
DOCUMENTATION OF
ATROCITIES IN
NORTHERN RAKHINE
STATE



August, 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

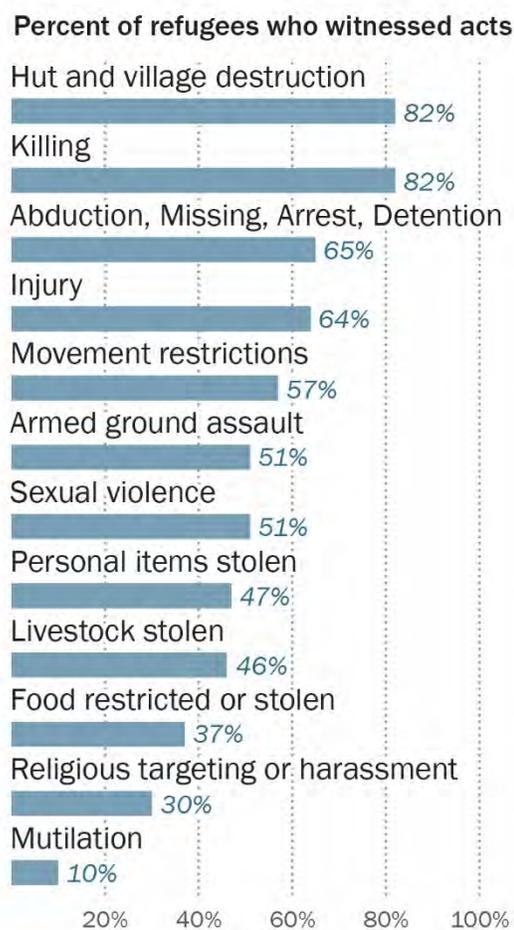
The Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), with funding support from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), conducted a survey in spring 2018 of the firsthand experiences of 1,024 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh. The goal of the survey was to document atrocities committed against residents in Burma's northern Rakhine State during the course of violence in the previous two years.

The survey used a representative sample of refugee camp populations to provide insights into the violence they witnessed. Any hearsay testimony was not recorded. Survey results reveal the pattern of events refugees experienced. There may be cases when multiple refugees reported witnessing the same event, so the percentages from this survey should not be extrapolated to come up with a definitive overall number of events. The National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) worked with INR to map and analyze the resulting data (see Map 1).

The results of the survey show that the vast majority of Rohingya refugees experienced or directly witnessed extreme violence and the destruction of their homes. They identified the Burmese military as a perpetrator in most cases.

- Most witnessed a killing, two-thirds witnessed an injury, and half witnessed sexual violence (see Figure 1).
- Rohingya identified the Burmese military as a perpetrator in 84% of the killings or injuries they witnessed.
- Three-quarters say they saw members of the army kill someone; the same proportion say they witnessed the army destroying huts or whole villages. Police, unidentified security forces, and armed civilians carried out the rest of the observed killings.
- One-fifth of all respondents witnessed a mass-casualty event of killings or injuries (either in their villages or as they fled) with more than 100 victims.

Figure 1: Hut and Village Destruction, Killing Top the List of Violent Acts Experienced

