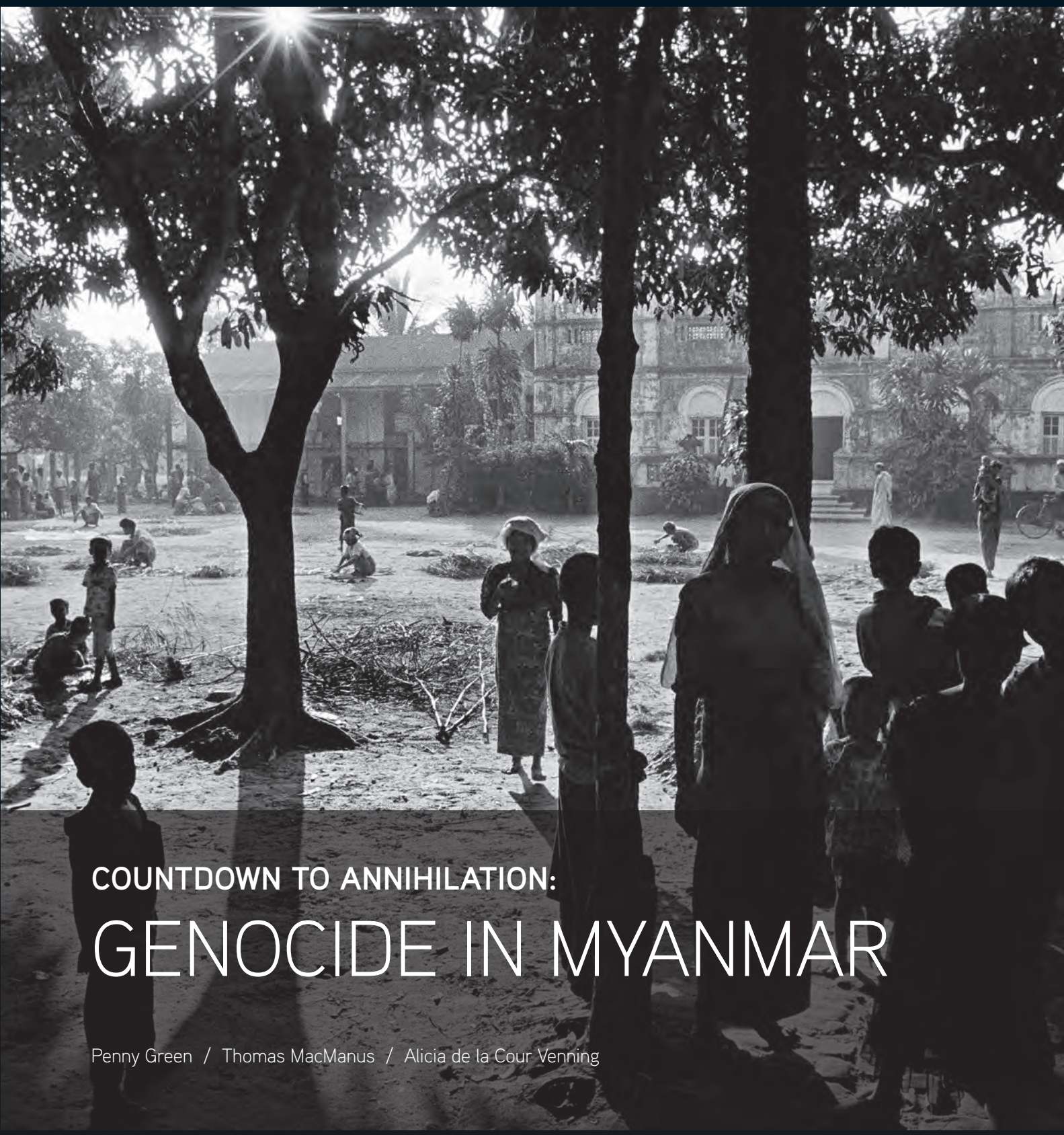

COUNTDOWN TO ANNIHILATION:

GENOCIDE IN MYANMAR

Penny Green / Thomas MacManus / Alicia de la Cour Venning

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Front page image:
After violence erupted in June 2012, tens of thousands of Rohingya were forced into isolated camps for internally displaced people. Thet Kay PyinYwar Ma is a mosque and madrassa outside of Sittwe. Some 2,200 Rohingya fled to the madrassa after their homes in Sittwe were destroyed. © Greg Constantine

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COUNTDOWN TO ANNIHILATION:

GENOCIDE IN MYANMAR

Penny Green / Thomas MacManus / Alicia de la Cour Venning

CONTENTS

MAPS 5

CHRONOLOGY 7

ABBREVIATIONS AND GLOSSARY 9

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 11

FOREWORD 13

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 15

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND 16

1. INTRODUCTION 19

GENOCIDE: A FRAMEWORK 21

METHODOLOGY 23

2. BACKGROUND 27

RAKHINE STATE 27

RAKHINE OPPRESSION 28

RAKHINE CIVIL SOCIETY 31

RAKHINE MOBILISATION 34

EMERGENCY COORDINATION CENTRE 37

PROTESTS 38

ATTACKS ON THE UN AND INGOS 39

RAKHINE NATIONALISM 40

IMPACT OF THE 2012 CONFLICT 48

PART II: ROAD TO GENOCIDE 52

3. STIGMATISATION AND DEHUMANISATION 53

CITIZENSHIP AND WHITE CARDS 56

GENOCIDAL ROLE OF MONKS 59

PREACHERS OF HATE: 969 AND MA BA THA 61

4. HARASSMENT, VIOLENCE AND TERROR 69

INSTITUTIONALISED DISCRIMINATION 70

RACE AND RELIGION LAWS 72

ORGANISED MASSACRES: JUNE 2012 74

5. ISOLATION AND SEGREGATION 79

DETENTION CAMPS 82

PRISON VILLAGES 82

THE GHETTO: AUNG MINGALAR 84

OTHER INDICATORS OF SEGREGATION 86

6. SYSTEMATIC WEAKENING 89

CONDITIONS OF DETENTION 90

DENIAL OF HEALTHCARE 93

HUNGER CRISIS 95

LOSS OF LIVELIHOOD 97

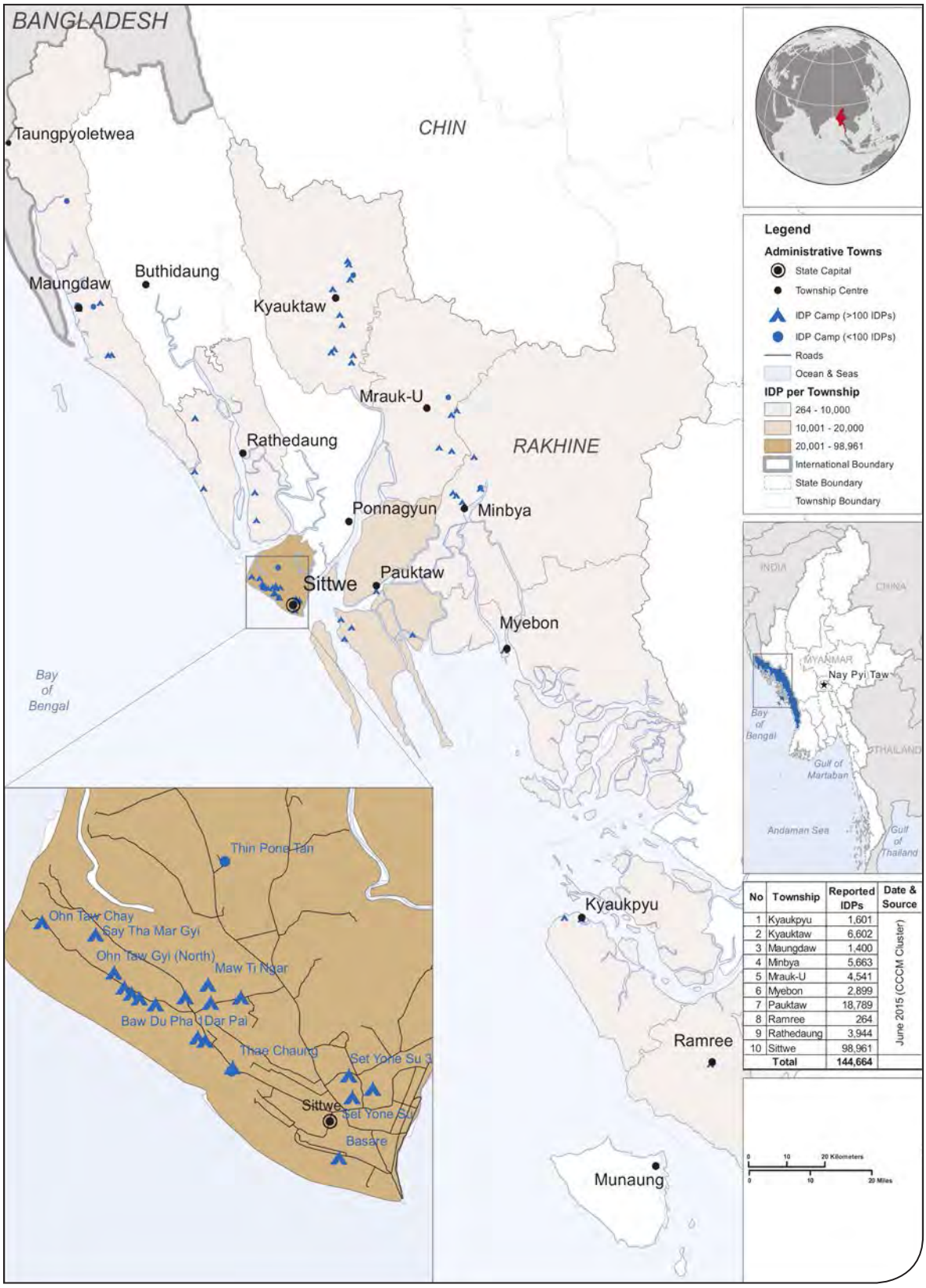
7. CONCLUSION 99

BIBLIOGRAPHY 102

LEAKED DOCUMENTS 105

Maps

Source: The New York Times



No	Township	Reported IDPs	Date & Source
1	Kyaukpyu	1,601	June 2015 (CCCM Cluster)
2	Kyauktaw	6,602	
3	Maungdaw	1,400	
4	Minbya	5,663	
5	Mrauk-U	4,541	
6	Myebon	2,899	
7	Pauktaw	18,789	
8	Ramree	264	
9	Rathedaung	3,944	
10	Sittwe	98,961	
	Total	**144,664**	

Source: Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU)

Chronology

1785: Last Rakhine Kingdom annexed by Burmese King Bodawpaya.

1824-26: First Anglo-Burmese war; Arakan (Rakhine) state is annexed to British India.

1942-3: Pro-British Muslims and pro-Japanese Rakhine clash; massacres on both sides. Muslims flee north and Rakhine people move south, contributing to segregation.

1948: Burma gains independence from Britain, U Nu becomes first Prime Minister.

1959: Burma's first President, Sao Shwe Thaike, declares, 'Muslims of Arakan certainly belong to the indigenous races of Burma'.

1960: Rohingya vote in elections.

1962: Ne Win leads military coup; leads to increasing discrimination of ethnic minorities.

1974: Rakhine granted statehood.

1977-78: Nationwide crackdown on 'illegal immigration'; 200,000 Rohingya flee to Bangladesh. Most return to Burma the following year.

1982: Citizenship Law excludes Rohingya from country's list of 135 national races and strips Rohingya of citizenship.

1989: Burma renamed Myanmar; Arakan state renamed Rakhine state; new citizenship scrutiny cards issued to Myanmar nationals, excluding most Rohingya.

1990: Elections held, Rohingya and Kaman parties run; several Rohingya representatives elected.

1991-2: Military operation Pyi Thaya in northern Rakhine state; 250,000 people flee to Bangladesh.

1992: NaSaKa military/border security force established in northern Rakhine state, notorious for abuses.

1993-95: Rohingya who fled during operation Pyi Thaya repatriated under UNHCR's watch.

1993: Border Region Immigration Control restricts marriages of Rohingya in Maungdaw township.

1994: Myanmar stops issuing birth certificates to Rohingya children.

1997: Head of Sittwe Immigration Office restricts Rohingya travelling outside their township.

2001: Twenty-eight mosques and Islamic schools destroyed in and around Maungdaw township.

2005: Maungdaw Township Peace and Development Council restricts Rohingya marriages and birth rate.

2008: Rohingyas granted temporary registration cards and permitted to vote in widely discredited Myanmar Constitution referendum.

2008-9: Government 'spot-checks' Rohingya homes and restricts movement.

2010: Myanmar elections, Rohingya allowed to vote.

2012: Violence erupts in Rakhine state between Buddhists and Muslims.

2014: March: Rakhine nationalists attack international NGO offices in Sittwe; April: Rohingya excluded from April nationwide census.

2015: February: parliament grants temporary white card holders (mostly Rohingya) the right to vote in planned constitutional amendment. Days later the President reverses the decision and declares white cards invalid; May: boat crisis in Andaman Sea reported in the international press; June: UNHCR estimates over 150,000 people have fled from the Myanmar/Bangladesh border area since January 2012; August: Rohingya representative in northern Rakhine state, U Shwe Maung, is barred from re-election.

Abbreviations and glossary

969	nationalist movement within the Sangha
AHRDO	Arakan Human Rights and Development Organization
ALD	Arakan League for Democracy
ANP	Arakan National Party (sometimes referred to as 'Rakhine National Party')
Arakan	former name of Rakhine state and people
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
Bamar	majority ethnic group in Myanmar, often used interchangeably with 'Burmese' and 'Burman'
Burma	former name of Myanmar (pre-1989)
CSOs	civil society organisations
ECC	Emergency Coordination Centre
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
IDPs	internally displaced persons
INGOs	international NGOs
ISCI	International State Crime Initiative
'kalar'	pejorative term for Muslims
Kaman	Muslim ethnic minority in Rakhine state

Lee, Yanghee	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar
Ma Ba Tha	nationalist movement within the Sangha
Mayu District	comprises northern Rakhine state districts of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung
MSF	Médecins Sans Frontières
NGO	non-governmental organisation
NLD	National League for Democracy, headed by Aung San Suu Kyi
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OIC	Organisation of Islamic Countries
Quintana, Tomás Ojea	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (2008-14)
Rakhine	Buddhist ethnic minority of Rakhine state
RNDP	Rakhine Nationalities Development Party
Rohingya	Muslim ethnic minority in Rakhine state
Sangha	community of ordained monks
SPDC	State Peace and Development Council
tatmadaw	Myanmar's armed forces
townships	administrative neighbourhoods of towns
UNICEF	UN Children's Fund
UNOCHA	UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
USDP	Union Solidarity and Development Party, headed by President Thein Sein
WFP	World Food Programme
'white cards'	temporary ID cards

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Foreword

For decades, the Rohingya people in Myanmar have been victims of widespread governmental violations that, when considered holistically, and analysed systematically, reveal a bleak conclusion: the Rohingya people are gradually being decimated.

