



# ON-THE-GROUND IN BURMA

A DIGITAL BRIEFER

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## MONTHLY HIGHLIGHTS

- [Thailand](#) extended its assistance to the Burmese junta to conduct a census and prepare for upcoming elections raising concerns about the legitimacy of the electoral process under the regime.
- [Burma Human Rights Network](#) and [Women Peace Network](#) renewed calls on the international community to protect the Rohingya amidst the increasing targeted attacks in Rakhine state.
- More than 25,000 businesses in Burma [closed](#) due to the devastating impact of the Burmese junta’s rule on the economy.
- August 14, Min Aung Hlaing [met](#) with the Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi to affirm China’s cooperation and support of the military regime.
- U.S. officials [met](#) with Burma’s opposition members and pledged expanded support.

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## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Hold the Junta accountable by taking tangible actions, including, but not limited to: imposing immediate targeted sanctions on Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise and jet fuel sector, and establishing a comprehensive coordinated global arms embargo.
2. Provide immediate cross-border assistance directly to local civil society organizations;
3. Recognize and engage with the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate civilian government of Burma instead of the illegal military junta;
4. Exert all possible pressure through every available means, including multilateral, regional, and bilateral engagement, to ensure that the military allows full access of humanitarian assistance in impacted areas, immediately stops military offensives throughout the country, and unconditionally releases all arbitrarily detained protesters and political prisoners.

# ANALYSIS

## Targeted attacks on Rohingya raise concerns about a second wave of genocide during commemoration month

On the seventh anniversary of the Rohingya Genocide, we commemorated those lost in 2017 but also scrutinized the renewed targeted attacks and the perpetrators during this month of remembrance. From the forced conscription of the Rohingya into the very military that executed the 2017 genocide to the targeted attacks on the ground that led to the Naf River Massacre that killed more than 200 Rohingya, it is clear that the international community is failing to protect a persecuted people as we stand on the cusp of a second wave of genocide. False words and empty promises do not contribute towards atrocity prevention but enable perpetrators to commit these crimes with impunity. If the international community continues to fail the Rohingya, even seven years later, how can it protect other ethnic and religious minorities in Burma?

### Latest Stats



**600,000+**  
Rohingya IDPs in  
Rakhine state



**1+ Million**  
Rohingya living in Cox's  
Bazar and Bhasan Char  
refugee camps



**20,000+**  
Rohingya crossed border into  
Bangladesh in last three  
months



**70,000+**  
Rohingya trapped in Maungdaw



**200+**  
Rohingya killed at Naf River

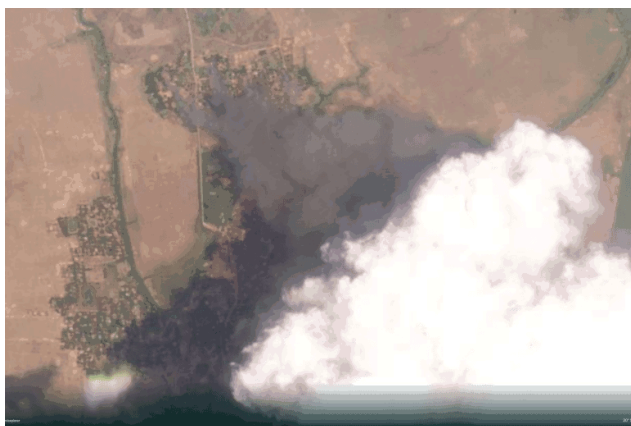
“For Rohingya people – oppressed, scapegoated, exploited, and stuck between warring parties – the situation carries echoes of the lead-up to genocidal violence in 2016 and 2017.

***UN Special Rapporteur Tom Andrews  
56th Session of the UNHRC***”

In August, we commemorated the seventh anniversary of the 2017 Rohingya Genocide with the [event](#), *A Dark Stain of Genocide: What must be done to prevent further genocide in Burma*. However, this event of remembrance became a space for renewed calls on the international community to protect the remaining Rohingya in Burma and further discussion on the escalating violent targeted attacks in Rakhine state.

Shortly after the Burmese junta's conscription announcement in February, the Rohingya have been [forced](#) to join the ranks of the very perpetrator that carried out the devastating genocide in 2017. Once conscripted, the Rohingya are "[subjected](#) to forced labor and cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment, then sent to the frontlines in Rakhine State to be used as cannon fodder."