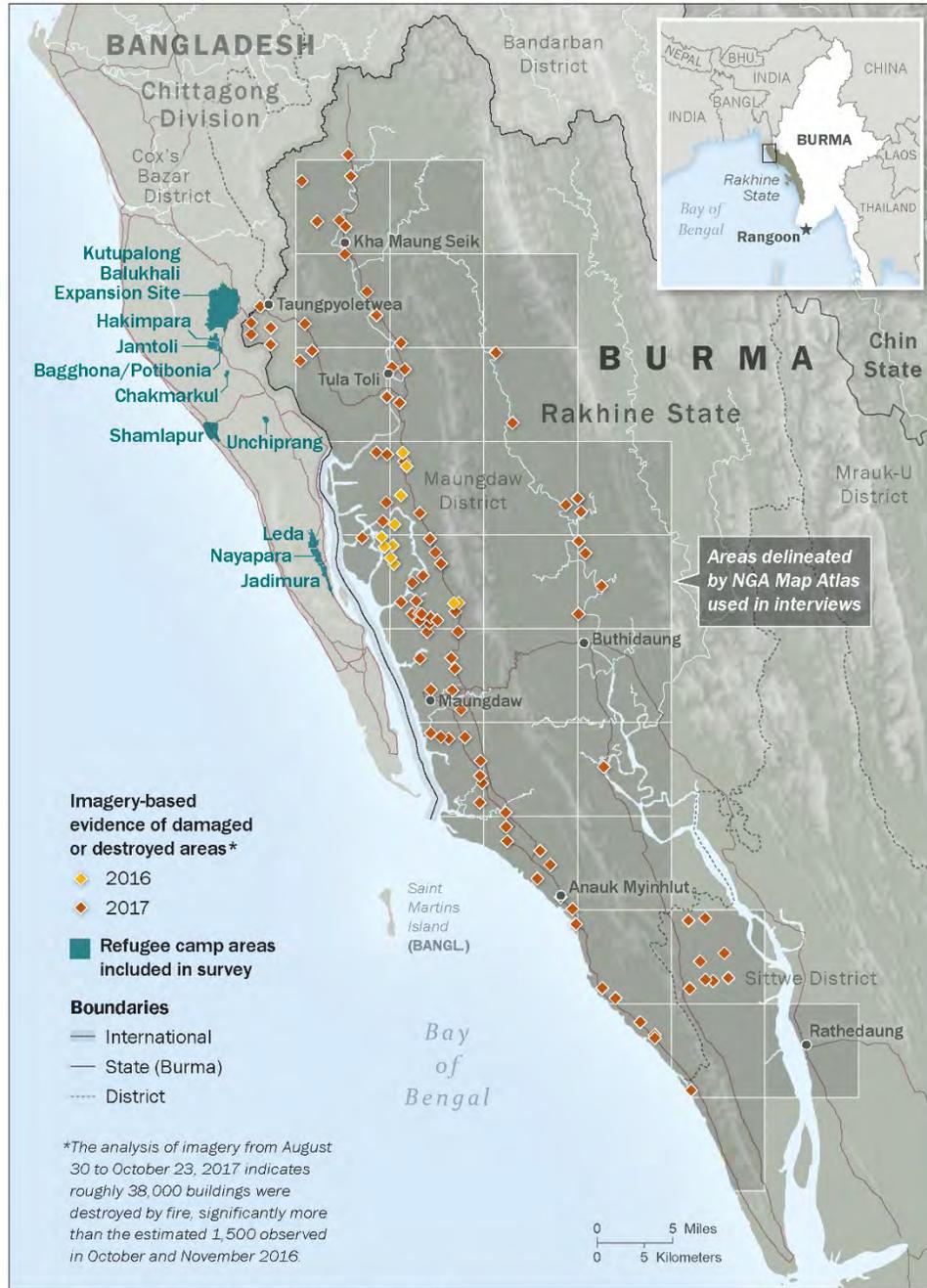


The two main phases of violence—the first in October 2016 and the second beginning in August 2017—followed attacks against Burmese security forces by the Rohingya insurgent group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The vast majority of reported incidents against Rohingya took place from August to October 2017. The survey shows that the military, which used the ARSA attacks to justify its so-called counterinsurgency operations in northern Rakhine State, targeted civilians indiscriminately and often with extreme brutality.

- Forty-five percent of refugees witnessed a rape, and the majority of rapes witnessed were committed, in whole or in part, by the army. Overall, nearly 40% of refugees saw a rape committed by members of the Burmese security services—either police or military—including 18% who saw them commit a gang rape.
- Members of the security services, as well as non-Rohingya civilians in some cases, targeted children and pregnant women.
- Those who were left behind because they were elderly, sick, or otherwise infirm were frequently found dead when their relatives returned to check on them.

The survey reveals that the recent violence in northern Rakhine State was extreme, large-scale, widespread, and seemingly geared toward both terrorizing the population and driving out the Rohingya residents. The scope and scale of the military's operations indicate they were well-planned and coordinated. In some areas, perpetrators used tactics that resulted in mass casualties, for example, locking people in houses to burn them, fencing off entire villages before shooting into the crowd, or sinking boats full of hundreds of fleeing Rohingya.

Map 1: Survey Sites and Destroyed Areas of Origin



Names and boundary representation are not necessarily authoritative.

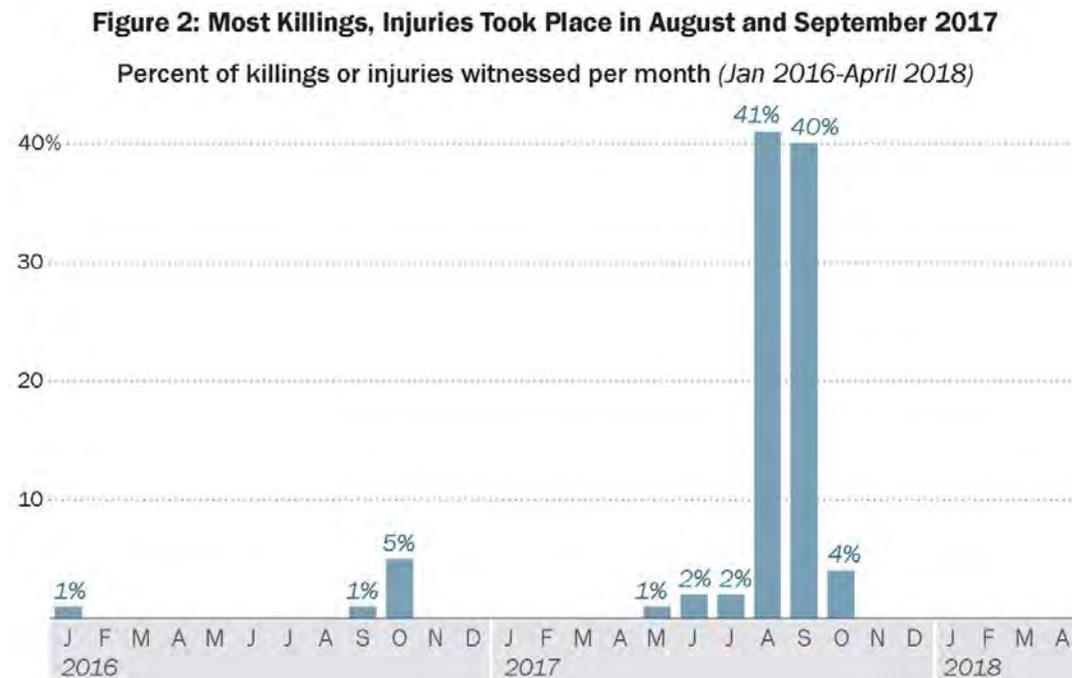
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INTRODUCTION

In spring 2018, the Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR) worked with funding from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL) to design and carry out a survey to document claims of atrocities committed against the ethnic Rohingya in Burma's northern Rakhine State since October 2016. INR combined a quantitative approach to sampling with a qualitative, semi-structured questionnaire. This approach allowed investigators to systematically collect data on events that refugees encamped in Bangladesh had witnessed in their northern Rakhine State villages. Expert and well-trained investigators and their translators took special steps to create a comfortable interview structure that reduced possible stress on the respondents, allowed for the investigator to obtain clarifying detail on perpetrators and events, and separate firsthand experience from hearsay testimony.

DRL contracted with an expert outside group to gather a team of 18 experienced human rights investigators from around the world to conduct the research. INR trained the team on sampling methodology, and the National Geospatial-Intelligence Agency (NGA) created a map atlas that allowed the investigators to identify and locate where events occurred. The 1,024 survey respondents included only adults who left northern Rakhine State on or after October 1, 2016, though reports of violence date from as early as January 2016.¹

What follows is an analysis of the resulting data, which illuminates the excessive use of force the Burmese Army and police unleashed on the Rohingya population in the name of counterinsurgency clearance operations after the October 2016 and August 2017 Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacks. The survey's most salient findings fall into the two periods that coincide with these Burmese military operations: the first focused during October 2016 and the second, and far more violent period, from August-September 2017 (see Figure 2).



