

# **Rohingya Organisations Joint Statement on Naf River Massacre**

23 August 2024

We, the undersigned Rohingya organisations, have been working to establish the facts of the ‘Naf River Massacre’ that occurred in Maungdaw, Rakhine state, on 5th August 2024. Based on interviews and documentation of first-hand accounts by survivors and eyewitnesses, so far we have established the following.

On 5th August 2024, an estimated number of at least 200 Rohingya civilians were killed in drone and artillery attacks in Maungdaw township, Rakhine State, while seeking shelter on the banks of the Naf River, which borders Bangladesh. Most of the victims of the attacks – “the Naf River Massacre” – were women and children. They had been forced to flee to the Naf River from Maungdaw town, where the Arakan Army (AA) had advanced, the Burmese military had sent reinforcements, and both parties engaged in intensifying attacks. With nowhere to go, the civilians had no choice but to cross the river to Bangladesh.

Numerous eyewitnesses told us that the drones and artillery had been launched from the areas under the control of the AA. The Naf River Massacre follows a pattern of similar drone strikes by the AA on urban wards of Maungdaw town and its surrounding Rohingya villages in recent weeks, killing dozens of Rohingya civilians daily. It also follows ground reports indicating that Rohingya civilians are being strategically targeted by the AA and the Myanmar military with atrocities, in addition to being indiscriminately caught in the crossfire of their armed conflict.

Attacking thousands of civilians, including women and children, is an act that is in violation of international humanitarian law and may constitute a war crime and crime against humanity.

At the same time, the choice of weaponry that was used to conduct the Naf River Massacre should challenge whether it was “indiscriminately” conducted. Drones are a type of unmanned aerial vehicle built to ensure heightened control and precision of their attacks. Regardless of their sophistication, drones allow for their operators to identify their target and, if necessary, adjust their position to prevent unnecessary attacks, prior to their launch. Moreover, it is important to note that the use of drones has been a hallmark of the AA’s operations in Rakhine State for the past months, disproportionately resulting in a wholly catastrophic and preventable loss of life of Rohingya civilians. In Maungdaw township, some Burmese military soldiers and members of these militia groups have been reported as hiding in the township’s urban areas, mostly concentrated in nearby Border Guard Police battalion bases: far from the banks of the Naf River. The AA and its leadership’s pattern of such attacks, including their use of hate speech against Rohingya, further point to the presence of an intent to target the Rohingya ethnic and religious minority in Rakhine State. Combined, these findings strengthen our conviction that the AA knew what and where their targets were.

## **Context for the Naf River Massacre**

This latest attack follows a pattern of similar drone strikes by the Arakan Army on urban wards of Maungdaw town and Rohingya villages in recent weeks, killing several Rohingya civilians.

As the Arakan Army advanced towards Maungdaw town, the Myanmar military sent reinforcements to urban areas. In fear of intensifying attacks, and with nowhere else to go, Rohingya civilians fled to the banks of the Naf River. The victims of the 5th of August attacks were trying to find a way to cross the river to relative safety in Bangladesh when they were brutally killed by the Arakan Army.

Rohingya civilians in Maungdaw township are trapped by the intense fighting between the Arakan Army and Myanmar military. They are in urgent need of international protection and humanitarian assistance.

The Arakan Army set its sights on seizing Maungdaw township after a brutal campaign for control of neighbouring Buthidaung, which ended on 18th May. During this campaign the Arakan Army carried out arson attacks on Rohingya homes and villages and killed more than 2,000 Rohingyas, as well as other [gross human rights](#) violations against Rohingya civilians. The Arakan Army sought to blame airstrikes carried out by the Myanmar military for the fires, a claim which has been [widely contested](#). Again, the Arakan Army has [denied responsibility](#) for the 5th of August attack.

For decades, Rohingya have already been suffering from a multitude of different forms of violence and oppression from the Myanmar military. In recent months, the Myanmar military has been using their proxy criminal gangs, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA), and Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) to abduct Rohingya refugees from the camps in Bangladesh to Maungdaw to fight alongside the Myanmar military. These are criminal gangs, and we again denounce these groups and declare they do not represent or act on behalf of Rohingya communities. We condemn their actions in the strongest possible terms.