This dramatic conclusion has not been drawn powerfully or often enough. It has been obscured by the gradual, multidimensional character of discriminatory and oppressive policies against the Rohingya, the historical unfolding of these policies over many decades, and the fact that they have fluctuated in intensity.

The failure to resolve the critical situation of the Rohingya can be attributed in part to Myanmar's historic political democratic transition, which has absorbed the energies and attention of almost all national and international actors; and to the unfortunate animosity from many in Myanmar toward the Rohingya community and those who defend them, even those who were and are still victims of human rights violations. Careful government planning grounded in decades of military rule, and skillful diplomatic manipulation, has further exacerbated an already intractable crisis.

With respect to the international community, the balance at this moment is mainly negative. The constant voicing of concerns regarding the suffering of the Rohingya, even the most pressing and urgent ones, are not enough to dismantle the machinery that oppresses them. Nor is there a sufficiently deep or complex understanding of the fundamental underlying dimensions of what is happening in Myanmar; namely, a progressive deterioration of the Rohingya community.

Facing this critical situation, the commitments assumed by other stakeholders are fundamental. In this sense, we count on the research of the *International State Crime Initiative* from Queen Mary, University of London. Based on Daniel Feierstein's analytical framework, the report solidly proves the different mechanisms targeted to weaken the Rohingya, and arrives at a convincing conclusion: that a process of genocide against the Rohingya population is underway in Myanmar.

Rohingya groups also report genocide, but the fact is that apart from them very few organizations have arrived at the same conclusion. There is no doubt that it is a very delicate subject, and in this case, due to the increasing engagement with the political transition in Myanmar, we must note that is has been embarrassing for the international community to express the idea of genocide.

Notwithstanding this, with investigations like the one presented in this report from Queen Mary University of London, the evidence of the crime of ius cogens has been accumulating. At this point, the situation of the Rohingya cannot be understood without considering a possible genocide.

We must acknowledge that Myanmar has been going through significant changes during recent years, and now faces a national election that is critical for its future. A peace process is ongoing, and some human rights shortcomings have been overcome, although many others remain. But the plight of the Rohingya has deteriorated rapidly. The community is cornered and traumatised, forcing them to escape in the worst possible conditions to the open sea, where many perish with the rest of the world scarcely reacting.

If we could for one moment imagine how it feels to be a young Rohingya woman, we would see the real face of our civilization: denial of their existence, health deprivation, limited access to food, confinement, the fear of rape, torture and violent death. To offer them an alternative, is a legal and moral obligation we all have.

Tomás Ojea Quintana,

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar (2008-14)

Executive Summary

In May 2015 scenes of desperate people stranded without food or water on captain-less boats off the coasts of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia brought global attention to the Rohingya,[1] a 1.1 million-strong Muslim ethnic group in Rakhine state, Myanmar (formerly Burma).[2] The immediate humanitarian crisis, however, masked a much deeper and more unpalatable crisis – a genocidal persecution organised by the Myanmar State from which the Rohingya were fleeing.

Reports of this persecution led researchers from the International State Crime Initiative (ISCI) to explore whether or not well-documented state crimes against Myanmar's Rohingya do indeed amount to genocide. ISCI's detailed research found ample evidence that the Rohingya have been subjected to systematic and widespread violations of human rights, including killings, torture, rape and arbitrary detention; destruction of their homes and villages; land confiscation; forced labour; denial of citizenship; denial of the right to identify themselves as Rohingya; denial of access to healthcare, education and employment; restrictions on freedom of movement, and State-sanctioned campaigns of religious hatred.

It also found compelling evidence of State-led policies, laws and strategies of genocidal persecution stretching back over 30 years, and of the Myanmar State coordinating with Rakhine ultra-nationalists, racist monks and its own security forces in a genocidal process against the Rohingya.

The persecution entered a new and more devastating phase in 2012. Organised massacres left over 200 Rohingya men, women and children dead. Up to 60 Rakhine were also killed during the June violence. Hundreds of homes, the vast majority belonging to Rohingya, were destroyed.

Around 138,000 Rohingya were displaced and ended up in what are effectively detention camps.

A further 4,500 desperate Rohingya people live in a squalid ghetto in Sittwe, Rakhine state's capital.

The Myanmar government's escalating institutionalized discrimination against the Rohingya has allowed hate speech to flourish, encouraged Islamophobia and granted impunity to perpetrators of the violence.

1 According to UNHCR estimates, between January 2012 and June 2015, some 150,000 people fled from the Myanmar/Bangladesh border area. See: UNHCR, *South-East Asia Irregular Maritime Movements*, January - November 2015; UNHCR, *South-East Asia Mixed Maritime Movements*, April - June 2015: http://www.unhcr.org/53f1c5fc9.html. Accessed 7 October 2015.

2 Myanmar was renamed Burma by the country's military regime in 1989. This report uses 'Arakan' and 'Burma' when referring to periods before 1989, and 'Rakhine' and 'Myanmar' following the renaming. The terms 'Arakan' and 'Burma' have not been changed in quoted text to retain the original meaning.

The systematic, planned and targeted weakening of the Rohingya through mass violence and other measures, as well as the regime's successive implementation of discriminatory and persecutory policies against them, amounts to a process of genocide. This process emerged in the 1970s, and has accelerated during Myanmar's faltering transition to democracy.

Part I of this report describes the history, politics and economics of the State's persecution of the Rohingya, affording particular attention to the relationship between the Rakhine Buddhist community and the State. Part II then analyses these processes of persecution using Daniel Feierstein's delineation of genocide's six stages, as outlined in his book, Genocide as Social Practice.[3] Specifically, we will focus on genocide's first four stages: 1) stigmatisation and dehumanisation; 2) harassment, violence and terror; 3) isolation and segregation; and 4) the systematic weakening of the target group.

The systematic weakening process that has accompanied the dehumanisation, violence and segregation has been so successful that the Rohingya in Myanmar can be described as a people whose agency has been effectively destroyed. Those who can, flee, while those who remain endure the barest of lives.

Now, the Rohingya potentially face the final two stages of genocide – mass annihilation and erasure of the group from Myanmar's history.

The report documents in detail the evidence for genocide, its historical genesis and the political, social and economic conditions in which it has emerged. It identifies the architects of the genocide as Myanmar State officials and security forces, Rakhine nationalist civil society leaders and Buddhist monks, and points to a significant degree of coordination between these agencies in the pursuit of eliminating the Rohingya from Myanmar's political landscape.

The report is based on a 12-month period of research, four of which were spent in the field between October 2014 and February 2015. The research included 176 interviews, observational fieldwork and documentary sources.

ISCI concludes that genocide is taking place in Myanmar and warns of the serious and present danger of the annihilation[4] of the country's Rohingya population.

3 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice: Reorganising Society under the Nazis and Argentina's Military Juntas*, (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2014).

4 Annihilation can be achieved not only through mass killing, but also, for example, through processes of mass exodus, population fragmentation and the social reconstruction of an ethnic identity. Raphael Lemkin, who coined the term 'genocide' in the 1940s, did not regard mass murder as essential to a genocidal campaign. His multidimensional understanding of genocidal destruction includes social, cultural, religious, and economic destruction.

PART I: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Rohingya child, Darpaing camp, Sittwe, November 2014

1. INTRODUCTION

In 2012, while researching civil society resistance to State violence and corruption in Myanmar, ISCI heard reports of widespread State-sanctioned violence and discrimination against Muslims in Myanmar's north-western Rakhine state. The massacres that occurred that year were not – as the government maintained – simply the product of 'inter-communal violence'. Rather, they were part of a long-term, systematic strategy by national and regional governments to remove the already persecuted Rohingya minority from the State's realm of political, social, moral and physical obligation.[5]

Significant steps in this strategy have included the removal in 1982 of Rohingya from the list of officially recognised ethnic minorities and stripping them of citizenship; the refusal to issue Rohingya babies with birth certificates since 1994; the government's refusal even to use the term 'Rohingya' and to condemn anyone nationally or internationally who does so; the exclusion of Rohingya from the 2014 census; banning Rohingya from standing in the November 2015 elections; and the longstanding restrictions upon freedom of movement and denial of access to healthcare, employment opportunities and higher education.

Myanmar has a long history of inter-religious and inter-ethnic conflict, State violence and repression, restrictions on population movement, and underdevelopment. Myanmar is religiously diverse but not religiously pluralistic.[6] The State has a dark legacy of oppression against all its ethnic minority people, including both the Rakhine and the Rohingya, but the Rohingya have been singled out for a particularly lethal form of torment. As a result, in Rakhine state, the relationship between Buddhists and Muslims has moved from mutual tolerance to open hostility – hostility primarily directed against Muslim Rohingya by Rakhine and Bamar (Burmese)[7] Buddhists.

Rakhine state, the second poorest region in Myanmar, has experienced years of economic and developmental neglect. The Rakhine community, together with the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities living in the state, have suffered extreme poverty, inadequate access to education, healthcare and livelihood opportunities. As a result the Rakhine community harbours grievances against both the Myanmar

5 On the concept of the 'universe of obligation' and its centrality to genocide, see Fein, H, *Accounting for Genocide: National Responses and Jewish Victimization during the Holocaust*, (New York: Free Press, 1979).

6 Walton, M. J. and Hayward, S, 'Contesting Buddhist Narratives: Democratization, Nationalism, and Communal Violence', Policy Studies 71, (Honolulu: East-West Center, 2014), p. 7: http://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/contesting-buddhist-narratives-democratization-nationalism-and-communal-violence-in-mya. Accessed 10 October 2015.

7 The term 'Bamar' refers to the largest of Myanmar's ethnic groups from which the ruling elite is drawn. This is often used interchangeably with the terms 'Burmese' and 'Burman'.

State and its predominantly Bamar rulers, as well as the scapegoated Rohingya, or 'illegal Bengali immigrants' as they are referred to in State and public discourse. Rakhine antagonism extends to international organisations, which are perceived as disproportionately supportive of the Rohingya.

Many of the fears and grievances expressed to ISCI in interviews with members of the Rakhine community related to poverty, economic underdevelopment and State suppression of Rakhine culture. These fears, however, tended to be expressed most vehemently as a perceived Muslim threat. ISCI research suggests that the State and State-sponsored actors have manipulated and channeled legitimate Rakhine concerns into hostility towards the Rohingya in an effort to deflect anger from government policy. Myanmar State officials, nationalist Rakhine politicians and civil society leaders, and hardline Buddhist monks are all central to the scapegoating process. The result is a dangerous mix of racism, xenophobia and Islamophobia, and a narrative that dehumanises and excludes the Rohingya from both Rakhine and Myanmar's 'universe of moral obligation.'[8]

The violence that erupted in Rakhine state in June and October 2012 displaced around 147,000 people, about 138,000 of them Rohingya. The majority of the displaced Rohingya are living in what is essentially a vast detention camp complex on the outskirts of Sittwe. Others live in more isolated villages and camps in and around Sittwe, Pauk Taw, Mrauk U, Minbya and Myebon.[9] In Sittwe's once vibrant centre, a squalid ghetto (Aung Mingalar) imprisons the city's 4,500 remaining Rohingya. All other evidence of Muslim life, apart from the ruins of three once imposing mosques, was destroyed in the 2012 violence. The predominantly Rohingya townships of Buthidaung and Maungdaw in northern Rakhine are accessible only via special permission and are securitised zones where the Rohingya endure heavily restricted lives.

Throughout 2013 and 2014, the situation for displaced and isolated Rohingya and Muslim minority Kaman[10] in Rakhine state continued to deteriorate. In June 2013, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) reported that Rakhine communities were blocking humanitarian access to at least 36,000 Rohingya in remote villages.[11] It was also reported that Rohingya were being prevented from leaving the camps and there was evidence that some had been killed by Myanmar's security forces.[12] The then UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Tomás Ojea Quintana, told the UN General Assembly that he was concerned about:

> *... the disproportionate and discriminatory restrictions on freedom of movement that remain in place for Muslim populations and that have a severe impact on their human rights, including their access to livelihoods, food, water and sanitation, health care and education.*[13]

8 Fein, H, Accounting for Genocide. See also Fein, H, 'Genocide: a Sociological Perspective', Current Sociology, 38(1), Spring 1990, pp. 1-126.

9 See UNOCHA map of IDP sites in Rakhine State, April 2015: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Affected_Map_IDP_Sites_Rakhine_OCHA_Apr2015_A0.pdf. Accessed 11 October 2015.

10 The Muslim Kaman who hold Myanmar citizenship were not initially targeted but the assault on "Bengali immigrants" was to evolve into an assault on anyone associated with "foreigness" by dint of religion, regardless of actual legal status.

11 UNOCHA, *Myanmar Humanitarian Bulletin*, June 2013: http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Myanmar%20Humanitarian%20Bulletin%20June%202013.pdf. Accessed 11 October 2015.

12 Fortify Rights, *Policies of Persecution: Ending Abusive State Policies Against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar*, 25 February 2014, p. 34: http://www.fortifyrights.org/downloads/Policies_of_Persecution_Feb_25_Fortify_Rights.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2015.

13 Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of human rights in Myanmar, UN General Assembly, 23 September 2013, A/68/397, para. 51: http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/MM/A-68-397_en.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2015.

An individual working with an aid organisation reported that the lack of basic necessities and unsanitary conditions was leading to 'avoidable deaths'.[14] In November 2013, UNOCHA reported that more than 138,000 Rohingya and Kaman remained displaced.[15] An estimated 1 million more live and work or are interned in camps in Australia, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and the UK. The UNHCR estimates that between January 2012 and June 2015 over 150,000 people fled from the Myanmar/Bangladesh border area.[16] During often perilous journeys they risk death by drowning and abuse by smugglers.[17]

Denied citizenship, employment, health care and adequate food; discriminated against in law and policy; confined to camps and ghettos; subject to torture and extortion; and living under the daily threat of violence, the very existence of the Rohingya is precarious.

Genocide: a framework

State crimes involve human rights violations perpetrated by state agents in pursuit of the state's organisational goals.[18] Genocide is a particular form of state crime that involves, as Feierstein explains, social practices that aim '(1) to destroy social relationships based on autonomy and cooperation by annihilating a significant part of the population…and (2) to use the terror of annihilation to establish new models of identity and social relationships among the survivors'.[19] Importantly, genocide within this framework is understood as a process, often taking place over a period of years and even decades. It does not only refer to the discrete act of physical annihilation. This approach is in keeping with the original, nuanced formulation developed by the Polish international jurist, Raphael Lemkin:

> *Generally speaking, genocide does not necessarily mean the immediate destruction of a nation, except when accomplished by mass killings of all members of a nation. It is intended rather to signify a coordinated plan of different actions aimed at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves. The objectives of such a plan would be disintegration of the political and social institutions, of culture, language, national feelings, religion, and the economic existence of national groups, and the destruction of the personal security, liberty, health, dignity, and even the lives of the individuals belonging to such groups.*[20]

This report captures and documents the myriad strategies employed by the Myanmar State to destroy the Rohingya identity. In doing so it exposes the architects, the executioners and the accomplices.

14 Cooney, L, 'Patients Not Politics', blog post on *The Humanitarian Space*, December 2013, Cited in Fortify Rights, Policies of Persecution, p. 19.