¹ While the survey was open to respondents of any ethnicity, only Rohingya were captured in the sample.

Background on Systematic Abuse

The Rohingya have experienced decades of persecution and violence, largely perpetrated by Burmese security services and the government. The roots of anti-Rohingya sentiments and discrimination lie in a longstanding belief in Burma that Rohingya are not “native” to Burma but arrived from Bangladesh during British colonial rule. Rohingya separatist movements in the 1940s and 1950s, and periodic, low-level unrest since, contribute to the state-sanctioned narrative that the Rohingya are a security concern to be contained and must be treated separately from those they consider to be rightful Burmese citizens. Burma’s military government gradually stripped Rohingya of their citizenship and other rights in a series of maneuvers, including the 1982 Citizenship Law, and a decision in 2015 to revoke their temporary registration cards. State violence against the Rohingya in 1977, under the military’s Operation Dragon King aimed against “illegal immigration,” and again in 1991 in what they claimed was a response to attacks by the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), resulted in two separate waves of refugees when hundreds of thousands of Rohingya fled across the border to find refuge in Bangladesh.

SECTION I: PATTERN OF VIOLENCE IN NORTHERN RAKHINE (2016 AND 2017)

On October 9, 2016 a group of ARSA members and other Rohingya villagers attacked three border guard police stations, leaving nine policemen dead. The military responded by using what it called counterinsurgency tactics against the Rohingya population in the area. Few witnessed killings (2%) or destruction of huts (3%) between October and November 2016, most likely because the military targeted villages in only a few areas (see Map 1; see Tab 2 for background on ARSA).

Authorities Targeted Men for Abduction, Arrest (October 2016-August 2017)

As part of their military operations beginning in October 2016, Burmese security officials would take Rohingya men into custody, ostensibly to question them about ties to or knowledge of ARSA. As tensions rose between Burmese officials and Rohingya in northern Rakhine State, increasing numbers of men and boys were taken into custody. To avoid being taken away by security services, men spent nights hiding in the woods, leaving their wives and children vulnerable to invasive searches by security services. Many of these women reported being groped, stripped, or violated while intruders searched their homes and their bodies for valuables or possible weapons.

Abductions of Women (October 2016-August 2017)

Refugees also reported abductions of women. In the year before the attack on her village, one woman said that the military would take the “beautiful” girls and they never came back. In another notable case, four months before the major attack, one refugee said the military told each village in his area that they had to provide 20 women so they could “teach them tailoring,” but the village never heard from them again.

Though in many cases the victim's fate is unclear, refugees reported instances in which women had been raped after abduction. The week prior to an attack on his village, a man was walking in a forest near a military outpost when he saw four Rohingya girls tied up with ropes, heavily bleeding and "half dead." They told him the military had kept them there for three days raping them.

Increased Restrictions (2017)

On August 25, 2017, ARSA launched attacks against about 30 police and army posts in northern Rakhine state, triggering a harsh military reaction. The majority of the attacks and three-quarters of the reported killings witnessed by the refugees in our survey occurred between August and October of 2017. Before the most acute violence broke out, a majority reported increased movement restrictions—even above the normal levels.

Dozens reported that Burmese authorities removed fences before the attacks, either by doing so themselves or by forcing Rohingya villagers to do so. In some cases, the military said they did not want Rohingya hiding militants. Removing fences also was meant to humiliate Rohingya, as it forced them to urinate and defecate in the open air. In at least 50 cases, respondents reported that the military and other actors removed knives, tools, iron, and other sharp objects that could be used as weapons. In some cases, local authorities photographed these objects as evidence of ARSA presence in the village.

- One-third who had these items taken said such restrictions had existed in their village for years. In about one-quarter of the cases, local authorities took these objects after the October 2016 attacks, and through summer 2017. Three-in-ten said the objects were removed between a month and a day before the attack, while the remaining 11% said they were removed while the attack was in progress or immediately prior.
- Rohingya most often cited the military as the culprit (in 88% of cases), but in some cases, civilians (31%) and police (22%) participated. In each, the removal of these objects facilitated the subsequent ground assaults, killings, and property destruction.

"When the military came, they would steal whatever we had, including knives—we could not cut vegetables or fish." Female, age 30