In May, reports emerged of the Arakan Army forcing the Rohingya in Buthidaung to leave their homes. Eye witness [statements](#) painted a picture of targeted attacks, theft, arson, and destruction. Rohingya fled their homes en masse with nowhere else to go. There are now about [70,000](#) trapped in Maungdaw with no means to escape.



*Rohingya homes burning in Buthidaung in May 2024.  
Photo: Aljazeera*

In early August, the [massacre](#) along the Naf River was carried out by the Arakan Army. Rohingya attempting to flee for Bangladesh were cut down by drones and mortar shelling from Pan Taw Pyin

and Shwe Zar. This brutal offensive killed more than 200 Rohingya, including women and children, further traumatizing the community. This month of remembrance and commemoration has been further stained with the murder of more than 200 Rohingya.

Despite calls from the [Burma Human Right Network](#) and the [Women Peace Network](#) and an [open letter](#) from Rohingya organizations and supporting international organizations, the international community remains silent. At some point, the international community must realize that the empty words shared during this month of commemoration are just that - empty words.

Are we to see a repeat of 2017? In the wake of this genocidal event, the international community turned a blind eye to the devastating reports until evidence from satellite imagery forced them to acknowledge and confirm the horror stories coming from the ground.

In the last several months, emerging [reports](#) have raised concerns of a second wave of genocide. Both the Burmese junta and the Arakan Army, two forces who historically oppose each other, are united in their targeted violence against the Rohingya, creating an environment of unrelenting terror. Legitimate concern as multiple perpetrators are actively targeting the Rohingya. These conditions on the ground increasingly suggest that the Rohingya face yet another existential threat if immediate international action is not taken.

This ongoing crisis is also a reflection of broader geopolitical dynamics in the region. Regional powers like China, India, and Thailand have played roles that complicate any concerted international effort to hold the Burmese military accountable. [China](#), in particular, has maintained strategic and economic interests in Burma through projects like the Belt and Road Initiative. These interests have led China to support the junta

diplomatically and economically, shielding it from international sanctions or punitive measures at the United Nations Security Council. Likewise, [Thailand's](#) cooperation with the junta in preparing for the upcoming elections demonstrates how some regional actors prioritize their own stability over human rights, weakening the international effort to delegitimize the military regime. These regional factors show that the Rohingya crisis as well as other regional conflicts are not merely a humanitarian issue but also a geopolitical one.

Moreover, the international community's response to the crisis has been inconsistent and fragmented. While several countries have imposed sanctions on Burma, they have been limited in scope, often failing to target critical sectors like Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise or the timber and jade industries that fuel the junta's power. Without coordinated global action, including a comprehensive arms embargo and targeted global sanctions, the military regime is able to continue its brutal campaign with relative impunity. Humanitarian aid to Bangladesh, which hosts nearly a million Rohingya refugees, has also been severely underfunded, exacerbating the suffering of displaced people. The lack of global burden-sharing leaves countries like Bangladesh overwhelmed and under-resourced, contributing to the ongoing crisis.

ASEAN's failure to respond effectively to the Rohingya crisis is also a key factor. Despite being a regional organization tasked with ensuring stability in Southeast Asia, ASEA has remained largely ineffective in addressing the conflict,

clinging to its principle of non-interference. This has allowed the Burmese junta to act with impunity while its neighbors, such as Malaysia and Indonesia, voice concerns without seeing tangible results. ASEAN's inability to coordinate a meaningful response has weakened its credibility as a regional leader, and speaks to the need for stronger regional leadership to pressure the junta into halting its military operations and granting access to humanitarian aid.

Finally, the international community must take a stronger, unified stance on Burma. This includes expanding sanctions on key economic sectors, diplomatically isolating the junta by recognizing the National Unity Government (NUG) as the legitimate authority, and accelerating legal cases at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC). Ongoing legal proceedings, such as the case filed by Gambia at the ICJ, are critical in holding perpetrators of genocide accountable and setting a precedent for international justice. The time for symbolic gestures and empty condemnations has passed. Concrete steps, both punitive and humanitarian, must be taken to prevent a second wave of genocide and protect the remaining Rohingya.

Without a concerted, coordinated global effort, the cycle of violence, displacement and impunity will continue, leading to even more devastating consequences for the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities in Burma. The international community has the tools to act, but without the political will to use them, the atrocities will only escalate, and the genocide will continue to unfold in real-time.

