



# Renewed call for action to protect Rohingya in Rakhine State, Myanmar

Statement

August 7, 2024

**Women's Peace Network (WPN) [renews](#) its call for immediate action to protect Rohingya civilians in Rakhine State, Myanmar**, from a deadly catastrophe with devastating implications for the survival of the ethnic and religious minority group as a whole, peace and coexistence of Arakan, inclusive federal democracy of Myanmar, and security and stability of the wider South and Southeast Asian region.

**On August 6, 2024, in Maungdaw township, the Arakan Army (AA) [launched](#) drone attacks near the Naf River, killing at least 200 Rohingya civilians – most of whom were women and children.** The civilians had been forcibly displaced from downtown Maungdaw on August 5, to escape the AA's drone attacks in the area.

**A surge of rapidly intensifying atrocities targeted at Rohingya civilians had already been taking place in Maungdaw township prior to the August 6 attack.** These atrocities include the AA's mass arrests of Rohingya civilians; takeover of Rohingya homes and villages; looting of Rohingya properties; forced transfer of Rohingya civilians from their homes and villages; and the launch of heavy weapons and further drone strikes. Access to humanitarian aid, including food, water, shelter, and medical care, continues to be lacking in the area, disproportionately leaving Rohingya civilians, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), to die from starvation and other preventable conditions. WPN has also been informed of the Burmese military launching heavy weapons on Rohingya homes and villages, including those forcibly entered by AA members; abducting Rohingya youth for forced labor, forced recruitment, and other heinous purposes; and forcing its allegedly collaborating militant groups – [none](#) of which represent Rohingya as a community – into physically obstructing displaced Rohingya from fleeing for their lives.

***“A second wave of genocide,” “another genocide,” and “worse than 2016 and 2017” are now among the terms used by many in WPN's network to describe the catastrophe unfolding in Maungdaw township.*** A pattern of atrocities [observed](#) across northern Rakhine State for nearly eight months reinforce the applicability of such a harrowing language to this context. In January 2024, AA members forcibly [entered](#) Hpon Nyo Leik village, Buthidaung township, positioning themselves in the Rohingya village and effectively inviting the Burmese military's lethal attacks on its inhabitants. In February, the Burmese military [began](#) forcibly recruiting the country's civilians, including thousands of Rohingya and IDPs in Sittwe township. In the subsequent months, while coercing Rohingya to launch divisive protests in the area, the Burmese military [intensified](#) its airstrikes on civilians, including in Rohingya villages; and, allegedly with its collaborating groups, [attacked](#) ethnic Rakhine-majority areas in Buthidaung township. Such divisive conditions rapidly aggravated in May, when AA members [torched](#) downtown Buthidaung, burned down its surrounding Rohingya villages, looted their properties, expelled their nearly 200,000 Rohingya residents, abducted Rohingya youth for purposes including forced recruitment, and tortured and massacred hundreds of Rohingya civilians. Reports have also [emerged](#) of sexual and gender-based violence being committed against Rohingya women.

**A humanitarian catastrophe is also worsening in Rakhine State.** Rohingya are now facing famine and other preventable conditions in the area, at least in part due to their humanitarian access being directly and

indirectly impeded by the armed conflict, the sudden evacuation of United Nations (UN) and international non-governmental personnel from the area, the Burmese military's weaponization of aid after Cyclone Mocha's devastation, and the continued closure of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

**The few Rohingya who were able to reach Bangladesh now join its nearly one million Rohingya refugees as the country approaches an uncertain future.** Widespread internet and communication blackouts in Bangladesh have increasingly challenged WPN's sustained attempts to closely monitor, document, and verify the situation of Rohingya. It is important to note that the years-long internet shutdown in Rakhine State – combined with the exacerbating armed conflict – has effectively forced the majority of Rohingya in the region to long rely on Bangladeshi mobile network operators for communication purposes.

**Amid such a volatile context, relying on Rohingya in Rakhine State to seek protection through precarious land and sea crossings is far from an effective and sustainable solution to the decades-long crisis.** Such an avenue will only endanger Rohingya with dangerous conditions that will further delay their safe, voluntary, sustainable and dignified return to their homes in Myanmar: human trafficking, sexual and gender-based violence, child and forced marriage, forced labor and servitude, Islamophobic and anti-Rohingya hate speech and disinformation, abductions and forced recruitment, arrest and detention, torture and mob attacks, and even death.

**Continued inaction on Myanmar is what enabled the AA's lethal drone attack on Rohingya civilians, on August 6, and wider crisis in Rakhine State.** Nearly seven years after the Burmese military's genocidal attacks, decades into its mass atrocities against ethnic and religious minorities, and over three years since its attempted coup, the failures of the past must no longer dictate the country's future.

**Therefore, WPN calls upon the UN, the UN Security Council, and the international community to act for the immediate protection of Rohingya civilians remaining in Rakhine State.** Human rights observers and independent international investigations must be urgently deployed to the region to monitor and verify emerging developments. Cross-border aid, including emergency humanitarian assistance and medical care, must be enabled between the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, specifically to Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships and other areas in Rakhine State with Rohingya civilians and IDPs. Justice must continue to guide all actions for civilians in Rakhine State and across the country: all perpetrators of atrocities – including the Burmese military and members of the Arakan Army – must be held accountable under international law.



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