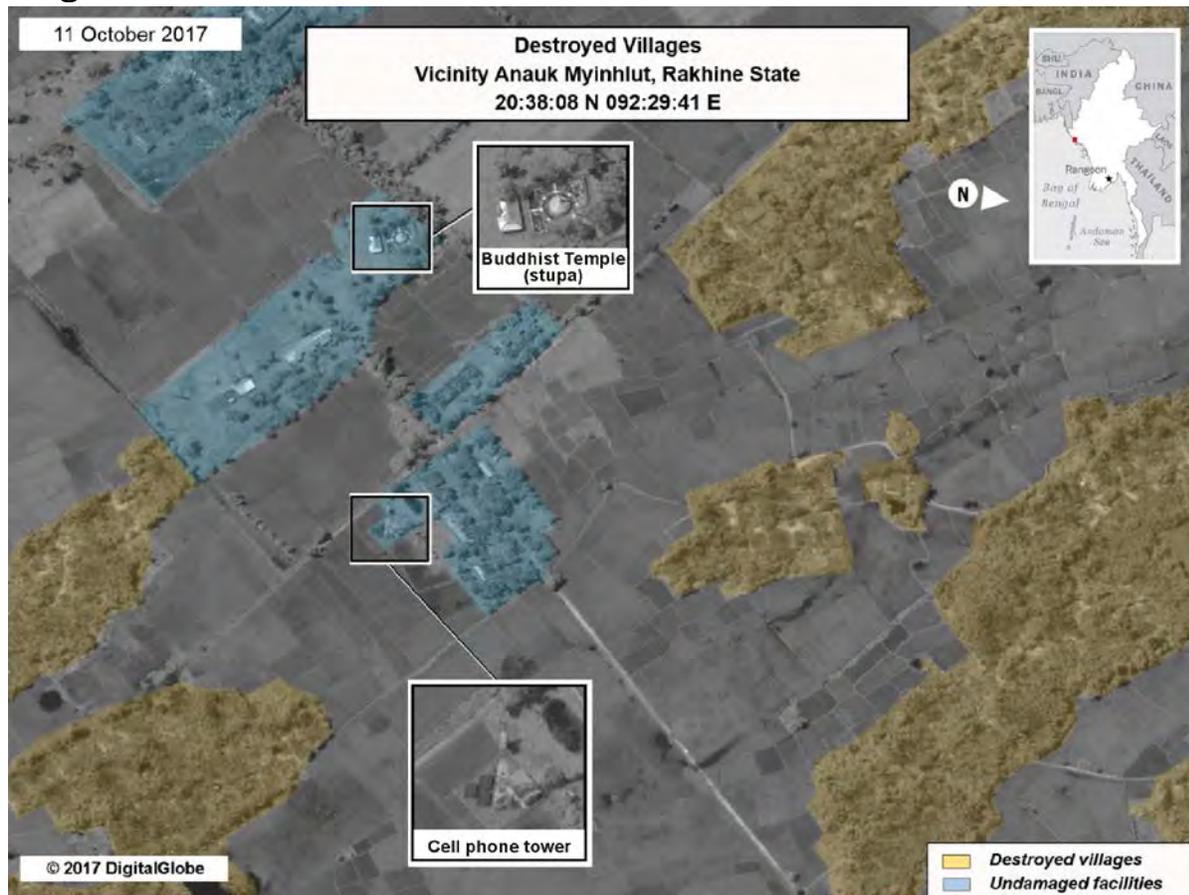
Systematic, Large-Scale Violence Strikes Villages (August-September 2017)

After August 25, on the days when violence broke out in their villages, some respondents reported the attacks began in the early morning before most residents were awake. These attacks explicitly targeted Rohingya, and left neighboring non-Rohingya sites (e.g. Buddhist stupas) and critical infrastructure (e.g. cell phone towers) untouched during the assaults (see Image 1, next page). During these large-scale attacks, homes and property were destroyed, and scores of Rohingya were killed as they fled their villages. These attacks generally lasted 1-4 days, depending on the size of the village. Rohingya said the army was involved in nearly all (92%) of the ground assaults—at times alone (32%), but sometimes accompanied by other security forces (26%), civilians (11%), or both (23%).

The stories from some refugees show a pattern of planning and pre-meditation in their villages on the part of the attackers. In one case, the local heads of the military and police called together

25 Muslim leaders from the surrounding villages to tell them to leave or they would be killed or burned. Other respondents reported non-Rohingya neighbors leaving shortly before the outbreak of violence.

Image 1



SECTION 2: TYPES AND PERPETRATORS OF VIOLENCE WITNESSED BY ROHINGYA

Burmese Army Overwhelmingly Identified as Main Actor

The results of the survey overwhelmingly show that Burmese security forces, and the army in particular, primarily are responsible for the violence that has driven the nearly 800,000 Rohingya from their homes since October 2016 (see Map 2, next page).

- Three-quarters witnessed a killing by a member of the army. In contrast, only one-quarter witnessed a killing by non-Rohingya civilians or any police force.
- Victims named the army as perpetrators in an overwhelming majority (88%) of the killings witnessed, as well as in nearly all armed ground assaults (92%) and aerial attacks (88%).

“The military surrounded us and shot at people. They wore green uniforms. They wore red scarves and red patches on their shoulders. They had long guns held on their shoulders and helmets.” Female, age 18

In many cases—and in half of the armed ground assaults reported—additional security services such as the Border Guard Police (BGP), the Rakhine State Police, or the Combat Police forces accompanied the army. Non-Rohingya civilians also participated in the violence and the looting that often accompanied it. In some cases, refugees said the military provided civilians uniforms and weapons to be used in the assault.

Official Rhetoric, Attackers’ Language Coincide

Official statements portrayed the Rohingya as a foreign jihadist enemy group, and those who fled as guilty of belonging to, supporting, or sympathizing with a terror group.

“Rakhine State sees an increasing number of Bengali populations. Later the Bengalis in Rakhine State drove out the natives including Rakhine, Dainet, Mro, Khami and Maramagyi. Conflicts between Rakhine ethnics and Bengalis occur as Bengalis try to establish a separate region... Arrangements are being made to launch the Jihad holy war in the whole Rakhine State before October 2017.” (Army Spokesman Maj-Gen Aung Ye Win on August 31, 2017)

“ARSA extremist Bengali terrorists were not successful in attacking the security outposts, and they fled to Bangladesh for fear of the retribution of the security troops. As the terrorist took their families together with them, the number of people who fled had become large.” (Min Aung Hlaing, in comments to U.S. Secretary of State Rex Tillerson on November 16, 2017)

Those Rohingya who were able to understand their attackers frequently heard similar themes—soldiers, policemen, and civilians telling them that they did not belong in Burma and that they must leave or face death. During the attacks on their villages and rapes, many Rohingya reported hearing perpetrators using explicit language and calling them “Bangladeshi/Bengali” or the racial slur “Kalar.” Many Rohingya cannot speak Burmese and thus were unable to say what was being shouted at them during the attacks. Others said the attackers approached their task in silence.

Killings, Destruction, Heavy Weaponry Pervasive

The violence respondents witnessed was extensive and followed consistent patterns across northern Rakhine State.

- Overall, eight-in-ten refugees said they witnessed a killing, most often by the Burmese security forces—either police or military. Over half (54%) of the killings witnessed were from shooting, 20% by machete or knife, and 11% by burning. Only 3% the killings were from drowning, though refugees reported that more drowned during their escape.
- Two-thirds said that they were taken into army or police custody or that they saw other Rohingya being taken.
- Eight-in-10 reported they saw the destruction of homes or villages. Many more reported that others had confirmed their homes were destroyed, but this hearsay testimony was not recorded by the investigators. Imagery analysis from August 30 to October 23, 2017

indicates that more than 38,000 buildings were destroyed by fire, significantly more than the estimated 1,500 observed in October and November 2016. Most villages where burning occurred were totally destroyed.