### **Moving forward, we demand the Arakan Army to immediately:**

- Halt all human rights violations and atrocities against Rohingya and other ethnic and religious groups in Arakan/Rakhine.
- Refrain from indiscriminate and targeted attacks against the Rohingya civilian population. End repeatedly using hate speech based on religion and race such as “Bengali terrorist, Extremist Muslim, Muslim terrorist” to describe the Rohingya, as well as portraying all Rohingya as collaborating with the military junta. This hate speech fuels religious conflict and increasing hatred among the public.
- Take full responsibilities and allow UN-led independent investigation into these massacres access to Rakhine to establish the facts and to hold perpetrators to account.
- Develop effective measures to prevent further violations and atrocities against Rohingya and other minorities in Arakan/Rakhine,
- Develop policy and enforcement to ensure troops comply with the Geneva Conventions, international law, and international human rights standards to protect civilians regardless of their ethnicity and religion during conflict.
- Engage with the international community and provide immediate and unimpeded humanitarian access to all affected areas, including Maungdaw and Buthidaung.

- Engage in dialogue with Rohingya and other ethnic and religious community leaders in Arakan/Rakhine State with the goal of establishing a peaceful and prosperous Arakan/Rakhine State that guarantees inclusivity, equality and rights for all, including by establishing an inclusive democratic administration based on equal, full and meaningful participation of all ethnic and religious minorities in Arakan/Rakhine State.

**We call on Rohingya communities to:**

- Continue to reject criminal gangs and individuals collaborating with the Myanmar military.
- Work with all religious and ethnic groups in Rakhine State for the establishment of a peaceful and prosperous Rakhine State and a federal democratic union in Myanmar.

**We urge the National Unity Government, National Unity Consultative Council, Spring Revolution's revolutionary forces, political parties, and civil society of Myanmar (Burma) to:**

- Call on the Arakan Army to respect human rights for all, end human rights violations against Rohingya and other ethnic and religious minorities in Arakan/Rakhine, abide by international law.
- Implement The Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

**We appeal to Bangladeshi Government to:**

- Urgently provide temporary shelter, food, medicine, and other essential services to the newly arrived refugees. Reports indicate that thousands of Rohingya attempting to cross the Naff River were kidnapped by local Bangladeshi gangs and taken to Laal Island, where they are being subjected to extortion and harassment. These vulnerable individuals must be rescued and provided with immediate protection. Furthermore, hundreds of Rohingya who have already crossed into Bangladesh are now in the custody of Bangladeshi authorities.
- Establish an emergency humanitarian corridor to allow the delivery of humanitarian aid from Bangladesh into areas of Rakhine State under the control of the Arakan Army.

**We call on the International Community to:**

- Convene a UN Security Council emergency meeting to discuss steps that can be taken against the Myanmar military, Arakan Army and others who are violating the provisional measures to prevent ongoing genocide of the Rohingya, which were ordered by the International Court of Justice.
- Exert maximum pressure on the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military to immediately cease all hostilities against civilians, including by taking a principled stance and publicly condemning the Arakan Army when it commits atrocities such as the Naf River Massacre. The protection of civilians must be the highest priority.
- Consider imposing sanctions on the Arakan Army and its leadership should it continue to commit severe and systematic human rights violations against the Rohingya.
- Support Bangladesh in its effort to rescue those fleeing from recent fighting and violence in Rakhine State and provide protection and humanitarian assistance, including food, medicine and shelter to ensure the rights and dignity of these refugees are upheld.

- Provide immediate protection, healthcare, and mental health and psychosocial support to women, children, and elderly persons affected by the recent attacks, including sexual and gender-based violence, in Rakhine State.
- Work with the Government of Bangladesh on the establishment of an emergency humanitarian corridor from Bangladesh into areas of Rakhine State under the control of the Arakan Army.
- Support the National Unity Government, ethnic resistance organisations, religious bodies, political parties and civil society in and from Myanmar in their efforts to dismantle the Myanmar military and establish a federal democratic union and to implement The Rabat Plan of Action on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