15 UNOCHA, 'Myanmar: Internal Displacement in Rakhine State as of November 30 2013': http://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/IDPMap_OCHA_MMR_0131_Rakhine_IDP_locations_A3_30Nov2013.pdf. Accessed 11 October 2015.

16 UNHCR, *South-East Asia Irregular Maritime Movements*, January – November 2014, indicates that between January 2012 and November 2014 over 120,000 had fled, URL no longer available, accessed March 2015; UNHCR, South East Asia Irregular Maritime Movements, April - June 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/53f1c5fc9.html, which claims around 31,000 fled in the first half of 2015.

17 Fortify Rights, *Policies of Persecution*, p. 19.

18 Green P and Ward T, State Crime: Governments, Violence and Corruption, (London: Pluto Press, 2004).

19 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice*, p. 14.

20 Lemkin, R, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe: Laws of Occupation, Analysis of Government, Proposals for Redress*, (Washington DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944), p. 79.

The systematic, targeted weakening of the Rohingya through mass violence, enforced isolation, disenfranchisement, illness and hunger, and the regime's discriminatory and persecutory policies against the Rohingya amounts to what Maung Zarni and Alice Cowley describe as a 'slow-burning genocide.'[21]

Genocide cannot occur without preparation and commitment to an exclusionary ideology, the primary purpose of which is to garner support for action that the state will carry out at a later stage.[22] An exclusionary ideology dehumanises victims in the minds of the perpetrators,[23] enabling the latter to cope with the former's destruction. Dehumanisation of victims is necessary because a genocidal policy depends on the complicity or participation of citizens – if the other group is not human, then killing them is not murder.[24]

Once the target group has been classified and is clearly identifiable, enabling a distinction between 'us' and 'them', the state uses other techniques of dehumanisation, including propaganda, coercion and terror, to gain the complicity of the population. This is an important step as, in addition to a high level of cooperation between the military and state bureaucracy, the participation and complicity of the majority of the local population is a necessary prerequisite for genocide.[25]

The process of dehumanisation, including the use of propaganda, agitation and incitement, paves the way for mass annihilation to occur.[26] Perpetrators become indoctrinated to the point where they genuinely believe they are doing what is best for society, through purification and elimination of those seen as less than human and who therefore pose a threat to the common goal.

The analysis used in this report draws on the seminal work of Gregory H. Stanton[27] and Barbara Harff and Ted Robert Gurr.[28] The findings are benchmarked against the stages of genocide outlined in the work of Daniel Feierstein.[29] The following table is adapted from Feierstein's periodization of the genocidal process. While it is expressed as six essential and apparently sequential stages, these stages are not necessarily linear and frequently overlap.

21 Zarni, M and Cowley, A, 'The Slow-Burning Genocide of Myanmar's Rohingya', *Pacific Rim Law and Policy Journal*, 23(3), June 2014, pp. 681 – 752. Further supporting the view that the physical and social violence and discrimination against the Rohingya amounts to genocide, on 21 September 2015, the Simon-Skjodt Center for the Prevention of Genocide listed Myanmar as the country with the highest risk of a future episode of mass killing, ahead of the Central African Republic, Nigeria and Sudan. Their assessment was based on an early warning statistical tool aimed at forecasting the risk of state-led mass killings. See: http://www.ushmm.org/confront-genocide/how-to-prevent-genocide/early-warning-project.

22 Vetlesen, A, 'Genocide: A Case for the Responsibility of the Bystander', Journal of Peace Research, 37(4), July 2000, p. 524.

23 Kuper, L, *Genocide: Its Political Use in the Twentieth Century*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1981), p. 85.

24 Stanton, G, 'Could the Rwandan Genocide have been Prevented? *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6(2), 2004, p. 214.

25 See, for example: Mukimbiri, J, 'The Seven Stages of the Rwandan Genocide', *Journal of International Criminal Justice*, 3(4), 2005, pp.823-826; Jamieson, R, 'Genocide and the Social Production of Immorality', *Theoretical Criminology*, 3(2), 1999, p. 140.

26 Dadrian, V, 'Patterns of Twentieth Century Genocides: The Armenian, Jewish and Rwandan Cases', *Journal of Genocide Research*, 6(4), December 2004, p. 515.

27 Stanton, G. H., 'The 8 Stages of Genocide,' Genocide Watch, 1998: http://www.genocidewatch.org/aboutgenocide/8stagesofgenocide.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

28 Harff, B and Gurr, T. R., 'Toward Empirical Theory of Genocides and Politicides: Identification and Measurement of Cases Since 1945', *International Studies Quarterly*, 32(3), September 1988, pp. 359-371.

29 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice*.

Feierstein's stages of genocide (adapted by ISCI)		
	Genocidal stage	**Detail**
1	Stigmatisation	The construction of a 'negative otherness', through dehumanisation and scapegoating, including denial of citizenship.
2	Harassment, violence and terror	Physical and psychological harassment, violence, arbitrary arrests and detentions, disenfranchisement and deprivation of civil rights.
3	Isolation and segregation	Forced demarcation of separate and isolated social, geographical, economic, political, cultural and ideological space designed to sever previously existing relations with the broader community.
4	Systematic weakening	Includes strategies of physical destruction of the target group through overcrowding, malnutrition, epidemics, lack of health care, torture and sporadic killings; and psychological destruction through humiliation, abuse, persistent violence and the undermining of solidarity.
5	Extermination	The organised physical disappearance through mass killing of those who once embodied certain types of social relations.
6	Symbolic enactment	The reconstruction of a new society in which the victims of genocide are physically and symbolically 'gone'.

Through the stages and processes outlined above, social relations are constructed, destroyed and reorganised until the 'symbolic destruction' of the victim group has been achieved. In the case of the Rohingya, this will mean their physical and symbolic removal from life in Myanmar.

ISCI's findings suggest strongly that we are witnessing Feierstein's fourth stage of genocide – the stage prior to mass extermination.

Methodology

This report is based on a 12-month study funded under the UK Economic and Social Research Council's 'Pilot Urgency Grants Mechanism'. Led by Professor Penny Green (Director of ISCI and Chair in Law and Globalisation at Queen Mary University of London), the ISCI team of three Queen Mary University researchers (Green, Thomas MacManus and Alicia de la Cour Venning) spent over four months in the field (primarily in Rakhine State but also in Yangon, Myanmar) investigating whether or not the Myanmar State's persecution of the Rohingya constitutes genocide.

The team conducted 176 formal interviews[30] with key participants. These included: individuals who identified as being of Rohingya, Rakhine, Kaman, Bamar and Maramagyi ethnicity;[31] INGO staff; Rakhine state government officials; Rakhine civil society leaders and politicians; Rakhine and Rohingya activists; senior

30 Together with many more informal conversations in the field.

31 The Rakhine are an indigenous Buddhist ethnic minority and form the largest population in Rakhine state; the Kaman are a smaller Muslim minority who speak Rakhine and are the only group of Muslims recognized as a 'national race' by the government; the Maramagyi are a Buddhist minority who speak the Rohingya language.

foreign diplomats; local and international journalists; lawyers; monks; imams; business people; local and international photographers; and academics.[32] Fieldwork also involved ethnographic observation in some 40 Rohingya, Kaman and Rakhine villages and camps for IDPs (within Sittwe, Thandwe and Mrauk U districts), and in Aung Mingalar, the one Rohingya ghetto in Sittwe. The ethnographic fieldwork, which combined interviews with observation, provided the opportunity to analyse social relations in Rakhine state.

The interviews were designed to elicit the experiences and perceptions of both perpetrator and victim communities and to document the state of genocidal persecution. An important goal was to penetrate and understand the sense of grievance that animates hostility against the Rohingya within the Rakhine community – many of whom we interviewed had engaged in the violence of 2012 against their long-standing neighbours. An understanding of the Rakhine sources of insecurity, which underpin nationalist and racist ideologies, is crucial to understanding underlying tensions and animosity between Buddhists and Muslims within the region.

The first interviews in Rohingya, Rakhine and Kaman villages were normally conducted with the formal or informal village administrators, who granted permission to interview residents and provided basic information about the village. The less structured nature of the camps tended to mean that interviews began immediately upon entering the camps, with researchers randomly selecting those willing to speak. Women in the camps were far more reticent to speak than men, but as strong a representation of women's voices as possible was achieved.

ISCI researchers faced hostility twice: once in a Rakhine camp during an interview with a group of elders who vented their anger at the international community for discriminating in favour of the Rohingya; and once in a Rakhine village when an elder asked the researchers to leave during an interview with two young perpetrators of the 2012 violence.

Informed consent was secured in every case and confidentiality assured. Most of those interviewed are not named in order to protect their identities and safety.

The fieldwork was supplemented by documentary searches in Burmese and British archives, media searches and academic literature surveys. In addition, leaked documents and interview data were made available by Al Jazeera, Wikileaks, journalist Francis Wade and Fortify Rights, and are referenced as such.

When ISCI researchers attempted to secure approval to visit northern Rakhine state it was denied. A translation of the pertinent discussions revealed that the team was denied access on the basis that it would most certainly speak to 'kalar' (a pejorative term used to refer to Muslims), though the official reason given was that the team's security could not be guaranteed. As a result, much of what ISCI learned about northern Rakhine comes from the testimony of Rohingya who have fled the area.

32 Interviews were conducted in 6 Rohingya villages, 10 Rohingya camps; 17 Rakhine villages, the 2 existing Rakhine camps; the one existing Maramagyi camp; and the 3 existing Kaman villages in Sittwe and in the Rohingya ghetto of Aung Mingalar. The interviewees comprised 71 Rakhine (57 male and 14 female), 53 Rohingya (45 male and 8 female), 13 Kaman (9 male and 4 female), and 11 Maramagyi (6 male and 5 female). In addition, 18 international journalists, photographers, international NGO workers and diplomats, 10 monks (the transcripts of 5 acquired through Al Jazeera), and a number of state officials, business people, developers, politicians, civil society and political activists and local journalists were also interviewed.

As far as ISCI is aware, the data gathered for this report is unique in its depth, breadth and texture, and reflects the only systematic academic fieldwork on the question of genocide in Rakhine state. The research provides a strong evidence base for understanding what is happening to the Rohingya, and for determining whether or not this is a genocide.

Rakhine men fishing off the coast near Thandwe

2. BACKGROUND

Rakhine state

Rakhine state extends some 560km along the northernmost part of Myanmar's coastline and borders Bangladesh to the north-west. It is separated from Myanmar's central, low-lying landmass by the Yoma mountain range.

The population of Rakhine state is around 3.2 million[33] with Rakhine Buddhists comprising an estimated 2.1 million and Rohingya Muslims just over a million.[34] The exact number of Rohingya is impossible to verify as they were excluded from participating in the 2014 census unless they registered as 'Bengali', which very few did. The Rakhine, also known as Arakanese, are an ethnic minority themselves in Myanmar, making up around 6 per cent of the national population.

Most Rohingya live in the townships[35] of Maungdaw and Buthidaung in northern Rakhine state, where they form a large majority population. Rakhine state is also home to a small number of Chin, Kaman, Mro, Khami, Dainet and Maramagyi ethnic minorities.

Competing histories surround the origins and existence of the Rohingya ethnicity in Myanmar. Carlos Sardina Galache explains:

> *Burmese and Rakhine nationalists often accuse the Rohingya of falsifying their history in order to advance their claims for ethnicity... Rohingya historians tend to minimize or ignore altogether the importance of the migration of labourers to Arakan from Bengal during colonial times.*[36]

33 Total population of Rakhine state is 3,188,963 (2,098,963 enumerated, 1,090,000 not enumerated (i.e. estimated)). Figures taken from the April 2014 census, which excluded the Rohingya. See: Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 'The Population and Housing Census of Myanmar, 2014: Summary of the Provisional Results', Department of Population, Milistry of Immigration and Population, August 2014: http://countryoffice.unfpa.org/myanmar/drive/SummmaryoftheProvisionalResults.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2015.

34 According to the estimate of uncounted persons in the 2014 census, the total number of Rohingya in Rakhine state is estimated at over 1 million. See: Human Rights Watch, 'Burma: Government Plan Would Segregate Rohingya: Forced Resettlement, Discriminatory Citizenship Creates Dangers', 3 October 2014: https://www.hrw.org/news/2014/10/03/burma-government-plan-would-segregate-rohingya. Accessed 10 October 2015.

35 A Township is an administrative subdivision of a district and incorporates a number of villages.

36 Galache, C S, 'Rohingya and national identities in Burma', *AsiaPacific, New Mandala*, 22 September 2014: http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2014/09/22/the-rohingya-and-national-identities-in-burma/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

Independent historians, however, document a longstanding Muslim presence in Rakhine state, which is corroborated by ancient mosques and the use of coins and Islamic titles by Arakan rulers. The origins of 'Rohingya' terminology are unclear, but the fact remains that the Rohingya and their chosen ethnic designation were accepted by the Burmese State in the 1950s. The first President of Burma, Sao Shwe Thaike, a Shan, claimed in 1959 that the 'Muslims of Arakan certainly belong to the indigenous races of Burma. If they do not belong to the indigenous races, we also cannot be taken as indigenous races.'[37] The Rohingya were issued citizenship/ID cards and granted the right to vote under Burma's first post-independence Prime Minister, U Nu, and Rohingya held important government positions as civil servants. In the 1960s, the official Burma Broadcasting Service relayed a Rohingya-language radio programme three times a week as part of its minority language programming, and the term 'Rohingya' was used in journals and school text-books until the late 1970s.[38]

During British colonisation when India and Burma were ruled together, migration of people from India's predominantly Muslim state of Bengal to Burma (mainly to Arakan state) increased as the British sought to cultivate rice production. Many of these seasonal migrants settled permanently, enlarging the pre-existing Rohingya community. Following the departure of the British, further migration is likely to have taken place across what is now the Myanmar-Bangladesh border area. Rakhine also migrated to Bangladesh[39], a reflection both of the porous nature of the border and that immigration between Bangladesh and Myanmar was not unilinear. Whatever the exact history, the origins of the Rohingya community in Myanmar has been used to deflect attention from the State's undeniable and systematic persecution of the Rohingya.

ISCI's fieldwork reveals a persistent memory in some sections of the Rakhine community of historical animosity between the communities, for example massacres of both groups in 1942-43 in the context of World War Two, when the Rohingya fought with the British and the Rakhine with the Japanese. These historic grievances have been resuscitated in a series of State-condoned stereotypes that brand the Rohingya as terrorists and illegal immigrants intent on Islamising Rakhine state through a campaign of population growth. The increasing polarisation of the two communities – into the majority, 'indigenous' Rakhine Buddhist 'us', and the minority 'interloper' Muslim Rohingya 'them'[40] – has fostered a dangerous social landscape.