In some cases, refugees said several cars or trucks would arrive to take part in a coordinated attack—speedboats were also mentioned in some areas. More than 100 respondents from villages spread across northern Rakhine State mentioned seeing helicopters, though they did not always take part in the attacks; some saw them drop “bombs” or “rockets.”

- Across northern Rakhine State, but especially near Maungdaw and areas further north, respondents reported the use of heavy, explosive weapons such as rocket launchers (or “launchers”) and grenades. They most often said the army or security forces were using these weapons.
- Others said the soldiers were using long and short guns or knives. Several respondents also said the local ethnic Rakhine (also known as “Mogh”) were using long knives or machetes to take part in the attack.
- In many areas, refugees mentioned the use of flamethrowers or incendiary devices. Security forces most often used these weapons to burn down houses, but also used them to kill and injure Rohingya.

“The whole village was under random fire like rain.” Male, age 20

Refugees reported that the perpetrators of the violence singled out community or religious leaders as their targets in some areas. Thirty percent of the respondents reported they witnessed explicitly religious targeting or harassment. Respondents also detailed cases of the military’s desecration of sacred texts, and some saw soldiers burning or urinating on Korans.

Theft of livestock and personal property—often jewelry and cooking vessels—was commonplace. One-third said their food resources were stolen or destroyed. Though the military was most commonly named as the perpetrator (involved in 76% of reported cases), non-Rohingya civilians were involved in one-third of the thefts witnessed. Some refugees lamented that their families had been living comfortable lives and that they owned small shops, acres of agricultural land, and cows, all of which had been destroyed, leaving them with virtually nothing with which to rebuild their lives. In some villages, community elite were targeted in the theft and violence, including those who were wealthier or more educated. In other areas, respondents described the actions as more random.

The Burmese government officially ceased operations in northern Rakhine on September 5, 2017. An analysis of imagery shows villages still burning on that date (see Image 2, next page), and reports from refugees indicate the violence continued, tapering through September and early October.

Image 2



Mutilation, Possible Torture Prevalent

Investigators heard reports of mostly Burmese soldiers, and sometimes civilians, mutilating or possibly torturing Rohingya before and during the attacks. One-in-ten refugees witnessed these acts.

- Reports of mutilation included the cutting and spreading of entrails, severed limbs or hands/feet, pulling out nails or burning beards and genitals to force a confession, or being burned alive.
- Thirty-three respondents reported groups of Rohingya were forced to stay outside for hours as a form of punishment, or as part of interrogations.
- Thirty-two respondents reported either seeing victims being decapitated or dismembered. Others reported passing mutilated corpses on their way to Bangladesh, but were unable to confirm what had happened.

Many reported passing dead bodies as they escaped from their home village to Bangladesh. Some appeared to have died due to various injuries—sometimes described as mutilations—while others seem to have died from exhaustion or other stresses on the journey. One-in-ten reported seeing the disposal of bodies in pits, graves, mass graves, or using other methods. In a few cases, witnesses said Rohingya were either killed in pits or buried alive, but in the majority of events, the victims were already dead when the bodies were being dumped, covered, or destroyed.

- Some reported seeing dead bodies being dropped into a pit or a grave dug by the military—sometimes with the assistance of bulldozers. Perpetrators also took advantage of village wells for body disposal.
- In other cases, soldiers burned dead bodies, aided by kerosene, hay, or wrapped blankets.
- One refugee reported that the military put acid into victims’ eyes so they could not be identified. Others reported the military dismembered bodies.
- Rohingya often saw bodies floating in water—one described seeing “heads floating in the river like footballs.”

“The military shot our honorable old Imam. They shot him twice, but he was not dead yet. So they stabbed him and hung his torso on a tree.” Female, age 30

Weak, Vulnerable Bear Brunt of Violence

During the attacks on Rohingya communities, refugees report that the military and, to a lesser extent, the state police, injured and killed those who were not able to dodge the attacks—often women, children, and the elderly. In some cases the violence against these vulnerable populations was indiscriminate, as soldiers shot rounds of bullets into the air. At other times, it was specifically targeted. In some villages, soldiers went door-to-door to kill those who had been unable to flee after the initial phase of violence.

“I had to choose between my children and my mother... I had only two hands and two children” Male, age 35

“The military and BGP slaughtered my son, who was 5 years old. When military came, I was pregnant. The situation was very horrific. I could not get all of my children. I could not go to my son. He was killed.” Female, age 25

One-hundred and seventeen refugees from across northern Rakhine State witnessed infants and children being beaten or killed, or saw the corpses of children with gunshot wounds or cut throats in villages and along roads as they fled to Bangladesh. When the military shot adult families, multiple reports indicate they included the children in the executions. In some cases, witnesses report seeing soldiers or police grab infants out of their mother’s arms to kill them, and some reported seeing them physically brutalize young children by stomping on them, beating them or throwing infants on the ground. Most of these events occurred in August and September 2017.

- Multiple witnesses report soldiers throwing infants and small children into open fires or burning huts. Witnesses also report seeing soldiers throw children into rivers and seeing children’s bodies that had been thrown into a village well. One refugee reported seeing a police officer throw an infant in a river, then shooting the mother when she ran into the water to save her child.
- One refugee told of soldiers following a group of Rohingya as they fled to Bangladesh. At one point, she said they suddenly shot into a group of children who were playing on the ground, killing a 5-year-old, a 3-year old, and a 3-month old infant.

- In one report, a group of Rakhine civilians joined the military in attacking villagers in a rice paddy. One of the civilians stopped a man who was holding an infant, threw it in the air and caught it on his long knife.
- Soldiers attacked women, and their infants, during or just after childbirth. Several refugees from different villages also reported that soldiers killed pregnant mothers by slashing their stomachs open and ripping out their fetuses.