# VOICE FROM COX'S BAZAR

*Interview with MD Jamal, Rohingya Refugee*

I am Md Jamal, a photographer, from the largest refugee camp in Bangladesh. At 30 years old, I am also known as Md Jamal Photography. I have been living in Kutupalong refugee camp. My parents fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh in 1992. I had hoped to become a journalist from a young age - but, as a refugee, I wasn't able to become a journalist. With a friend's smartphone, I started documenting the conditions in the refugee camp and posting the photos on social media. These efforts have led me down a different path that allows me to show the international community what life is like in the world's largest refugee camp

On August 9, Rohingya refugees in the camps of Bangladesh are protesting to demand global attention and justice for the ongoing and past atrocities committed against the Rohingya community in Myanmar. We are urgently calling for action to stop the second genocide, which has already claimed countless lives and continues to ravage Maungdaw and Buthidaung, orchestrated by the Arakan Army and the Burmese junta military. The Rohingya are being deliberately targeted in a brutal campaign aimed at erasing our community from Myanmar. These systematic attacks are part of a genocidal plan to exterminate the Rohingya, along with other ethnic groups, in Myanmar. The Rohingya refugees are raising their voices against this horror, seeking justice and an end to our suffering.

The ongoing genocide of the Rohingya by the Myanmar military, and now also involving the Arakan Army, is a tragic and alarming development. The international community's lack of decisive action in 2024 underscores a failure to respond to one of the most critical humanitarian crises of our time.



*While honoring the 7th anniversary of the Rohingya Genocide, refugees rallied together demanding justice in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.*

*Photo: [MD Jamal](#)*

Here are some critical points that highlight why the situation persists and what can be done:

## **Why the Inaction?**

*1. Global Distractions:* With global attention often focused on other geopolitical crises, such as conflicts in Ukraine, Israel, or climate change issues, the Rohingya crisis has not received the sustained attention it requires. Countries are overwhelmed with multiple crises, and prioritization often leaves marginalized communities, like the Rohingya, overlooked.

*2. Weak International Leverage:* Despite international condemnation and symbolic actions, Myanmar's military has faced little meaningful pressure. Sanctions are often limited and not universally implemented. Countries with leverage over Myanmar, like China and Russia, have shielded the military regime from more serious international repercussions by blocking stronger UN actions.

*3. Fragmented International Response:* The international community has not responded in a unified or forceful manner. Nations and organizations often lack coordination, and while some countries have taken steps to address the issue, others maintain relationships with Myanmar's military regime for economic or strategic reasons.

*4. Lack of Strong Regional Leadership:* ASEAN, the regional organization, has been largely ineffective in addressing the Rohingya crisis. While ASEAN principles emphasize non-interference in domestic affairs, this has hampered collective action against Myanmar, a member of the bloc. Without strong regional pressure, the situation remains unresolved.

### **What Can Be Done Now?**

*1. Urgent International Action:* Immediate UN Intervention: The United Nations, under Chapter VII of its Charter, can authorize peacekeeping missions or humanitarian interventions when mass atrocities like genocide are taking place. World powers should push for immediate UN action, despite potential opposition from some Security Council members.

*Humanitarian Corridors:* The international community must work to establish safe zones or humanitarian corridors in Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine State, to protect Rohingya civilians. This would require cooperation from international agencies and support from nearby countries like Bangladesh.

*2. Global Sanctions and Economic Pressure:* Comprehensive Sanctions: Countries must implement far-reaching sanctions on Myanmar's military regime and any groups aiding in the genocide. This includes freezing assets, cutting off military supplies, and targeting sectors of Myanmar's economy that support the military.

*Corporate Accountability:* International businesses operating in Myanmar, especially in sectors like oil, gas, and mining, should face pressure to cease operations until the genocide ends. Boycotting industries that fund Myanmar's military could deprive it of essential financial resources.

*3. Increase Diplomatic Pressure:* Regional Powers' Involvement: China and India, as key players in the region, must be engaged diplomatically to put pressure on Myanmar. While they have previously avoided criticizing Myanmar's military, their involvement could be crucial in achieving a ceasefire or ending hostilities.



*Rohingya youth walking through the flooded refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh.*

*Photo: [MD Jamal](#)*

*ASEAN Responsibility:* ASEAN must be pushed to take a stronger stance, going beyond its principle of non-interference. If Myanmar continues committing genocide, ASEAN should consider suspending or expelling Myanmar as a member, which would signal regional condemnation.

*4. Accountability for Crimes Against Humanity:* International Justice: Support for ongoing cases at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) must be increased. The ICJ's genocide case, initiated by Gambia, should be prioritized, and investigations

into military and Arakan Army leaders should be fast-tracked to ensure justice.

