaung township, which neighbours Maungdaw, in May 2024, killing an estimated 1,500 people and displacing 200,000, according to Rohingya activists. The evacuation notice of 16 June and impending attacks in Maungdaw, and rhetoric of senior members of the AA, give cause for concern over a possible intention on the part of the AA to forcibly transfer the Rohingya population from Rakhine state.