Rakhine oppression

The Myanmar State has long oppressed the Rakhine, themselves a minority ethnic group within Myanmar. Testimony gathered by ISCI suggests this includes the suppression of the memory, practice and exploration of Rakhine culture, language and history. Than Mrint, a Rakhine intellectual and Arakan National Party (ANP) politician, said:

37 As cited by Rogers, B, 'A friend's appeal to Burma', Mizzima, 19 June, 2012: http://archive-2.mizzima.com/edop/commentary/7349-a-friends-appeal-to-burma.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.
38 Lwin, N. S., 'Making Rohingya stateless', AsiaPacific, *New Mandala*, 29 October 2012: http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2012/10/29/making-rohingya-statelessness/. Accessed 10 October 2015.
39 Majid, M, The Rakhaines, (Dhaka: Mowla Brothers, 2005).
40 Stanton, G, 'Could the Rwandan Genocide have been Prevented?' p. 214.

> *There are many dangers to our indigenous identity. Our land is very ancient with Rakhine people. Without Rakhine people, this place is a dead place, just historical monuments. Our history is big. Myanmar has many ethnicities – a few have disappeared, the Phyu (Pyu) people have disappeared. Our inferiority is in many places – particularly in economic development, education, and economy.*[41]

Unlike other ethnic minority-populated regions of Myanmar, Arakan was one of five powerful kingdoms of South East Asia until the Burmese occupation of 1784.[42] Its decline during British rule (1826-1948) accelerated under the Burmese military dictatorship (1962-2010). Rakhine Buddhists described to ISCI systematic and ongoing oppression by the ruling Bamar elite, who many perceive as oppressors committed to the erosion of Rakhine culture and identity. One campaigner against the erosion of Rakhine culture said:

> *We Rakhine have had many enemies, but mostly the Burmese... There are so many dangers for our people, we must protect, we can't think about human rights or other things, we are struggling not to have our identity and community overrun... We have no future, we don't see a future. We must defend our community... We are afraid of losing our identity, our race, our language... We need federalism.*[43]

Some Rakhine interviewees even described the nature of their oppression as 'genocide'. During discussions following the boat crisis in May 2015, Zaw Aye Maung, the Yangon Region Ethnic Rakhine Affairs Minister and Chairman of the ANP, claimed that if genocide was taking place in Rakhine state then it was against ethnic Rakhine Buddhists. He said, 'We are now in danger of being overrun by these Bangladeshis'.[44] Similarly, an ANP spokesperson said: 'I feel like Rakhine will disappear from this land if they grant Bengalis citizenship.'[45]

Economic and developmental neglect, together with oppression and discrimination following the military coup led by General Ne Win in 1962,[46] have had a devastating effect on Rakhine state and social relations between communities. Levels of poverty contrast starkly with the state's abundance of natural resources and its strategic geopolitical location, both of which are exploited by foreign powers. Rakhine state is home to the Shwe Gas project, for example, which involves natural gas extraction off the coast and generates vast revenues for the military and for China. In June 2015, U Min Min Oo, a director of the International Relations and Information Division of the Ministry of Energy, announced that gas exports earn the Myanmar government over US$170 million a month – 40 per cent of the country's income.[47] The US$214 million, India-funded Kaladan Transport Project, built to connect northern India with the Kolkata region is another example of the government's exploitation of Rakhine state that will bring little immediate benefit to those living in the state.

41 Deputy Chair of the Culture and Monuments Trust, interviewed on 26 January 2015 in Mrauk U.
42 Hall, D.G.E., *A History of South-East Asia*, 3rd edition, (London: Macmillan, 1968), p. 389.
43 Interviewed on 25 and 26 January 2015 in Mrauk U.
44 McLaughlin, T and Belford, A, 'Myanmar says persecution not the cause of migrant crisis', Reuters, 4 June 2015: http://www.reuters.com/article/2015/06/04/us-asia-migrants-idUSKBN0OK11320150604?utm_source=Sailthru&utm_medium=email&utm_term=%2AMorning%20Brief&utm_campaign=New%20Campaign. Accessed 10 October 2015.
45 Interviewed on 21 January 2015 in Sittwe.
46 Ne Win, a military commander, was Prime Minister 1958-1960 and 1962-1974, and Head of State 1962-1981.
47 See Earthrights International: http://www.earthrights.org/campaigns/shwe-gas-campaign. Accessed 7 October 2015. According to Myanmar's Ministry of Energy, the Government 'earns US$170 million monthly from gas exports', As reported by the *Myanmar Times*, 15 June 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/business/15034-govt-earns-us-170-million-monthly-from-gas-exports.html. Accessed 7 October 2015.

A common feeling expressed by the Rakhine is that they suffer from discrimination and neglect under Bamar rule. A local civil society leader, referring to the fact that Rakhine State's former chief minister, Maung Maung Ohn, was both Bamar and a former general, said: 'We feel that we are being ruled by the army'.[48] He elaborated:

> *We feel like we are under neo-colonialism because everything is controlled by the Burmese – education, economics, everything. In all townships, the most important positions are for Burmese. Township officers here in Mrauk U are all Burmese. The Arakanese feel like we are still living under colonialism.*[49]

In early 2015, Rakhine civilians, accused of links with the outlawed rebel Arakan Army,[50] were harassed, arrested and tortured under Myanmar's notorious Unlawful Association Act. Tensions were raised when, following clashes between the *tatmadaw* (Myanmar's armed forces) and the Arakan Army in April 2015, the tatmadaw was accused of blocking aid to displaced Rakhine.[51]

Rakhine activists have also been imprisoned for peacefully protesting against the Shwe Gas pipeline.[52] Several interviewees expressed concern about the project and described forms of resistance to it. According to one:

> *The gas from the Shwe Gas pipeline, US$1.5 billion per year for 30 years, it's all going to China. We demonstrated, made statements... but nothing happened. The benefits from the pipeline are nothing for us. All profits are going to Nay Pyi Taw. We have many natural resources – seafood/ fishing, marble, titanium, bamboo forests, rice paddy and gas, but we're still the second poorest state.*[53]

The Secretary of a Rakhine civil society organisation elaborated on the detrimental impact the pipeline is having:

> *Recently, the Rakhine Women's Network has been working with [Rakhine] labourers who have been working on the Shwe gas pipeline under terrible conditions. They have no shelter, no toilets, no water.*[54]

48 Senior Member of a Rakhine civil society organisation based in Sittwe, interviewed on 12 November 2014 in Sittwe.
49 Interviewed on 25 January 2015 in Mrauk U.
50 The Arakan Army was formed in 2009 and is based primarily in Kachin state. Its mission is 'to protect our Arakan people, and to establish peace and justice and freedom and development'. See: Ye Mon, 'Rakhine chief minister hits out at army over fighting', Myanmar Times, 1 May 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14221-rakhine-chief-minister-hits-out-at-army-over-fighting.html. Accessed 10 October 2015. See also: BNI, 'Army accused of torture in Rakhine state', *Mizzima*, 1 May 2015: http://mizzima.com/news-domestic/army-accused-torture-rakhine-state. Accessed 10 October 2015.
51 Nyein Nyein, 'Burma Army Blocked Aid to Fleeing Arakan Villagers: Relief Group', *The* Irrawaddy, 22 April 2015. http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/burma-army-blocked-aid-to-fleeing-arakan-villagers-relief-group.html. Accessed 20 October 2015.
52 See: 'Burma: Release Ten Arakanese Activists, Amend Peaceful Assembly and Peaceful Processions Law', *Shwe Gas Movement,* 29 September 2013: http://www.shwe.org/burma-release-ten-arakanese-activists-amend-peaceful-assembly-and-peaceful-processions-law/. Accessed 10 October 2015.
53 Interviewed on 25 January 2015 in Mrauk U.
54 Interviewed on 24 November 2014 in Sittwe.

The perceived Bamar occupation and economic neglect of Rakhine state has contributed to a particularly extreme form of nationalist scape-goating among Rakhine which frames Muslims, and the Rohingya in particular, as the primary economic and cultural threat. For example, a Rakhine elder told ISCI: 'There are more jobs now because there are no Muslims anymore'.[55]

Rakhine civil society

Rakhine civil society is still in its infancy. It combines traditional human rights activism around land, labour, environment and development issues, with an extreme form of anti-Rohingya propagandising.

ISCI found that the Myanmar government has successfully manipulated the Rakhine into believing that their primary enemy is not the State but the Rohingya. As one Rakhine interviewee said, 'The government have told us – "we are not your enemy, the Bengali are your enemy".'[56]

Some civil society activists admitted that they had been distracted by the 'Bengali issue' to the extent that their campaigns against land grabbing, forced evictions and economic exploitation had been marginalised. One prominent Rakhine human rights activist spoke of the Myanmar government's manipulation of the conflict to advance economic exploitation:

> *Sometimes the government manipulates the Rakhine, you know? Because they want to continue the projects, like the gas pipeline project, oil pipeline. We have a lot of campaigns, so they just manipulate the Bengali conflict, then everyone worries about the refugees and then nobody cares about the Kaladan project! These projects, even though we have conflict here they continue. The government diverts our attention!... The government creates trouble between the two communities. It is also because of the development projects. Their strategy is for the regional development projects like Shwe Gas Project and Kaladan Project... we demand a share in the profits, you know, from the government. We have had campaigns against these projects, like our 24 hour electricity campaigns... This campaign was growing, spreading from Sittwe, Kyauk Phyu, to other regions... and the government is using the conflict, creating problems between the communities, and using this to take the profits...*[57]

ISCI also found that Rakhine civil society organisations and the state's dominant political party, the ANP, to be closely aligned. For example, one activist and member of the ANP reported: 'There are different organisations in Mrauk U, but they are all the same. If we do a movement, we do it all together.'[58]

Fears associated with the erosion of Rakhine culture and history exacerbate the perceived Muslim threat. Rakhine consistently expressed concern regarding illegal immigration from Bangladesh, which they blame on a porous border managed by corrupt officials, a densely populated neighbour, Bamar dominance over the Rakhine, and tensions between communities at the border area. Extracts from interviews with civil society activists give some sense of the feelings:

55 Interviewed on 6 December 2014 in Sittwe.
56 Interview conducted with a group of male Rakhine activists in Sittwe, 14 February 2014.
57 Senior Member of a Rakhine civil society organisation based in Sittwe, interviewed on 12 November 2014 in Sittwe.
58 Interviewed on 25 January 2015 in Mrauk U.

- *The Bengali are dominant globally and they are assisted by Burmese intelligence, soldiers and local police… the Bengali business people, they want to get some business incentives, business opportunities, so they pay money, a lot of money, so the authorities just accept. And they don't have a system, or any plan for the border fence or for the control of the migration. So a lot of people come in and settle down in the Buthidaung and Maungdaw areas.*[59]

- *There are too many illegal immigrants coming across the border… According to some statistics, Maungdaw is 98% Muslim and only 2% Rakhine. Buthidaung is 95% Muslim and only 5% Rakhine. Immigration data from the government is not reliable… I got information from my close friends that are in government that there are meetings in Thailand between Islamic groups who even talked about the date Myanmar will become Muslim… Documents show that they have a plan to make Myanmar an Islamic state… The person who told me this is a Rakhine man in government. He's a member of the state government.*[60]

- *Illegal immigrants are extremist Muslims.*[61] *The main intention of the Muslims is to invade our land, Muslim people want the Arakan land to become a Muslim land… I have no idea how to solve the conflict but I don't want to live with Muslim people. Malaysia and Afghanistan used to be Buddhist lands, same with Indonesia, but now they've become Muslim.*[62]

- *They [Bengalis] have a plan that Mayu district becomes an autonomous region, you know, a separate country or separate region. For example they have a plan, for Mayu district of Arakan state and the Chittagong hill tract from Bangladesh. They have a plan for an independent Islamic state, Akistan!*[63]

A local civil society leader claimed that a lack of law enforcement and corrupt Bamar officials in the Mayu district area has contributed to increased tensions between communities:

> *Many rape cases and other social violations, they are all crimes that have happened. So when Rakhine people have to go to the township town, to buy food or something, then they have to cross through the Bengali villages. The Bengali youth want to see the Buddhist girls and you know, shout abuse or sometimes physically abuse them. It has happened! For many, many years.*[64]

Given the almost complete segregation of the Rakhine and Rohingya communities in Sittwe and Mrauk U, the Rakhine there are now exposed only to the unadulterated anti-Muslim propaganda of the State, Buddhist leaders and Rakhine nationalists. Where once the lived experience of shared community resources, friendships, working partnerships and multicultural education all combined to counter stigmatisation, those positive social controls no longer exist. The Rakhine encountered by ISCI voiced virulent racism in their own media and in interviews, stereotyping Muslims as rude, dishonest, 'like animals' and having links to terrorism. One nationalist journal contained the following passage:

59 Senior Member of a Rakhine civil society organisation based in Sittwe, interviewed on 12 November 2014 in Sittwe.
60 Secretary of a Rakhine civil society organisation, interview conducted in Sittwe on 24 November 2014.
61 ECC leader, elder Than Tun, interviewed in Sittwe on 22 November 2014.
62 Rakhine woman, 40 years old, interviewed in a Rakhine village, Sittwe, on 4 December 2015.
63 Senior member of a Rakhine civil society organisation based in Sittwe, 12 November 2014, Sittwe.
64 Ibid.

> *... it is time people know that these so-called Myanmar Muslims who are inside the country – these human animals who are only lying in wait to ask for their rights – and the Muslims in the entire world are on the side of the Rohingya people and feel hurt.*[65]

An internally displaced Rakhine man in his forties said:

> *The conflict is mainly because of the Muslims, they have been brainwashed by those Muslim religious leaders, they always follow their instructions and in Muslim communities they even rape their own daughters... We can live together with other ethnic groups whether it is Chinese or others, Kachin, but Muslim – not like that, they are just very arrogant. We cannot live together with Muslim community, they are very scary... they are like animals, they are like dogs. The Muslim people... are trying to make the whole war begin, they are just trying to Islamise the whole world... I hate the Muslim people.*[66]

A 43-year-old Rakhine woman said:

> *I heard from Muslim workers who used to work in the village, that 'kalar' leaders teach them to live and to kill. I don't know what the government should do about the situation. It's even worse because more Bengalis are coming across from Bangladesh so the population is increasing. 'Kalar' workers told me this.*[67]

Another woman reported:

> *I asked a Muslim man, 'what do you do in the mosque'? And he replied, 'our religious teachers told us that we had to kill Rakhine people'.*[68]

65 Toe Tet Yay [Development] Journal (RNDP) - Volume 2. No. 12, 2012 November, Page 9, copy available on file with authors, obtained from Al Jazeera.
66 Interviewed in a Rakhine IDP camp, Sittwe, 25 November 2014.
67 Interviewed in a Rakhine village, Sittwe, 28 November 2014.
68 Rakhine woman, interview in a Rakhine village, Sittwe, 6 December 2014.