Consistent with the military's attacks on vulnerable segments of the Rohingya population, the military and police also appear to have targeted elderly men and women by beating, shooting, or stabbing them during attacks on their villages. Many respondents reported that the elderly were burned alive after their houses were set on fire and they were unable to escape.

- As his village was burning, one man witnessed soldiers physically push four disabled and elderly men who could not walk inside burning homes.
- Soldiers killed one witness's 70-year-old mother in front of her, then mutilated her body and threw it into a fire.
- Witnesses also report seeing the dead bodies of many elderly people as they fled to Bangladesh.

Respondents Escaped, but Many Did Not

In many of the reported cases, Rohingya left their villages and escaped across the border to Bangladesh. In other areas, however, there seemed to be a concerted effort by the attackers to prevent the Rohingya from escaping, and to inflict maximum damage upon them.

- Some reported that during assaults, villagers were locked into houses, and those houses were set on fire.
- Two refugees witnessed the military blocking all roads or exits from the village before opening fire on the Rohingya population.
- Nine respondents reported the army, navy, or ethnic Rakhine civilians took their boats, or scuttled or destroyed them during the violence to prevent their use.

One-fifth of all refugees said they witnessed a mass-casualty event of killings or injuries with more than 100 victims. In some cases, respondents said the events occurred in their own villages, while in other cases they reported seeing massacres as they fled to Bangladesh. In one case, the respondent said men were forced to lie face-down on the ground, and more than two hundred men and one woman were killed by being cut across the neck.

- One respondent witnessed Rohingya being shot and cut while hiding in the hills outside a village. Another mentioned seeing a "flood of bodies" from the same massacre there.
- Twenty-eight respondents reported the army or navy attempting to sink boats full of refugees, or shooting refugees trapped in the boats. Nine of these respondents said this caused the deaths of 100 people or more.

"All nine cousins drowned in the river after their boat was sunk by military. The soldiers beat them as boat was going down to make sure they drowned." Female, age 30

Sexual Violence Endemic

The survey uncovered widespread sexual assault and rape against Rohingya women by the military. Rape incidents appear to have increased in number and brutality in the direct lead-up to and during the August and September attacks. Gang rape was reported across northern Rakhine State, suggesting at least some level of cooperation between the multiple perpetrators (see Map 3, next page).

In general, the military and police did not appear to try to hide the rapes from their peers or from those above them in their chain of command. Rather, rapes were largely public in nature, with many assaults either taking place in public view, or with perpetrators leaving evidence of such assaults—including the victims’ corpses which clearly portrayed marks of rape—in public view.

Twenty-seven women said they were themselves raped, a low number that could reflect a cultural stigma against admitting one was raped or discussing sexual violence openly, as well as the reports that Burmese soldiers often killed women after they were raped. However, 45% witnessed women and girls being raped, including the 20% who witnessed gang rape. More witnessed some form of sexual violence, including forced stripping of clothing, touching of women’s breasts or genitals, and sexual assault. The fact that the refugees identified the security forces as having committed so many rapes and assaults publicly likely contributes to these high numbers.

“Two police from my village raped me. I know these men by sight, but not their names. After they were done, they told me to leave the country, this is not your country.” Female, age 23

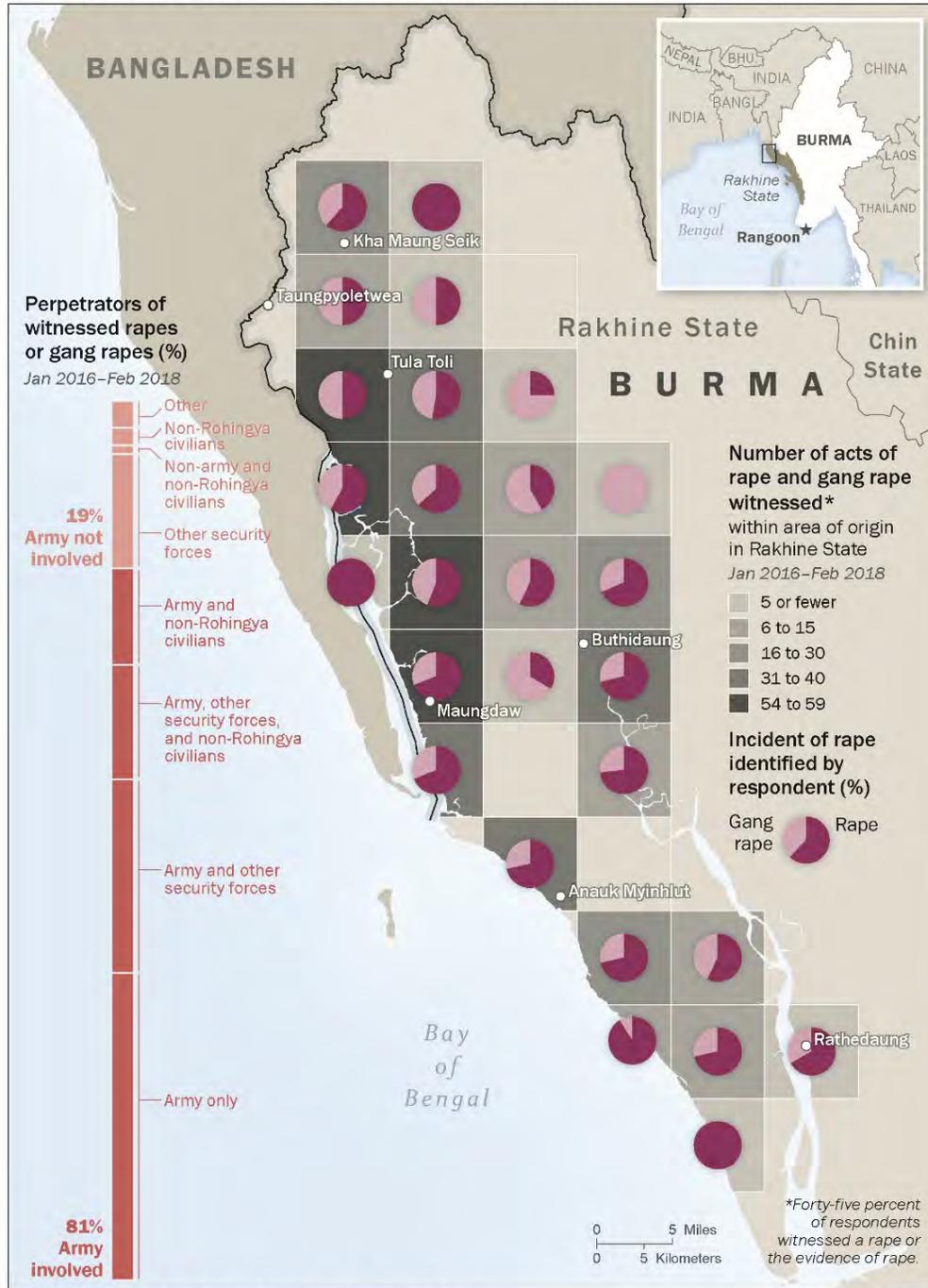
The security forces’ sexual assaults generally occurred in one of several ways, trends consistent throughout northern Rakhine State as identified below:

1. Home searches

Respondents reported that the military would routinely visit their villages, ostensibly to search for insurgents, and such searches would often involve groping, sexually assaulting, or raping the women inside their homes. Many women said the soldiers would steal valuables, particularly their gold jewelry, during the assaults. One 25-year-old reported particularly brutal home searches, saying the soldiers “raped women until they were half-dead.” Another said a soldier raped her sister because she refused to give him her gold nose ring. Women whose husbands had fled their homes to hide from the military were especially vulnerable to abuse.

“When soldiers came to the village and “searched” women, they groped our breasts, entire body. Today when I think about those days, this is what makes me sick. Our husbands were never there and cannot find out.” Female, age 25

Map 3: Army Mainly Responsible for Rape, Gang Rape in Northern Rakhine State



Names and boundary representation are not necessarily authoritative.

2. *Mass rapes in fields, mosques, schools*

Refugees from multiple villages across northern Rakhine state reported that for at least a year leading up to the August 2017 violence, military would arrive at their villages and demand that many or all the women gather in a public space or a nearby field. Some reported that if women did not leave their homes, soldiers found and raped them. Soldiers interrogated the women about their male family members, beating them if they failed to answer. They would then choose a smaller number of women—often 4 or 5, but some refugees reported up to 20—whom as many 15 soldiers would then take to fields, forests, houses, schools, mosques or latrines to gang rape. Many victims were reportedly killed afterwards, though not in all cases. In some cases, instead of making all the women gather, the military would go door-to-door, choosing the “prettiest” girls to take away likely to be raped, instead.

- In one report, in the days before a village massacre, local Rakhine police and army soldiers made more than 20 women leave their home to go sit outside in direct sunlight, threatening that if the women didn’t bring their husbands to them, they would beat and rape them. Women who didn’t cooperate were beaten. They chose the younger women, taking them to nearby homes and the madrasa and raping them.
- On some occasions, large numbers of women were taken to be raped. One woman said she saw some 50 of the village’s “prettiest women” taken to the hills, where two of the survivors later told her they were all raped, and about 35 were shot afterwards.
- One refugee said that the military demanded that all the women in her village gather in the mosque, but that one woman did not, because she had just given birth. Upon discovering this, soldiers pulled her out into her home’s yard and publicly raped her.

“They took women out and made them sit in the sun in the field, and questioned them, ‘where are the men?’ They took away breastfeeding moms, babies were not allowed to eat, kept them in the field for one day. They took away the young and beautiful women and raped them, gang rape, 5-7 men raping one woman.” Female, age 35

3. *Rapes During Attacks on Villages*

Refugees reported that on the day their villages were attacked, soldiers would grab and rape women who were fleeing from the burning homes and shooting.

- Witnesses from multiple locations report women were raped in the fields or hills, outside their homes in their own yards, or on roads in town where others could clearly see what was happening. One man saw 10 women being raped all along a road as he was fleeing, 4-6 soldiers attacking each woman, who were later killed.
- Many respondents reported seeing women’s naked corpses as they fled through villages, saying it was apparent from their gruesome injuries that the women had been raped. For example, a 19-year-old was fleeing her village when she said she passed a naked woman’s body bound to a tree “with clear signs of gang rape.”

“About 100 women were rounded up and raped in the hills, on the road, in front of their homes, wherever they could find them” Female, age 60

Witnesses reported that many women did not survive the rape attacks. In some cases they died from the brutality of the rape and the accompanying violence, and in many other cases the soldiers shot, hung, or hacked their bodies after they finished raping them.

“They were so brutal.” Male, age 55

- Those who did survive gang rapes often sustained serious injuries. One interviewee reported that her cousin was raped by six military officers, after which she has been virtually unable to walk or stand up.
- Witnesses reported exceptionally violent attacks where multiple soldiers raped women for hours at a time while beating them, sexually assaulting them with their weapons, or inflicting other injuries on them in addition to the rape.
- Nine respondents from unique locations in Rakhine state reported witnessing attacks or evidence of attacks in which soldiers cut off the breasts of women they raped during the assaults. Soldiers also reportedly mutilated genitals or other parts of bodies.

“The soldiers chased me. I couldn’t escape. Everyone managed to flee but I was pregnant so I wasn’t able to get away. Three soldiers raped me. One kicked me and I fell unconscious... When I got my senses back, I saw that my fetus had come out dead... I have seen my baby die and I find myself numb.” Female, age 25

Refugees from villages throughout Rakhine State reported that the perpetrators often killed their victims after the rape, typically by shooting or stabbing them. In multiple cases, soldiers killed some of the women during a mass rape, while releasing a small number alive.

- One refugee reported that the military abducted a woman along with some 80 others, taking them to a military camp in the village to rape for five days. Afterwards, she said soldiers killed half and let the remaining go free.
- In another village, one mother said that during a rape of roughly 100 women, her daughter was raped, then mutilated and killed, while her niece’s body was cut in half after rape.
- In yet another village, a man said he saw about twenty soldiers select five women, gang rape each one, then kill the women by shooting some, and hanging others from trees. Others reported soldiers cutting babies out of their pregnant mothers’ bellies, or killing both mother and child during or immediately after birth.