***Signatories: Rohingya Organisations***

- Arakan Rohingya Development Association - Australia
- Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)
- Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU)
- Australian Burmese Rohingya Organization (ABRO)
- British Rohingya Community UK
- Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRAJ)
- Burmese Rohingya Association of North America (BRANA)
- Burmese Rohingya Association in Queensland- Australia (BRAQA)
- Burmese Rohingya Community in Denmark (BRCD)
- Burmese Rohingya Community Netherlands (BRCNL)
- Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)
- Burmese Rohingya Community of Georgia, Atlanta (BRCG)
- Burmese Rohingya Welfare Organization (BRWO) New Zealand
- Canadian Burmese Rohingya Organisation
- European Rohingya Council (ERC)
- Free Rohingya Coalition (FRC)
- Global Rohingya Students' Union (GRSU)
- Los Angeles Rohingya Association
- Rohingya Action Ireland
- Rohingya Association of Canada
- Rohingya Centre Canada
- Rohingya Community in Japan (RCJ)
- Rohingya Community in Norway (RCN)
- Rohingya Human Rights Initiative
- Rohingya National League (RNL)
- Rohingya Women Development Network-RWDN
- RW Welfare Society (RWWS)
- Swedish Rohingya Association (SRA)

***Stand in solidarity with the Rohingya people and support the protection, justice, and accountability of civilians by the following 122 organisations: (65) listed below and (57) that have chosen not to disclose their names due to the security situation.***

1. Action Committee for Democracy Development (ACDD, Coalition of 12 Grassroots Network)
2. Ah Nah Podcast - conversations with Myanmar
3. ALTSEAN-Burma
4. Asia Democracy Network (ADN)
5. Asia-Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC)
6. Association of Human rights watch and documentation (Bago)
7. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organisation AWDO (Magway)
8. Ayeyarwaddy West Development Organisation AWDO (Nagphe)
9. Ayeyarwaddy Youth Network
10. Blood Money Campaign
11. Burma Action Ireland
12. Burma Campaign UK
13. Burma Civil War Museum (BCM)
14. Burma Human Rights Network
15. Burma Support
16. Chin Human Rights Organization
17. Civil Rights Defenders
18. CRPH & NUG Supporters Ireland
19. CRPH Funding Ireland
20. Defend Myanmar Democracy
21. Democracy Movement Strike Committee (Dawei)
22. Educational Initiatives Prague (EIP)
23. ETOs Watch Coalition
24. Friends Against Dictatorship (FAD)
25. From Singapore to Myanmar (FS2M)
26. Future Thanlwin
27. Generation Wave (GW)
28. Human Rights Foundation of Monland
29. Info Birmanie
30. Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID)
31. Justice for Myanmar
32. Justice Movement for Community- Innlay
33. Karen Peace Support Network (KPSN)
34. Kyauktada Strike Committee (KSC)
35. Legal Aid for Human Rights
36. MATA စစ်ကိုင်းတိုင်း
37. Milk Tea Alliance Thailand
38. Min Hla Farmers Group
39. Minbu Farmers Group

40. Minority Affairs Institute (MAI Myanmar)
41. Myanmar Campaign Network
42. Myanmar Cultural Research Society (MCRS)
43. MyaYar Knowledge Tree (CBO)
44. New Power Generation
45. Olive Organization
46. Progressive Voice
47. Pwintphyu Development Organisation
48. Save and Care Organization for Ethnic Women at Border Areas (SCOEWBA)
49. Sisters2sisters
50. Sitt Nyein Pann Foundation
51. U.S. Campaign for Burma
52. Volunteers in Myanmar
53. Women's Peace Network
54. Yangon Deaf Group
55. Yangon Medical Network
56. ဒို့မြေကွန်ရက် (LIOH)
57. ပွင့်ဖြူလယ်ယာမြေကွန်ရက်
58. မုန်တိုင်းကြားကသက်တံများ
59. သင့်မြတ်လိုသူများ
60. အညာလွင်ပြင်ရပ်ဝန်း
61. ဉာဏ်လင်းသစ်သုတေသနအဖွဲ့
62. Swedish Burma Committee
63. Association Suisse-Birmanie
64. Myanmar Action Group Denmark
65. Myanmarisch- Islamisches Zentrum e.V (Deutschland)

***For more information, please contact:***

Tun Khin: +44 78 8871 4866, Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)

Nay San Lwin: +49 176 6213 9138, Free Rohingya Coalition (FRC)