Rakhine mobilisation

A mosque now under the control of the Myanmar military, downtown Sittwe, January 2015

In October 2013 Rakhine leaders lobbied the President to implement a number of initiatives deemed necessary to the development of Rakhine state.[69] Underpinning the economic and development concerns of these submissions were core demands for the further isolation, segregation and restriction of Rohingya rights. The following extracts from the submissions give a sense of the nature of the lobbying:

- *I would like to request the parliament to enact a law earlier in order to prevent the population of illegal Bengalis whose population are increasing due to the marriage and having the children unsystematic ways which are not suitable with the cultural norms of human beings.*[70]

- *Providing the right to vote to the foreigners who sneaked into Myanmar without entirely being same race, religion and tradition who cannot speak Myanmar language and the other ethnic languages (at all) will be similar with handing over the sovereignty of the country to*

69 Leaked document 1: Submissions presented to Myanmar President Thein Sein by letter, 15 October 2013, by representatives of Rakhine state. Seen and sanctioned by Shwe Mann. Leaked to Fortify Rights; acquired by ISCI researchers from Al Jazeera.

70 Leaked document 1, submission A: Submitted by U Thar Pwin (Lawyer), 'Peace and stability of Rakhine state and the importance of geo-politics'.

the foreigners... [Myanmar's leaders] should consider entirely terminating the right to vote with illegal white cards [see glossary].[71]

- *The situations of Rakhine state and Kachin state in Myanmar are very good projects for NGOs... Until now, there are over 80 INGOs. They just assist IDP of indigenous (Rakhine) on the surface and give much assistance to Bengali population. It was said that in some boxes, there are explosive materials which can be transformed into the weapons. They were primarily based for humanitarian aid but later, they are involving in requesting citizenship for Bengali, and to gain Rohingya race with political willingness. They say from their mouths "humanitarian" but without doing humanitarian, they discriminate and their main strategy is to maintain the conflict in order to get good jobs, salary and opportunities. Therefore, NGOs and INGOs have to be under supervision of central government and Rakhine state government.*[72]

The government appears to have acceded to several of these anti-Rohingya demands or those demands accord with the government's own policy agenda. For example, it passed the Population Control Healthcare Bill in May 2015, widely believed to have been drafted specifically to restrict Rohingya reproduction rights.[73] It also disenfranchised the holders of white cards (temporary ID issued mainly to Rohingya that do not confer citizenship) and in March 2013 formally established the ECC (the Emergency Coordination Centre) to regulate humanitarian activities, perceived by the Rakhine as disproportionately supporting Rohingya.

Worrying submissions that remain as yet unaddressed include calls to resettle Rohingya living in Aung Mingalar ghetto and in camps near Sittwe University; combating terrorism through the establishment of peoples' militias, particularly along border areas in northern Rakhine state; and the construction of a wall along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border:

- *There is only [one] village in [Sittwe] downtown namely Aung Mingalar. The population of that village is over 4,000. It is not convenient for the town people (Rakhine Buddhists) to go and come around there because the security forces have deployed. If the security forces are withdrawn, that village is a wood fire that can burst anytime. That is why; we want to relocate that village to the Bengali areas... This issue is always threatening the stability of the region. We want the [central government] to separate and relocate these Bengalis anyway.*[74]

- *There are illegal Bengali villages along the [Sittwe] road of colleges and University. It is not secure for the students and any problem can emerge any time. So, it is necessary to consider the submission to relocate Bengali villages to other places.*[75]

- *I would like to request to form militias by the military supervision with the suitable numbers. So, the physical security and emotional security of Rakhine people will be increased in that way and the stability will be increased.*[76]

71 Leaked document 1, submission C: Summary findings of submissions presented to Myanmar President Thein Sein, 15 October 2013.
72 Ibid.
73 Huma Rights Watch, 'Burma: Reject Discriminatory Population Bill', 16 May 2015: https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/05/16/burma-reject-discriminatory-population-bill. Accessed 12 October 2015.
74 Leaked document 1, submission A.
75 Leaked document 1, submission D: U Zaw Myo Naing, 'Submission by a student for the Rakhine State'.
76 Leaked document 1, submission A.

- *Today, Bengalis' intruding threatened the security and sovereignty of the country. They are doing systematically terrorism and colony by the population. In fact, some terrorist overseas organizations are providing the trainings to the young Bengalis by brainwashing and trying to plan terrorism in many ways. So, Myanmar government should pay more attention over Bengali colony and the plans of terrorism very carefully... The frontiers of the western Myanmar and the coasts from which Bengalis can enter should be covered by the high walls in order to prevent illegal immigrants.*[77]

ISCI discovered a leaked document apparently adopted by the regime in 1988 which reveals the State Peace and Development Council's (SPDC) commitment to eliminating the Rohingya from Myanmar.

SPDC Rohingya Extermination Plan adopted in 1988[78]

1. The Muslims (Rohingyas) are not to be provided with citizenship cards by identifying them as insurgents.
2. To reduce the population growth of the Rohingyas by gradual imposition of restrictions on their marriages and by application of all possible methods of oppression and suppression against them.
3. To strive for the increase in Buddhist population to be more than the number of Muslim people by way of establishing Natala villages in Arakan with Buddhist settlers from different townships and from out of the country.
4. To allow them temporary movement from village to village and township to township only with Form 4 (which is required by the foreign nationals for travel), and to totally ban them travelling to Sittwe, the capital of Arakan State.
5. To forbid higher studies (university education) to the Rohingyas.
6. No Muslim is to be appointed in government services.
7. To forbid them from ownership of lands, shops and buildings. Any such properties under their existing ownership must be confiscated for distribution among the Buddhists. All their economic activities must be stopped.
8. To ban construction, renovation, repair and roofing of the mosques, Islamic religious schools and dwelling houses of the Rohingyas.
9. To try secretly to convert the Muslims into Buddhism.
10. Whenever there is a case between Rakhine and Muslim the court shall give verdict in favour of Rakhine; when the case is between Muslim themselves the court shall favour the rich against the poor Muslim so that the latter leaves the country with frustration.
11. Mass killing of the Muslim is to be avoided in order not to invite the attention of the Muslim countries.

(The Rohingya population was 1.2 million in 1952 and, according to UNHCR report it has been reduced to 774,000 in 2008).

Translation from Burmese, undated document

77 Leaked document 1, submission B: Submitted by Arakan Human Rights and Development Organization (AHRDO).
78 Leaked document 2: SPDC Rohingya Extermination Plan, adopted in 1988 on the basis of the proposals submitted by Col. Tha Kyaw (a Rakhine), Chairman of the National Unity Party.

What is so striking and alarming about the 'Extermination Plan' cited above is that at least 7 of the first 8 elements of the plan have been effectively instituted.

ISCI witnessed high levels of anger within the Rakhine community over perceived support by the international community for the Rohingya. The anger has been expressed most visibly through:

- **Emergency Coordination Centre (ECC)** established at the demand of Rakhine leaders, ostensibly to monitor delivery of aid to IDP camps to ensure Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims receive an equal share;

- **protests**, particularly in Yangon and Sittwe against plans by the OIC to open an office in Myanmar; UN Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's use of the word 'Rohingya'; visits by Yanghee Lee, the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar; parliament's decision to give holders of white ID cards (mainly Rohingya) the right to vote in 2015;[79]

- **violent attacks on UN and INGO offices** in Sittwe in 2014 and an orchestrated campaign against INGOs seen to be disproportionately assisting the Rohingya, which resulted in, for example, the expulsion of MSF in 2014.

Emergency Coordination Centre

In late March 2014, and in the immediate aftermath of the Rakhine attacks on INGO offices, the Rakhine state government, with the support of the State government, operationalised the ECC in Sittwe. Chaired by the State Security Minister, the ECC is supposed to facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance in Rakhine. Interviews with ECC elders, however, revealed entirely different objectives on the part of those who lead the Rakhine ECC. These include monitoring the international community and its perceived 'one-sided' humanitarian support for the Rohingya; and ensuring that the international community directs development aid towards the Rakhine. As Thar Pwin, one of the three Rakhine elders on the ECC, declared:

> *We monitor them – one of the motivations is to ensure equal distribution 50-50. For Rakhine we don't need INGOs. But the INGOs are interested in the Bengalis. Yes the Rakhine don't need them but the Bengalis do – it's a pressure the government can't resist.*[80]

When asked how the monitoring took place, Thar Pwin revealed the close ties between Rakhine nationalist civil society organisations and the ECC:

> *Every township has ECC representatives and the local CSOs and ECC work together to monitor the INGOs. In Mrauk U, for example, there was an issue with the distribution of fertilizer. The*

79 The decision was quickly reversed:, Nyein Nyein, 'Thein Sein Pushes Referendum Suffrage for White Card Holders', *The Irrawaddy*, 22 December 2014: http://www.irrawaddy.org/election/news/thein-sein-pushes-referendum-suffrage-for-white-card-holders. Accessed 11 October 2015.

80 Interview with Thar Pwin, in Sittwe, 23 January 2015.

> *ICRC [International Committee of the Red Cross] distributed 200 bags of fertilizer to five Rakhine villages and 180 bags of fertilizer to three Bengali villages – this is not 50-50 distribution. In this case the CSOs will block the work of the INGOs.*[81]

That these objectives are explicitly motivated by antagonism to perceived INGO support of the Rohingya and by organised Rakhine racism was exemplified by another ECC elder, Than Tun:

> *The whole Muslim community here are illegal immigrants, they are Bengalis. The UN, INGOs and international media are identifying illegal Bengalis as residents. Rohingya is a fake identity. The UN and INGOs are helping the Muslim community to take over land in Rakhine state. The Muslim population is increasing but the UN are still helping them to survive.*[82]

Whether the ECC has any real impact on the work of the INGOs is disputed by the INGO community, but it is clear that the ECC provides the most racist elements within Rakhine civil society with a high degree of state and organisational legitimacy in its anti-Rohingya programme.

Protests

So Naing from the Rakhine Social Network, one of the organisers of an anti-Rohingya protest held in Sittwe on 14 June 2015, described their role:

> *We protested peacefully to show our disappointment and concern, and deliver a strong message to the government of Myanmar, UN and INGOs that these migrants must be repatriated immediately and that we don't accept them in the land of Rakhine.*[83]

Protest flyers referred to 'migrants' as 'kalar' and called on Rakhine people to 'protect the future of Rakhine' under banners that read 'we are under attack from terrorist so called boat people'.[84]

Zaw Win, a protest leader in Buthidaung, said around 1,000 people protested there. He added:

> *The Rakhine community fear conflict may erupt if these migrants stay longer in Rakhine. That's why we are protesting.*[85]

Protesting can be a dangerous exercise in Myanmar; considerable numbers of student protestors and land activists are languishing behind bars. To obtain permission for such protests requires lengthy bureaucratic procedures. By contrast, anti-Rohingya protests regularly happen without sanction from the authorities. CSO leaders in Sittwe told ISCI that permission is readily granted for these protests through

81 Ibid.
82 Interview with Than Tun, in Sittwe, 22 November 2014.
83 '500 March in Anti-Rohingya Protest', DVB, 14 June 2015: http://www.dvb.no/news/500-march-in-anti-muslim-protest-burma-myanmar-rohingya/52476. Accessed 11 October 2015.
84 Ibid.
85 Mandalay, Z, 'Rakhine Buddhists protest against helping Rohingya migrants', UCA News, 15 June 2015: http://www.ucanews.com/news/rakhine-buddhists-protest-against-helping-rohingya-migrants/73779. Accessed 10 October 2015.

a simple phone call to the state minister's office,[86] and has become much easier to obtain in recent years. One said:

> *Before we had to go through so many levels of bureaucracy, for example for the OIC [Organisation of Islamic Cooperation] protest in September 2012 against their plans to open an office. But now we don't even need to ask, we just call them [state government], and tell them we're going to protest. We speak to the state government often, we have a kind of relationship, 'give and take', so this is helpful.*[87]

Rakhine nationalists are free to express hate speech and to publicly challenge international organisations seeking to offer humanitarian assistance to Rohingya IDPs. Given the climate of ethno-religious tension, this is tantamount to the authorities green-lighting violent intolerance and religious hatred.

Attacks on the UN and INGOs

Rakhine nationalists go as far as to claim that UN agencies are controlled by Muslim countries driven by an agenda to Islamise the globe. The following extracts from interviews highlight the hostility expressed towards the international community/INGOs:

- *I feel bad about Ban Ki-Moon using the Rohingya word at the ASEAN [Association of Southeast Asian Nations] Summit. As a representative of the UN, he should not add to the conflict by using this word. I worry because the Rohingya word never existed before. It's not one of the 135 ethnic groups so the government doesn't accept it either.*[88]

- *INGOs and UN are trying to give citizenship to illegal Bengali people, pressuring the government on this front. Because of these reasons, people have hostility to the UN and INGOs... The OIC in other Muslim countries support the Rohingya through INGOs. The Muslim communities who have lived in Rakhine State for centuries can apply for citizenship, they are currently trying to apply. The application depends on the 1982 law. The Rohingya are trying to 'get around the law' by creating this [Rohingya] identity. If the international community recognises the Rohingya as an indigenous people they won't have to apply as per the 1982 law.*[89]

- *Rohingya is not just a word. Behind the word is the idea that they [Bengalis] are an ethnic group. The purpose of creating the word is to automatically gain citizenship of Myanmar without going via the 1982 application process. Even though they use the word Rohingya, those people have a very strong relationship with Bengalis - the language, religion and culture is similar to Bengali, they are just trying to create a new identity.*[90]

86 Maung Maung Ohn's appointment was announced on 26 June 2012: http://www.dvb.no/news/president-nominates-military-man-as-arakan-chief-minister-burma-myanmar/41856. Accessed 13 October 2015.
87 ISCI interview with leader of prominent Rakhine civil society organisation, 22 January 2015, Sittwe.
88 Secretary of a Rakhine civil society organisation, interview conducted in Sittwe on 24 November 2014.
89 ECC leader, elder Than Tun, interviewed in Sittwe on 22 November 2014.
90 Ibid.

In response to the international community's alleged bias in reporting on the 2012 violence, the Arakan Human Rights and Development Organisation (AHRDO) published its own inflammatory and racist report (funded by the extremist anti-Muslim monk, Ashin Wirathu) which challenged both the legitimacy of the international community and demonised the Rohingya. A representative from AHRDO explained the motivation behind the report, the sense of injustice felt by the Rakhine community, and the way the government manipulated that anger:

> *We did a lot of research during the conflict interviewed in different regions, different state townships and we published this report… it took more than a year. But it is a reaction to the international community, because at the time Al Jazeera and Human [Rights] Watch and many other INGOs, they were all on the Bengali side and only one side is written. This report is the only report from our communities - the only report…*
>
> *What I want – we want – is both sides! A balance, you know… I'm a Buddhist, human rights activist. I love all people so that's why our mood is like human rights for all… [But the INGOs] write only for the Rohingya people…*
>
> *INGOs, you know in the past, they have bad history because they only give support to the Bengali Muslims…they only give support to the Bengali villages and they leave out Rakhine villages, that's why you know in the past- since the 1990s for more than 20 years, we feel 'oh we are deflated and we are also poor!' You know people in some areas are just hand to mouth, both Rakhine community and Bengali community. So why are we neglected?*
>
> *… The government is taking advantage you know. The Rakhine, they feel in the past neglected and discriminated against, and the government is taking advantage.*[91]

The AHRDO office was allegedly attacked by nationalists in late 2014 for perceived political moderation. Two of its staff were apparently forced to take refuge for a period in Yangon.[92]

Rakhine nationalism

The Arakan National Party has become one of the strongest ethnically-based political parties in the country.[93] In 2010 it won seven seats in the national government's upper house and nine in the lower.[94] Today, the party is an amalgamation of the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNDP) and Arakan League for Democracy (ALD), which merged in January 2014.[95]

91 Senior Member of a Rakhine civil society organisation based in Sittwe, 12 November 2014, Sittwe.
92 Interviews with Rakhine and INGO sources, January – March 2015.
93 Ye Mon, 'SNLD to field 160 candidates', Myanmar Times, 21 July 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15587-snld-to-field-160-candidates.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.
94 Moe Myint, 'Arakan National Party Eyes 63 Seats in General Election', *The Irrawaddy*, 14 July 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/arakan-national-party-eyes-63-seats-in-general-election.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.
95 Interview with ANP members at ANP office in Sittwe, 22November 2014. The Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) was set up in 1990 and won 11 of 26 seats in the 1990 election. The ALD boycotted the 1990 election, however, and those who did not agree with this decision split off from the ALD and formed the RNDP. The RNDP and ALD re-merged in January 2014 to form the ANP.