*Independent Investigations:* Global human rights organizations and UN fact-finding missions should be strengthened to collect evidence and document the ongoing crimes. This documentation is essential for future prosecutions and ensuring that the perpetrators do not escape justice.

*5. Humanitarian Aid and Refugee Protection:* Support for Bangladesh: Bangladesh continues to bear the burden of hosting nearly a million Rohingya refugees. International donors need to significantly increase humanitarian aid and support for Bangladesh's refugee infrastructure. This includes ensuring access to food, healthcare, and education in the camps.

*Third-Country Resettlement:* More countries should commit to resettling Rohingya refugees, especially those who are most vulnerable to the ongoing violence. International agreements should be put in place to share the responsibility for resettlement.

*6. Raise Global Awareness and Mobilize Public Opinion:* Media and Advocacy Campaigns: Global media coverage needs to focus on the current wave of violence, bringing attention to the Rohingya genocide. Advocacy groups should organize international campaigns to push governments to act, using the power of public opinion to create pressure.

*Engage Civil Society:* Civil society organizations, religious leaders, and human rights groups globally must raise their voices to demand action from governments and international organizations. Mobilizing public support can often compel reluctant governments to take stronger action.

## Call to the International Community

The international community must recognize that failure to act against the ongoing genocide of the Rohingya is not just a political failure but a moral one. It is essential to act now before further atrocities occur. The tools to respond to genocide—whether through diplomatic, military, or humanitarian means—exist, but what has been lacking is the will to use them effectively.

World leaders, particularly from influential countries, must:

*1. Stop issuing statements without action:*

Symbolic condemnation is not enough. The time for concrete measures—sanctions, military aid bans, and diplomatic isolation—is now.

*2. Actively support justice efforts:* Nations should stand behind international legal actions to ensure that the perpetrators of genocide face trial. The Rohingya deserve justice, and the world has a responsibility to ensure that justice is served.

*3. Provide safe refuge:* Countries must offer more robust refugee resettlement programs and increase aid to host nations like Bangladesh, which continues to bear the brunt of the refugee crisis.

*4. Pressure Myanmar's allies:* Countries like China and Russia must be diplomatically pressured to reconsider their support for Myanmar's military regime. Global powers need to leverage their influence over these nations to bring about a change in their stance on Myanmar.

The genocide against the Rohingya continues because of international inaction. Every day that goes by without concrete intervention results in more lives lost, more suffering, and more trauma for a persecuted people. The world cannot afford to turn a blind eye any longer.

# AN OVERVIEW OF BURMA

## CHIN

In August, tensions escalated among resistance groups in Chin State. On August 21, the Zo Reunification Organization (ZORO) [facilitated](#) a meeting in Aizawl, India, between the Interim Chin National Consultative Council (ICNCC) and the Chin Brotherhood Alliance. Despite being allies, these groups have [clashed](#), particularly in Matupi Township, where the Chin Brotherhood, supported by the Arakan Army, took control in July after disputes with the Chinland Council. Meanwhile, violence [spread](#) to Maungdaw, resulting in severe civilian casualties and mass displacement, with over 320,000 people displaced across Rakhine and southern Chin State since November 2023. Mediation [efforts](#) between the Chinland Council and Chin Brotherhood Alliance are ongoing, with talks planned in New Delhi. Resistance groups remain determined to [weaken](#) the Burmese military, recognizing it as a persistent threat to their communities.

## KACHIN

Widespread phone and internet outages severely [impacted](#) students abroad who rely on financial support from home. The junta's ongoing efforts to shut down communication are not only isolating communities but also jeopardizing the education and futures of young people. Junta-aligned militias in Kachin State forcibly [recruited](#) civilians in Chipwi District. This tactic of coercing locals into military service further highlights the oppressive and inhumane practices of the junta and its allies. KIA allied forces [attacked](#) a junta convoy near Bhamo, destroying four military vehicles, including one armored vehicle, while capturing another. The convoy was en route to support ongoing battles in Momauk Township. Following the KIA's capture of the junta's Light Infantry Battalion 437 base in Bhamo District, the junta [launched](#) a counteroffensive, which led to intensified clashes in the area. Fighting continues between Bhamo and MoMauk towns, as well as near Mansei town, with both sides locked in tense engagements.