TAB 1: METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This report is based on a DRL-funded, INR-designed survey conducted in the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Face-to-face interviews were conducted among a random sample of 1,024 Rohingya adults, 18 years old and older, who had left northern Rakhine State after October 1, 2016. The fieldwork took place from April 1 to April 22, 2018 by a team of 18 experienced human rights investigators from around the world. The investigators hailed from nearly every continent; many have previous experience with the International Criminal Tribunal for the former Yugoslavia, and International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda; some are sexual and gender-based violence and/or trauma experts, some are former law enforcement officers, and all have previous experience in trauma-sensitive human rights documentation for the purposes of accountability. None were U.S. government officials. The investigators were trained by INR on sampling as well as the survey tool, which included open-ended questions and follow-up probes designed to draw out a narrative on the violence. They also received training from an expert with knowledge of the Burmese security services, which aided them in correctly identifying perpetrators.

This hybrid survey combined quantitative and qualitative methodology, and it is unique among existing research into the current Rohingya crisis because the random sampling of refugees ensured that the results represent the entire refugee population in camps in Cox's Bazar, providing context for other qualitative research efforts.

The interviews were conducted via translator in a semi-structured format, often within the respondent's camp residence. The translators were recruited locally, and an expert provided a two-day training on translation in the context of sensitive interviews. The qualitative content of the interview was then coded by the investigator to capture events that the respondent directly witnessed, as well as the events' perpetrator—to the extent they could be determined.

NGA created a map atlas to aid in locating the respondents' village of origin. The atlas broke northern Rakhine State into a grid covering areas that open-source analysis had identified as containing villages burned in the violence. Even when the respondent was unable to locate his or her exact village on the map, with the guidance of the investigator, the respondent was in most cases able to locate events to a general area within the grid. NGA analysts were able to locate approximately 9 out of every 10 of the locations identified by investigators, and conducted geospatial analysis based on the overall grid.

A large majority of the respondents left northern Rakhine State in either August or September 2017, which mirrors NGO accounting of the ebb and flow of refugees since unrest began in October 2016. Though the survey was open to refugees of all ethnicities, only Rohingya were captured by the random sampling method.

The margin of sampling error is ± 3 percentage points, and the study is representative of the population of camps sampled (see Map 1). Those who were living outside the officially administered camps were not included in the sample design. Though the survey results showed the vast majority of the most violent incidents occurred during a relatively brief two month period of time (see Figure 2, page 4), further analysis of the data is planned in order to reveal patterns of violence across space and time, and provide more information on specific mass-casualty events.

The analysis also benefits from additional insight provided by the expert on Burma's security services and an informal focus group conducted among victims of sexual violence by an investigator.

There are some limitations to the data collected in the study:

- The methodology chosen for the study focuses on the pattern of events refugees experienced, and thus there are some cases when two or more refugees report witnessing the same event. Though the report accurately reflects the typical experiences of a Rohingya refugee, it cannot be used to calculate death rates or other losses in northern Rakhine State without combining this dataset with additional information.
- The presence of ARSA in the refugee camps likely gave pause to some refugees who might otherwise identify ARSA as perpetrators. ARSA's involvement in the violence thus is likely under-reported. However, based on other credible research into the attacks in northern Rakhine State, we have no reason to conclude the group was responsible for more than a small fraction of the violence.
- We do not have any insight into events that occurred outside of the study time frame. The survey also did not capture any experiences from Rohingya who chose to stay in northern Rakhine State or from Burmese of any other ethnicity who resided there.

TAB 2: ADDITIONAL FINDINGS AND BACKGROUND

Some Restrictions Predated Attacks

Rohingya interviewed for this survey indicated that human rights abuses within their villages increased significantly following the anti-Muslim riots in Rakhine State in June 2012, and an outbreak of civilian-led violence in 2014. Interviewees described numerous restrictions and abuses they faced in daily life. Local officials forced Rohingya to pay sometimes-exorbitant fees to marry or have children, and they enforced limits on family size. Restrictions on movement were particularly severe, with a complex web of regulations making it extremely difficult for Rohingya to move freely, though sometimes it was possible if a bribe was paid. Some areas reported frequent incidences of forced labor, beatings, and sexual violence. The severity of these restrictions differed village-to-village, but Rohingya generally found their lives more restricted than those of their non-Rohingya neighbors.

Many also said they were unable to practice their religion because the military had shuttered or burned mosques, closed their children’s madrassas, and banned mosques from issuing a call to prayer. In some cases, people said the military had threatened them that if they were found praying in their homes they would be beaten, arrested, or killed. In some areas, local authorities forced women to go outside unveiled, or forced men to shave their beards—and, in a few cases, tugged or pulled out their beards.

What do we know about ARSA?

ARSA, also known by its former name Harakah al-Yaqin, or HaY, frames its objectives as those of an ethnic insurgency seeking greater rights for Burma’s Rohingya population. It has stopped short of calling for outright autonomy for Rohingya and disavowed terrorism writ large, as well as specific terrorist organizations like al-Qaida, ISIS, and Lashkar-e-Tayyiba. Any ties to these or other foreign extremist groups remain unconfirmed. Though ARSA reportedly receives financial support from members of the Rohingya diaspora in the Middle East and South Asia, participants in ARSA attacks were poorly equipped and resourced.

The group comprises a shadowy network of Rohingya militants in Burma and Bangladesh led by its senior leader, Ata Ullah (also known as Abu Umar al Junooni). ARSA’s size and support among Rohingya in Burma and Bangladesh are unclear. The group has only conducted one significant attack since August 2017, a January 2018 attack on a Burmese military truck. Recent murders and intimidation of ARSA critics and government collaborators inside Rohingya refugee camps have also been blamed on the group.

Only a handful of respondents mentioned ARSA as a perpetrator—some mentioned attempted recruitment or a presence in their village, some mentioned the October 9 attacks, and a few mentioned threats or violence against those who “collaborated” with the military.