The Arakan National Party's Headquarters, Sittwe

In July 2015 the ANP indicated a scaling-up of its political ambitions when it announced plans to contest 63 seats in the 8 November 2015 election – all 34 elected seats in Rakhine state's regional parliament and 29 seats in the national parliament (17 in the lower house and 12 in the upper house).[96]

The announcement included plans to contest four predominantly Rohingya constituencies in northern Rakhine state (in Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships).[97] Speculation also emerged that Dr Aye Maung, head of the ANP, has ambitions to become Rakhine state Chief Minister and that U Shwe Mann, the current Speaker in the national parliament and former chairman of the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), had promised to help him achieve this.[98] It is worth noting that when Maung Maung Ohn was appointed as Rakhine state's Chief Minister in 2014 he stated:

> *There will be an ethnic Rakhine chief minister in Rakhine state when the new government takes over in 2015... I will hand over my position to the new ethnic Rakhine chief minister when the time comes.*[99]

96 Moe Myint, 'Arakan National Party Eyes 63 Seats'.
97 Ibid.
98 Mratt Kyaw Thu, 'Rakhine Nationa Party in "chaos"', *Myanmar Times*, 26 June 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15221-rakhine-national-party-in-chaos.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.
99 'New Chief Minister for Myanmar's Rakhine State to Serve for Only a Year', *Radio Free Asia*, 27 June 2014: http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/rakhine-06272014180702.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.

Since the 2012 violence, the perception that the opposition NLD is too weak on the 'Bengali issue' has grown, fuelled by nationalist and Buddhist propaganda. Despite Aung San Suu Kyi's refusal to condemn the persecution of the Rohingya[100] the NLD has lost popularity in the region. An NLD member who participated in the ISCI research said:

> *Before 2012 a lot of people supported the NLD. After the 2012 conflict, Aung San Suu Kyi said she was really concerned about what was happening in Rakhine state - that there was a minority clashing with a majority and that both sides should respect each other to get stability. That's why Rakhine people are very angry with Aung San Suu Kyi. The nationalist party started spreading the rumour that the NLD grants more favours to Muslims. Also a nationalist group posted photoshopped images of Aung San Suu Kyi wearing Muslim dress on social media.*[101]

According to NLD interviewees, since the 2012 violence Rakhine national groups have attacked the Sittwe NLD office three times, destroying the NLD billboard outside the office. As a result, the office has moved location three times.[102] Impunity for such intimidation persists. The NLD interviewees said they knew which groups were responsible for the vandalism, but were uncomfortable to mention the name publicly. They said they had lodged an official complaint – in writing and in person – with the police and township administration, but no action has been taken.

NLD members also shed light on the rise of nationalism in Rakhine state and the danger for those who oppose this view and for moderates. One said:

> *Democracy is not easy here. Only nationalism exists here. We are struggling for democracy for so many years. However, in Rakhine after 2012, it's not like we can say anything about democracy. If people talk about nationalism, people like it. If we discuss, democracy and what is wrong and right, then the nationalist groups target us … There are also a lot of moderate people but they are scared of the nationalists … They're scared of, like, bad people, we're scared about national groups attacking our houses and assuming that we are traitors. We don't want to enter conflict with them.*[103]

On the issue of white card holders' eligibility to vote, however, the Rakhine NLD branch and ANP are in agreement. The interviewee explained why the NLD does not want white card holders to vote:

> *Because this is according to law, people holding the white card are not citizens yet. Only citizens should vote. That is according to law. The Rakhine party and NLD are in unity, that's why we are standing together on the white card, because it's based on citizenship. People who are citizens should vote in the referendum. People who are not citizens should not vote in the elections.*[104]

100 Green, P, 'Aung San Suu Kyi's silence on the genocide of Rohingya Muslims is tantamount to complicity', *The Independent*, 20 May 2015: http://www.independent.co.uk/voices/comment/aung-san-suu-kyis-silence-on-the-genocide-of-rohingya-muslims-is-tantamount-to-complicity-10264497.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.
101 Interview with NLD members, Rakhine state, Sittwe, 17 February 2015.
102 Ibid.
103 Ibid.
104 Ibid.

NLD members also confirmed that they joined protests held in Sittwe in February against parliament's 2 February 2015 decision to allow white card holders to vote.[105] The vote overwhelmingly passed, with 328 votes in favour, 79 against and 19 absentee.[106] Just days later, however, on 11 February, President Thein Sein reversed parliament's decision even though in December 2014 he had recommended to parliament that white card holders should be eligible to vote in a constitutional referendum scheduled for 2015.[107]

In August 2015 Myanmar's Electoral Commission banned U Shwe Maung, an elected Rohingya lawmaker and USDP member (Rohingya MP for northern Rakhine state) from running for re-election. A fax from the Electoral Commission notified U Shwe Maung that he was ineligible on the basis that he is not a citizen, even though he had held office for the previous four years.[108]

In July 2015, a proposal to amend section 261 of the constitution, to enable state and divisional legislatures to elect their own chief ministers, failed to pass, having only achieved 66 per cent of favourable votes (75 per cent is required).[109] The amendment received overwhelming support from civilian MPs: it is assumed the military bloc (who are assigned 56 seats) voted against the proposal, which means that over 90 per cent of elected representatives voted in favour. Schedule Five, enumerating regional governments' taxation powers, was extended to allow regional governments to bolster state and divisional funds via taxes on 20 new potential revenue streams (such as oil and gas), including levies on income, commerce and customs. Political commentator Yan Myo Thein commented on the vote:

> *If regional and state parliaments cannot select their Chief Ministers, it's impossible for states and regions to see their own government emerge in the post-2015 election [period]. In other words, there is no possibility for self-administration to emerge in ethnic regions. Without self-government and self-administration, the political path to a federal union is weakening.*[110]

The failure of proposed constitutional changes to section 261 is likely related to the peace process that is addressing long-standing armed conflicts between the army and ethnic minority groups in various regions, in the sense that it allows the military to retain bargaining power. The rejection of section 261 proposed amendments is detrimental for national political reconciliation, however, as a decision to decentralise power would have demonstrated that the military is genuine about reform and granting ethnic groups the political rights they have been demanding since Myanmar's independence. This is a particularly important issue in a country where minority peoples comprise a third of the population.[111]

105 Kay Zue, 'Rakhine Buddhists to protest against "white card" vote decision', *BurmaNet News*, 6 February 2015: http://www.burmanet.org/news/2015/02/06/mizzima-news-rakhine-buddhists-to-protest-against-white-card-vote-decision-kay-zue/. Accessed 11 October 2015.

106 Lawi Weng, '"White Card" Holders Eligible to Vote on Constitutional Reform', *The Irrawaddy*, 3 February 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/election/news/white-card-holders-eligible-to-vote-on-constitutional-reform. Accessed 11 October 2015.

107 Nyein Nyein, 'Thein Sein Pushes Referendum Suffrage for White Card Holders', The Irrawaddy, 22 December 2014: http://www.irrawaddy.org/election/news/thein-sein-pushes-referendum-suffrage-for-white-card-holders. Accessed 11 October 2015.

108 Fuller ,T, 'Myanmar Striking Rohingya From Voter Rolls, Activists Say', New York Times, 23 August 2015: http://www.nytimes.com/2015/08/24/world/asia/myanmar-lawmaker-u-shwe-maung-barred-from-re-election-on-citizenship-grounds.html?_r=0. Accessed 11 October 2015. See also: Ye Mon, 'Muslims parties fear exclusion from election', *Myanmar Times*, 27 August 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/16176-muslim-parties-fear-exclusion-from-election.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.

109 Htoo Thant, Pyae Thet Phyo, and Lun Min Mang, 'MPs vow to maintain push for chief minister selection change', *Myanmar Times*, 13 July 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15466-mps-vow-to-maintain-push-for-chief-minister-selection-change.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.

110 Yen Snaing, 'Charter Push for Decentralization, Stronger Parliament Falters', The Irrawaddy, 9 July 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/charter-push-for-decentralization-stronger-parliament-falters.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.

111 Transnational Institute, 'Burma's Ethnic Challenge: From Aspirations to Solutions', *Burma Policy Briefing*, October 2013, No.12, pp. 1-20. p. 3: https://www.tni.org/files/download/bpb_12_def.pdf. Accessed 11 October 2015.

However, the possibility of granting regional governments more power poses serious challenges in Rakhine state, where local politicians express, unchecked, a vicious form of nationalism and religious hatred. The history of recent leadership in Rakhine state should not engender a sense of complacency. The current, and temporary, Chief Minister Mya Aung is a low ranking Rakhine who in his own words is 'too low in rank to receive direct instruction from the president by phone.'[112] He was appointed to replace former army major and deputy Minister for Border Affairs, Maung Maung Ohn who resigned in August 2015 to contest the November 2015 elections. Many international organisations regarded Maung Maung Ohn as genuine in his attempts to facilitate their work in the region and to cooperate with them. Other analysts said he was appointed to calm tensions, to 'keep Sittwe out of flames'. However, ISCI's research points to a more cynical conclusion. Maung Maung Ohn was apparently drafted in by the national government to quell the violence. His solution was to encourage Rakhine nationalist mobilisation, the spread of racist propaganda and to afford impunity to those responsible for violence against the Rohingya. The logical consequence has been that segregation has become the solution.

In June 2015, following the boat crisis, Maung Maung Ohn had announced:

> *If you want to know whether or not what they [the international community] say is true, come and have a look at Arakan State. We are open to any investigation… Don't say anything based on hearsay.*[113]

However, just days earlier, Myanmar naval authorities turned away foreign media as they attempted to access a fishing boat carrying 727 refugees. Reuters reported that journalists were briefly detained, questioned, made to delete photos and videos, and then ordered to leave the area.[114]

Indeed, the majority of researchers and journalists are denied access to northern Rakhine state and IDP camps outside of Sittwe. In August 2015 Yanghee Lee was denied access to Rakhine state in her capacity as Special Rapporteur on Myanmar. Rakhine state officials stated that she was not able to visit the region due to extreme weather conditions, however, she reported that her request for a stopover was denied well before her visit had begun.[115]

New Chief Minister Mya Aung has reported that he will continue the work of Maung Maung Ohn: 'Arakan State has become stable now and we'll introduce measures to make it more stable. There are no more problems with the Bengalis.'[116]

Islamophobia fuels perceptions that Rakhine culture, already endangered as a result of decades of Bamar-led oppression, is similarly threatened by perceived Muslim expansion. Rakhine unity has strengthened in the face of dual enemies: the Bamar and the Rohingya.

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112 Ming Aung Khaing, 'New Arakan Chief Minister Mya Aung: "The President Trusts Me"', *The Irrawaddy*, 9 September 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/election/interview/new-arakan-chief-minister-mya-aung-the-president-trusts-me. Accessed 10 October 2015.

113 Kyaw Phyo Tha, 'Arakan Officials Face Off with Muslims Leaders over Boat People Crisis', *The Irrawaddy*, 1 June 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/arakan-officials-face-off-with-muslim-leaders-over-boat-people-crisis.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

114 McLaughlin, T and Soe Zeya Tun, 'Myanmar Navy Blocks Journalists as Migrant Boat Held in Limbo', Reuters, 31 May 2015: http://uk.reuters.com/article/2015/05/31/uk-asia-migrants-boat-idUKKBN0OG0CP20150531. Accessed 11 October 2015.

115 Solomon, F, 'Burma Govt "Hampers" Mandate of UN Rights Envoy', *The Irrawaddy*, 7 August 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/govt-hampers-mandate-of-yanghee-lee.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.

116 Ibid.

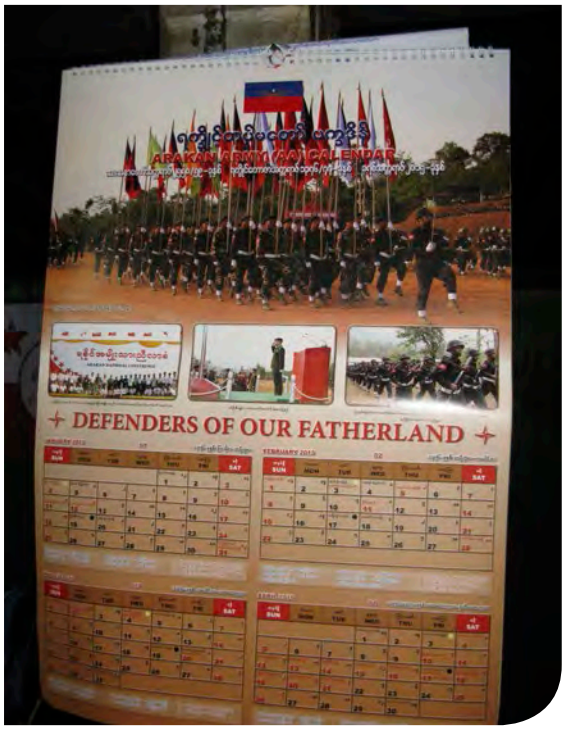
Mein Kampf on sale in Sittwe's main street

ISCI found evidence of Nazi ideology in official ANP documents. In Rakhine state, as in other areas of Myanmar, it is not uncommon to see Nazi and SS paraphernalia (t-shirts, helmets etc.) as well as copies of Mein Kampf being sold on the street. Against this background and standing in front of an Arakan Army calendar entitled 'Defenders of Our Fatherland', Sittwe's ANP spokesperson told ISCI that Rohingya should be moved to 'concentration camps' in central Myanmar before asking, with a smile on his face, to change that to 'refugee camps', obviously conscious of the connotations.[117] The forerunner of the ANP, the RNDP published an editorial in its November 2012 magazine, The Progress, declaring:

> *Hitler and Eichmann were the enemy of the Jews, but they were probably heroes to the Germans [...] In order for a country's survival, the survival of a race, or in defense of national sovereignty, crimes against humanity or in-human acts may justifiably be committed [...] So, if that survival principle or justification is applied or permitted equally (in our Myanmar case) our endeavours to protect our Rakhine race and defend the sovereignty and longevity of the Union of Myanmar cannot be labelled as "crimes against humanity," or "inhuman" or "in-humane" [sic] [...] We will go down in history as cowards if we pass on these [Rohingya] issues to the next generation without getting it over and done with.*[118]

117 Interview with ANP spokesperson, ANP office, Sittwe, 21 January 2015.

118 Original PDF of *The Progress* editorial supplied by journalist Francis Wade; see also Hudson-Rodd, N, 'Silence as Myanmar "genocide" unfolds', Asia Times, 18 February 2014: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/SEA-01-180214.html. Accessed 8 October 2015.