## KARENNI

Throughout August, Karenni State has faced severe challenges due to ongoing conflict and natural disasters. On August 1, a landmine explosion, [planted](#) by the Burma military, claimed the life of a teenager and injured another in a KNU-controlled area. The situation was further [aggravated](#) by severe flooding, leaving thousands of displaced civilians without adequate shelter and intensifying the humanitarian crisis. IDP camps are in [urgent](#) need of supplies, particularly for educational programs. Despite these hardships, Karenni Resistance forces achieved a significant victory on August 8 by [seizing](#) the junta's Yaykyaw military base in Bawlakhe District. However, the safety of children remains a grave [concern](#) as schools rely on bomb shelters for air defense amid ongoing military airstrikes, leading to temporary closures and disruptions in education.

## MON

In early August, the HUFORM [reported](#) that residents in 100+ villages across the townships of Ye, Thanbyuzayat, Kyaikto, Bilin, Kyaikmaraw, and Thaton are struggling because of severe flooding. Civilians are now facing food shortages and urgently need humanitarian aid, further complicated by ongoing armed conflicts that have exacerbated the hardships faced by locals. The Burmese military junta forcibly recruited [conscripts](#) in Bilin, Thaton, Chaungzon, and Ye, targeting men over 35 years old. A desperate move to sustain its rule amidst growing resistance, they [list](#) and track possible conscripts. On August 29, a young man was [killed](#) and four others injured during a Burmese military airstrike in Kyaikmayaw township. On August 30, a woman stepped on a [landmine](#) and sustained injuries in Thanbyuzayat. The landmines are increasingly claiming people's lives and threatening their safety.



## KAREN

In Karen State, junta attacks have threatened the safety and health of the local population. Two drones [bombed](#) Kaw Bane village, killing a woman and damaging houses, which has heightened fears among residents. Additionally, the Palaw Tapo IDP camp, housing over 3000 displaced persons, is facing an [outbreak](#) of a contagious fever disease amid inadequate medical care, leading to the closure of junior classes. Furthermore, landmines [planted](#) by the Burma military junta in KNU-controlled areas have resulted in civilian casualties, including the death of a teenager in mid-July.

## SHAN

Anti-junta forces [captured](#) Lashio and detained top military officials. Junta intensified airstrikes on Kyaukme Town in northern Shan State, targeting civilians and creating widespread fear and instability. The fighting [caused](#) civilian casualties and there are still many unretrieved corpses remaining in the town, according to a local. Residents, including IDPs who had returned home, are [fleeing](#) Hsihseng Town in southern Shan State as fighting intensifies. Thousands have been [displaced](#) in northern Shan State, Burma, as the Ta'ang National Liberation Army targeted another town in the ongoing conflict with the military junta. The Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army [captured](#) the junta's 147th Light Infantry Battalion in Nawngkawgyi Village, Hsipaw Township, Shan State. In response, junta forces in Namlan Town are indiscriminately shelled Hsipaw with artillery, heightening safety concerns among residents.

## RAKHINE

Rakhine State faces severe humanitarian challenges as over 600,000 IDPs suffer from critical [medicine](#) shortages and dwindling healthcare access, resulting in at least 10 deaths. Children are missing essential [vaccinations](#) due to these shortages. Intensifying [fighting](#) in Maungdaw Township has also led to more Rohingya deaths. Compounding the crisis, banks have stopped [cash](#) withdrawals, severely hampering aid delivery efforts.

## CENTRAL BURMA

In early August, the Burmese military conducted airstrikes in Singu township, Mandalay Region, [killing](#) 15 civilians. On August 7, the Burmese military indiscriminately [shelled](#) artillery in Yinmarbin township, Sagaing Region, killing four civilians and severely injuring five more. About 200 local residents in villages in Tantabin town, Bago Region were [trapped](#) due to the junta's "Shoot and Kill" orders on August 5. The conflicts have forced over 2,000 villagers to flee their homes and in need of humanitarian aid. On August 13, at least 11 civilians were [killed](#) after the military regime conducted artillery shelling in Monywa township, Sagaing Region. On August 12, more than 10,000 residents from 12 villages were forced to flee the area as the Burmese military launched offensive attacks in Ye-U township, Sagaing Region. The mass [displacement](#) exacerbated the struggles of the refugees with inadequate humanitarian aid and food supplies. On August 18, the Burmese military launched an [offensive](#) attack in Launglon town, Tanintharyi Region. On August 20, the military junta launched at least [67 bombs](#) in Tingyaing Town, Sagaing Region. The brutal onslaught destroyed the temples and buildings.