Arakan Army Calendar 2015, ANP office, SIttwe

The presence of a significant Muslim population in Rakhine state contributes to a siege-like mentality on the part of Rakhine leaders, who frequently refer to themselves as 'the protectors of Myanmar' and guardians of the 'western gate' against a perceived Islamic threat. Nyo Aye, the Rakhine Women's Network Chair in Sittwe, claimed in 2014: 'We are worried that this country will not remain Buddhist ...We Rakhines are strongly guarding Myanmar's western door.'[119] In 2013 U Shwe Mann, former chairman of the USDP and parliamentary Speaker, offered official support for this view when he said: 'I appreciate the attempts of the Rakhine people to protect Myanmar.'[120]

The Arakan region has long been a frontier between Muslim and Buddhist Asia[121] and home to successive independent Arakan kingdoms.[122] History surrounding the once mighty Mrauk U Arakanese Kingdom (1430-1785) which was invaded by the Burmese in 1785, also provides much of the basis for Rakhine nationalism today. Mrauk U, founded by King Narameikhla, was the capital of Arakan state. The King's Muslim soldiers, who came with him from Bengal, settled in a village near Mrauk U and built the Sandi Khan Mosque. Muslim influence in Arakan may therefore be said to date from 1430.[123]

In an attempt to deny this Muslim influence, the tatmadaw destroyed ancient mosques throughout the region during the 1990s. A further 33 mosques in Sittwe alone were destroyed during the 2012 violence.[124]

119 Belford, A, 'As Myanmar's Rakhine Buddists gain strength, so does anti-Muslim apartheid', *Reuters*, 18 June 2014: http://uk.reuters.com/article/2014/06/18/us-myanmar-rohingya-idUSKBN0ET2UR20140618. Accessed 11 October 2015.

120 Ei Ei Toe Lwin,, 'Speaker pledges "support" for Rakhine people', *Myanmar Times*, 4 October 2013: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/8350-speaker-pledges-support-for-rakhine-people.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.

121 International Crisis Group, *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*, Asia Report No. 261, 22 October 2014, p. 2: http://www.crisisgroup.org/~/media/Files/asia/south-east-asia/burma-myanmar/261-myanmar-the-politics-of-rakhine-state.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2015.

122 Da Nyaddy (580BC-327), Versali (327BC-580AD) Laya Mro, and Mrauk U (1430-1785), ANP, 26 Jan Mrauk U.

123 Yegar, M, The Crescent in Arakan', (orginal date unknown), *Kaladan Press Network*, 22 October 2006: http://www.kaladan-press.org/index.php/scholar-column-mainmenu-36/36-rohingya/216-the-crescent-in-arakan.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

124 Interview with prominent Rohingya leader, Sittwe, 29 January 2015.

Ruins of destroyed and abandoned mosque, downtown Sittwe, February 2015

In the years following independence from the British in 1948, armed revolts were staged by national minorities and communists. One involved a Muslim group known as the Majahids, and affected the northern Rakhine state districts of Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung (formerly known as Mayu district) that lie on the Bangladesh frontier and are populated mainly by Rohingya. These events led to an informal division of the state into a predominantly Muslim (including Rohingya) north and Rakhine (Buddhist) south, with Maungdaw and Buthidaung becoming Muslim strongholds.

Tensions under British rule between Buddhists and Muslims had peaked in 1945. As a reward for the Muslim population's pro-British stance during the Japanese occupation of Rakhine state (1942 until early 1945), the British promised them an autonomous area in northern Rakhine and encouraged Muslims to take up administrative posts and engage in infrastructure projects. The Muslim population of northern Arakan grew considerably during and after World War Two as a result of immigration from Chittagong. Thousands of refugees from south Arakan who had crossed into India in 1942 now returned to north Arakan.[125] Buddhists there saw these Muslims as migrants and imperialist invaders, responsible for stealing local employment opportunities and cultivating fertile soils for the benefit of the British enemy. These factors, including the fresh memory of the war-time massacres, meant that Muslims became the subject of popular national resentment.

125 Yegar, M, 'The Crescent in Arakan'.

These and other historical events have been resurrected and manipulated by the Myanmar government to fuel the current Rakhine sense of injustice and insecurity. A Rakhine politician explained how this feeds directly into the current climate of distrust between communities:

> *There is fear between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims … the Rakhine dare not go to Bengali areas … Before the separation of the two communities, I dare not go into Muslim communities just outside town. I never go there, I didn't go there at any time, at night, but any Muslim can come here … It's a long story, in 1942, 200 Rakhine villages disappeared, killed by Muslims … Probably if I go there I will disappear.* [126]

Impact of the 2012 conflict

Prior to the massacres of 2012, Sittwe appears to have been a thriving, multicultural town where Buddhist, Hindu and Muslim religions, and Rakhine, Rohingya, Kaman and Maramagyi ethnic communities coexisted in relative harmony. There were over 140 Muslim businesses in downtown Sittwe; 38 mosques; schools were mixed and the different communities traded with each other, conducted routine business transactions and engaged socially.[127] Intermarriage and the sharing of cultural traditions and festivals were not uncommon.

The following extracts from interviews with various Rakhine Buddhists reflect how the 2012 violence shattered the friendships and cooperation that had existed between Buddhists and Muslims:

- *I was surprised by the conflict… Before, I lived with the Muslims in a brotherly way. I had a friend and we were together. I haven't seen my friend since the conflict. I haven't seen any Muslims since the conflict. The government separated us. And I don't want to see them. They are bad and they kill Rakhine.*[128]

- *I was working in Buthidaung… The school was in a Rakhine village but the students were mixed. There was only one other teacher who was also Rakhine. There were no problems between Rakhine and Muslim students, no discrimination. The kids played and worked together. The village was also all integrated. Villagers were integrated… Most of the students were Muslims so I have a strong feeling regarding Muslims. I have very close Muslim friends… I felt sad when I heard Muslim students killed a Rakhine headmaster. I felt sad to hear this. I also felt sad about violence against Muslim friends…*[129]

Following the 2012 conflict, relations between the communities in Sittwe and Mrauk U were effectively severed. Given the level of apartheid segregation now dividing the two communities it is hard to see how former relations will be restored.

126 ANP spokesperson, 21 January 2015, Sittwe.
127 Interview with elder, Aung Mingalar Rohingya ghetto, Sittwe, 24 January 2015.
128 Interview with a 55-year-old Rakhine man, Sittwe, 5 December 2014.
129 Interview with 44-year-old Rakhine woman who was born in Maungdaw in 1970, grew up in Sittwe, and worked as a teacher in Buthidaung between 1994 and 1998, interviewed in Sittwe, 24 November 2014.

During the conflict, Muslims simply disappeared from the lives of their Rakhine friends. Muslims were segregated in the detention camp complex and the Aung Mingalar ghetto. Muslim students were no longer permitted to attend Sittwe schools or university. Merchants and traders were effectively prohibited from entering downtown Sittwe. The two communities were now physically and ideologically an ocean apart.

Downtown Sittwe, cleansed of all Muslim influence since 2012 violence

In Northern Rakhine State the situation is reportedly rather different. Communities are still to some extent integrated. In the market places Rakhine stalls stand beside Rohingya stalls and Rohingya trishaw drivers carry Rakhine passengers. Children attend the same schools until the age of 16 but the Rohingya can no longer attend Sittwe university given the prohibitions on Muslim travel and the threat of violence from both security forces and Rakhine nationalists should they be seen.[130]

In Sittwe and Mrauk U the lack of daily contact, combined with the racist fears promulgated within the Rakhine community, have resulted in a rapid growth of hostility. This was reflected by interviewees:

130 Francis Wade, unpublished field observations, October 2015. Reproduced with permission of the author.

- *I managed 200 people [before the conflict], Muslims and Rakhine, 80 Muslims. They used to work together eagerly… I still communicate a little with people from Thandoli village [Muslim] but I can't bring them here because other people might make problems for me. The Rakhine have hate. And the headmaster was killed in Maung Daw… I hired Muslims to carry rice from paddy fields to my house. When we had festivals, we invited them. When they had Eid, we would go. And also, Novus ceremony, we would sit together, drink alcohol, no problem, always people keep in touch. Now I'm scared to see them in person.*[131]

- *No one will buy from Muslim people because they are afraid of being killed and they think food might be poisoned. I think Muslim intentions are not good. I don't want to communicate with Muslim people anymore.*[132]

- *I used to work with 'kalar'. I would buy from 'kalar' shops, but I didn't have any 'kalar' friends… Before the conflict I didn't think 'kalar' were bad, but I think that their behaviour recently is very bad… I don't want to live near them anymore, especially after the conflict I feel this way.*[133]

- *Rakhine are the native people, Muslims should have a sense of respect towards them. I used to stay at a Muslim friend's house in Maungdaw, but I don't go anymore because I'm afraid. The Muslim friends I used to have, they were close to Rakhine people and they understand them. But there are extreme people and those are the problem. I would like to meet my Muslim friends again, but I'm too afraid to go to Maungdaw… We have no contact with Muslim people since the conflict. I'm willing to work with them but it depends how the Muslims react to us… We need Muslim leaders who are trusted and vice versa. Rakhine trusted leaders and then, they can liaise with each other towards coming to a solution with the government's help… I need permission from the government but if I do this [engage in interfaith activities], I think people might think I'm working too closely with the government, which isn't good.* [134]

- *Today, both sides are scared of each other. We visited Muslim villages during the day but not at night. Even the police say not to visit at night… Before the conflict, we would sleep and eat at each other's villages. The Muslims can speak Muslim and Rakhine. And a few Rakhine can speak Muslim that is Bengali. We were eating and sleeping together before. Cooking, eating, doing business, enjoying each other's culture. In Maungdaw and Kyauk Phyu, many houses were burned down. There were so many reasons that started the conflict. That's why we've lost trust.*[135]

Against this background, the road to genocide was well under way.

131 Rakhine man, aged 45, informal village administrator, interviewed in village on outskirts of Sittwe, 6 December 2014.
132 Rakhine woman, aged 40, interviewed in Sittwe on 4 December 2015.
133 Rakhine woman, aged 43, interviewed in Sittwe on 28 November 2014.
134 Rakhine civil society activist, interview conducted in Sittwe on 24 November 2014.
135 Ye Seni Pyen Village Group, 28 November 2014.

PART II: ROAD TO GENOCIDE

Child's toy, Rohingya IDP camp, Sittwe

...the effects of genocide do not end but only begin with the deaths of the victims. In short the main objective of genocidal destruction is the transformation of the victims into 'nothing' and the survivors into 'nobodies.' (Feierstein)[136]

This section provides evidence for the first four stages of genocide: systematic, institutionalised stigmatization and dehumanisation; subjection to harassment, violence and terror; the organised isolation and segregation of the Rohingya into detention camps, prison villages and a ghetto; and finally the systematic weakening of the Rohingya community. Taken together these overlapping stages provide compelling evidence of genocidal persecution against the Rohingya.

136 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice*.

3. STIGMATISATION AND DEHUMANISATION

The first step in destroying previously cooperative relations within or between social groups is stigmatisation. (Feierstein) [137]

The stigmatisation and dehumanisation of the Rohingya operates from the highest levels of government to local Rakhine civil society. In 2015 the Head of the Myanmar Human Rights Commission, Win Mra, an ethnic Rakhine who refers to the Rohingya who mainly live in Rakhine state as 'strangers', said:

> *As human beings... we have the right to food, health and other human rights, but when you claim yourself as a Rohingya, that's a different issue.*[138]

A leading Rakhine human rights organisation, said:

> *But these Bengalis are not like humans - they are intolerant demons which spill blood and inflict pain and suffering on others. Thus we must resist them.*[139]

The process of stigmatisation and dehumanisation has been in play for over three decades. A key moment in re-positioning the Rohingya outside the state's sphere of responsibility was in 1982, when General Ne Win removed the Rohingya from the list of officially recognised ethnic minorities. Central to this ongoing re-positioning is the government's explicit refusal to recognise or use the term 'Rohingya'.

Demonisation on the basis of skin colour, other physical characteristics or alleged behaviour patterns – a feature of genocides elsewhere in the world – is widespread in Myanmar. In 2009, for instance, Myanmar's senior official in Hong Kong, Ye Myint Aung, compared the 'fair and soft skin' of Myanmar people with the 'dark brown' complexion of the Rohingya who he described as 'ugly as ogres'.[140]

137 Ibid.

138 Paluch, G, 'As Myanmar rights official, an Elvis impersonator sings different tune', *LA Times*, 1 July 2015: http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-ff-myanmar-elvis-20150701-story.html#page=1. Accessed 10 October 2015.

139 Arakan Human Rights and Development Organisation (AHRDO), 'Conflict and Violence in Arakan (Rakhine) State, Myanmar (Burma): What is Happening, Why and What To Do', July 2013 p.21: http://www.burmalink.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/AHRDO.Arakan-Violence-Report-for-reading-Online.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2015.

140 'Myanmar envoy terms Rohingyas "ugly as ogres"', *The Dawn*, 12 February 2009: http://www.dawn.com/news/342940/myanmar-envoy-terms-rohingyas-ugly-as-ogres. Accessed 10 October 2015.

The most prominent Buddhist voice of ethno-religious hatred, Ashin Wirathu, has likened Muslims to African carp in his racist and often bizarre sermons: 'They breed quickly and they are very violent and they eat their own.' He has also equated Islamic halal practices with a 'familiarity with blood' which could threaten world peace, redolent of the Nazi prohibition on the kosher slaughtering of animals.[141]

Government officials have staged a determined campaign to dehumanise Rohingya by banning even the mention of their name. For example, the Myanmar government's Commission of Inquiry into the 2012 violence reported:

> *The Government of the Union of Myanmar does not recognize the name Rohingya... Bengalis now pushing to use the term Rohingya are surely fanning the flames of sectarian violence... Bengali demands to be recognized as Rohingya will only be divisive, leading to more conflict, possibly with greater losses than before.*[142]

In June 2014, following the presentation of UNICEF's development plans for Rakhine state to local partners, the Minister of Local Security asked the UN children's fund to apologize for using the word 'Rohingya'.[143]

In May 2015, Myanmar's leaders announced they would not attend a regional meeting in Thailand in response to the boat crisis on the Andaman Sea if the word 'Rohingya' was used in the invitation. Myanmar's deputy foreign minister, Thant Kyaw, said:

> *If they are using the word Rohingya in the official title of the meeting, we cannot join... If we joined, it would seem like we accept the term Rohingya.*[144]

The same month at the Special Meeting on Irregular Migration in the Indian Ocean, held in Thailand, Htin Lin, Myanmar's representative, told media:

> *We are totally against the use of the nomenclature Rohingya, which never [existed] as a race in [this] country.* [145]

This policy of identity denial operates from the very highest echelons of government witnessed at a meeting in London, in July 2015, when President Thein Sein declared that 'We do not have the term Rohingya'[146].

Of particular significance, State officials prohibited Rakhine's Muslims from identifying as Rohingya in the 2014 census, announcing on the eve of the event that anyone who attempted to do so would be

141 Kyaw, N. N., 'Islamophobia in Buddhist Myanmar: The 969 Movement & Anti-Muslim Violence', in Crouch, M (ed), *Islam and the State in Myanmar: Muslim-Buddhist Relations and the Politics of Belonging*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, Forthcoming 2016), p. 15.

142 Republic of the Union of Myanmar, 'Final Report of Inquiry Commission on Sectarian Violence in Rakhine State', 10 September 2013, p. 56: http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs15/Rakhine_Commission_Report-en-red.pdf. Accessed 10 October 2015.

143 UNICEF, 'New plan to address significant needs of children in Rakhine State', 10 June 2014: http://www.unicef.org/eapro/media_22654.html; and, Kean T, 'UNICEF rejects apology reports', *Myanmar Times*, 13 June 2014: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/10654-unicef-rejects-reports-of-apology-over-rohingya-use.html. Both accessed 10 October 2015.

144 Lawi Weng, 'Burma May Boycott Trafficking Summit over Use of Name "Rohingya"', The Irrawaddy, 20 May 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/burma-may-boycott-trafficking-summit-over-use-of-name-rohingya.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

145 Roughneen, S, '"Rohingya" taboo at 17-nation meeting' *Nikkei Asian Review*, 29 May 2015: http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/International-Relations/Rohingya-taboo-at-17-nation-meeting. Accessed 10 October 2015.

146 Inkey, M, 'Thein Sein talks at Chatham House', *AsiaPacific*, New Mandala, 17 July 2013: http://asiapacific.anu.edu.au/newmandala/2013/07/17/thein-sein-talks-at-chatham-house/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

registered as 'Bengali', the derogatory term used by authorities who consider the Rohingya to be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.[147] Government spokesperson Ye Htut announced on 30 March: 'If a household wants to identify themselves as "Rohingya", we will not register it.[148] He also said: 'It will be acceptable if they write "Bengali"... We won't accept them as "Rohingya"'.[149]

In Myanmar the militarised state has been particularly effective in securing the commitment of its citizens to an anti-Islamic narrative that conceptualises and stigmatises the Rohingya as illegal Bengali immigrants. A leaked military presentation for use in training cadets about Muslims is revealing.[150] Under the heading 'Bengali Muslims' it claims the following:

- *They infiltrate the people to propagate their religion.*
- *Their population increases by way of mass illegal immigration.*
- *They take advantage of Myanmar people whenever there is an opportunity.*

This narrative is widely endorsed by both the country's political opposition (especially the NLD and Aung San Suu Kyi) and its human rights advocates. There is, as a result, no effective counter-narrative within Myanmar that challenges government propaganda and defends and asserts the existence of the Rohingya. Rohingya candidates, for example, have now been prohibited from standing in the 2015 elections.

Dehumanisation techniques are reinforced through exclusion and systematic isolation.[151] This includes, for example, restricting the Rohingya to secure zones, detention camps, ghettos and prison villages, excluding them from higher education, the professions, the military and from working in the public service.

A confidential telegram released by Wikileaks captures the situation of the Rohingya in 2006:

> *Non-Buddhist ethnic minorities in Burma's Rakhine State face the worst of times, with a flat economy, no citizenship rights, and no freedom to seek better opportunities elsewhere. [...] The Imam of the oldest mosque in Sittwe told us that no Muslim resident of the city is permitted on the streets after 8 pm, and confirmed that he and most of the Muslims in his local community are not permitted to leave the city limits at all. The Imam said there were about 100 mosques in Sittwe District, but the authorities only permitted a few to remain open, and none could be repaired without permission. [...] The Embassy will continue to pursue every opportunity to visit Rakhine State. Unfortunately, the regime tightly restricts access to the region, perhaps realizing how truly dreadful the situation there has become.*[152]

147 '"Rohingya" term banned from Myanmar census', Banglanews24, 29 March 2014.: http://en.banglanews24.com/fullnews/bn/88641.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.
148 'Burma census bans people registering as Rohingya', *BBC*, 30 March 2014: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-26807239. Accessed 10 October 2015.
149 'UNFPA under fire over census role', *BurmaNet News*, 9 April 2014: http://www.burmanet.org/news/2014/04/09/mizzima-news-unfpa-under-fire-over-census-role/. Accessed 10 October 2015.
150 Leaked document 3: Nyi Pyi Taw Divisional Military Headquarters, No (13) Combatants Organizing School, 'Fear of Extinction of Race', Lecture by Bo Toe Naing, Gazette No- Army 62505, Ka Tha No. 32, 26 October 2012. Acquired from Al Jazeera.
151 Lecomte, J M, *Teaching about the Holocaust in the 21st Century*, (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 2001), p. 49.
152 A tale of two Sittwes: Burma's ethnic tensions telegram from US embassy Yangon 27 November 2006, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/06RANGOON1722_a.html. Accessed 20 October 2015.

Citizenship and white cards

Rakhine-led campaign to remove white card holders' right to vote, March 2015, Sittwe

Central to the government's dehumanisation campaign has been to deny Rohingya citizenship, making them a 'non-people'.

Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Law left the Rohingya without nationality, a move reinforced by publication in 1983 of the results of a census in which Rohingya were not counted.[153]

In 1989, the government instituted a citizen verification programme. Individuals were issued colour-coded citizenship scrutiny cards, which categorised citizenship by card colour. Full citizens held pink cards, 'associate citizens' blue, and naturalized citizens green.[154] At this time, some Muslims held national registration cards, others held temporary registration certificates, and many had no identification at all.[155] When Ne Win removed the Rohingya from the list of 'national races' he also introduced a series of arduous requirements that the Rohingya were required to satisfy in order to claim eligibility for any level of citizenship under Burmese Law.

153 Human Rights Watch, '"All You Can Do is Pray": Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State', April 2013, Annex I, p. 139: https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims. Accessed 10 October 2015.

154 Amnesty International, *Myanmar: The Rohingya Minority: Fundamental Rights Denied*, AI Index: ASA 16/005/2004, (London: Amnesty International, 2004), p. 11: https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/ASA16/005/2004/en/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

155 The International Crisis Group, *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*, Asia Report No. 261, 22 October 2014, p. 11.

During the citizen verification process, government authorities collected the identification documents of Muslims in Rakhine state but never replaced them. This left most Rohingya and other Muslims in Rakhine state without any form of identification.[156]

We met Rohingya in Mrauk U who had ID cards of parents and grandparents recognising their involvement with Aung San's independence movement. Rohingya in villages on the outskirts of Sittwe produced ID cards and family lists with the word 'Rohingya', some of which had been crossed out and replaced with the word 'Bengali'. Interviewees claimed this to have been done by authorities in the 1990s.[157]

In the early 1990s Rohingya who were repatriated from Bangladesh, with the assistance of the UNHCR, were granted yellow 'returnee identity cards' which established nothing except the holder was a 'returnee'.[158] In 1995, the authorities granted many Muslims white 'temporary registration cards' that expressly do not grant citizenship, regardless of whether or not the card-holder previously held citizenship documents.[159] The white card however, entitled the holder to vote in both the 2010 general election and 2012 by-elections.

On 31 March 2015 white cards were revoked following a Rakhine-led campaign against them. As one person told ISCI, 'the RNDP don't want a million new voters who will vote against them'.[160] Myanmar has 797,504 white card holders in total, the vast majority (666,381) held by Muslims in Rakhine state.[161]

Immigration officials reported that nearly 400,000 white cards had been returned by the end of May 2015. U Tin Aye, chair of the Election Commission, claims that the government is still scrutinising white card holders, that the commission cannot allow white card holders to vote, and that no law yet exists to allow green card holders to vote. The Minister for Immigration, U Khin Yi, announced in June that the government would issue new green coloured cards to those who handed in white cards. He went on to say: 'If necessary, we will ask parliament whether we should allow those holders to vote or not. We will follow the law. If parliament decides green card holders are granted citizenship or will be recognised as naturalised citizens in the future, I must allow [them to vote].'[162]

The most recent form of citizenship verification process was piloted in 2014 in Rakhine state's Myebon township, where around 200 Muslims, many of them Kaman, were granted citizenship on the basis that they registered as 'Bengali'. The project was officially suspended following widespread resistance from local Buddhist Rakhine.[163]

Many of the Rohingya interviewed in camps, villages and Aung Mingalar saw citizenship as the key to lifting their oppression. In Rakhine province, Rohingya eagerly showed ISCI the treasured official ID cards of their parents, grandparents and sometimes their own if they were old enough to have been issued one. There was a desperate belief that if only they could convince the authorities of the legitimacy of their claims, they would be afforded their rightful entitlement to citizenship.

156 The International Crisis Group, *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*, p. 11.
157 Interviews with Rohingya in both villages and IDP camps in and around Sittwe.
158 Amnesty International, *The Rohingya Minority: Fundamental Rights Denied*, p. 12.
159 Ibid. See also, The International Crisis Group, *Myanmar: The Politics of Rakhine State*, p. 11.
160 Senior UN staff member, Yangon, 30 October 2014.
161 'NLD denies news report saying it demands to give citizenship to Bengalis', *Eleven*: http://elevenmyanmar.com/politics/nld-denies-news-report-saying-it-demands-give-citizenship-bengalis. Accessed 10 October 2015.
162 Myanmar Times (2015) 'If you Want Clean Water, Don't Stir up the Dirt', 15 June, http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/15032-if-you-want-clean-water-don-t-stir-up-the-dirt.html?start=1. Accessed 20 October 2015.
163 Senior UN staff member, 30 October 2014.

ISCI's findings suggest, however, that citizenship would be no protection against the State's goal of eliminating the Rohingya. ISCI came across many Kaman Muslims with citizenship who faced relentless discrimination. They were trapped in their villages, hemmed in and oppressed by a very real threat of violence, cut off from their traditional livelihoods, and denied freedom of movement, education and healthcare (see below).

A Kaman administrator of a mixed (Rohingya, Rakhine and Kaman) village tract[164] in the area of the camp complex expressed the uncertainty of the Kaman situation:

> *The government doesn't have policies on the Kaman because we are citizens. The Rohingya villagers have more difficulty than we have I think. They aren't like us – they can't go to the city, to the hospital and they can't set up businesses. The Kaman can't leave the village tract [a collection of several villages with one administration] either... We can't go to the city or the hospital.*[165]

164 Local villages in the greater Sittwe district are organised administratively into 'village tracts' which usually consist of four to seven villages. Tract administrators are sometimes paid by the government and are normally Rakhine. Tracts can be a mix of ethnic villages and each village has an unpaid, informal administrator who reports to the official administrator. Village tracts visited by ISCI included Rohingya, Kaman and Rakhine villages.

165 Interviewed in the village tract, 25 January 2015.

Genocidal role of monks

Several thousand people from the Rakhine Buddhist community participate in an anti-Rohingya demonstration in Sittwe in November 2014. The demonstrators reject the existence of the Rohingya in Myanmar and protest against UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon's use of the word 'Rohingya' in a recent speech. (c) Greg Constantine

Myanmar's monks, (referred to collectively as the Sangha) have been central to the stigmatisation and violent harassment stages of the genocide, not least because they hold an especially revered position in Myanmar society. Respected and admired for their teachings, humility and acts of humanity, they hold the highest moral authority and their sermons are effectively 'blueprints for proper moral conduct'.[166] They are also acutely aware of their power in society. In an unpublished interview, monk, Ven Pannasiha said:

> *There are over 500,000 monks in Burma. There are only 450,000 soldiers... religious leaders have the power to grab people and attract them. And so, if the monks are united, the military cannot withstand it. Monks know that.*[167]

The Sangha campaigns for race and religious purity are underpinned by the virulent stigmatisation of Muslim communities and are lent added potency because of the moral authority monks command at all levels of society. The infamous Buddhist voice of ethno-religious hatred, Mandalay-based monk Ashin Wirathu, said during an interview with ISCI in 2013, 'In our society, monks are teachers of society'.[168]

166 Walton M J and Hayward S, 'Contesting Buddhist Narratives', p. 30.
167 Unpublished interview with Ven Pannasiha, Yangon, 19 August 2015. Interviewed and shared by Al Jazeera.
168 Interview with Wirathu in Mandalay, 20 January 2013.

Indeed, in recent years significant sections of the Sangha have exploited their position to propagate anti-Islamic racist terror and polarising propaganda.

The power and authority of monks to mobilise large swathes of the Myanmar population has not been lost on the government. Testimony from monks and former monks acquired by ISCI reveal the conscious manipulation of the Sangha by President Thein Sein's government:

> *Ma Ba Tha and 969 [two prominent nationalist movements] are controlled by the military and when it wants a problem to take place, at the right moment, like turning on a water faucet, it will turn it on when it wants and turn it off when it doesn't. It's an ember that it's keeping so that it can start a flame when necessary.*[169]

The evidence points to an insecure military that fears displacement by the democratic transition process, and civil unrest is seen to provide an opportunity to exercise military power and authority.

Despite their own disenfranchisement in 1946[170], the Sangha remain a political force and have played a somewhat contradictory role in Burmese politics - sometimes bravely resisting the regime (for example, leading the 2007 Saffron Revolution and the Letpadaung mine protests of 2012); sometimes serving as a government mouthpiece for extremist nationalist and racist ideology.

According to one monk, himself a critic of both Wirathu and the government:

> *Behind this issue, the government systematically prepared and incited riots in places like Mandalay and Meiktila with monks who are their pawns and who have relationship with them... the events that started in Rakhine are suspicious. It has political instigations.*[171]

Leading up to November 2015 and what could be Myanmar's most free and fair elections since 1990, monks are playing an increasingly powerful role in the promotion of anti-Muslim, specifically anti-Rohingya sentiment under the guise of protecting the 'national race and religion'. Ma Ba Tha, for example, is encouraging people to vote with a 'nationalist spirit'[172] for candidates who 'will not let our race and religion disappear'.[173] The government, with its eyes set firmly on the polls, has encouraged this rising extremism, offering public support to leading nationalist monks. The increasingly powerful, staunchly nationalistic Buddhist movements have the potential to radically influence large sectors of Myanmar society. Nowhere is tension between Buddhists and Muslims, particularly the Rohingya, stronger than in the border state of Rakhine, widely perceived as Myanmar's 'last frontier' of Buddhism.

169 Interview with former leading monk A, 26 June 2015 Yangon. Interviewed and shared by Al Jazeera.
170 Larsson, T, 'Monkish Politics in Southeast Asia: Religious disenfranchisement in comparative and theoretical perspective', Modern Asian Studies, 49(1), 2015, pp. 40-82
171 Unpublished interview with Ven Pannasiha, August 19 2015, Yangon. Interviewed and shared by Al Jazeera.
172 Zaw, J and Lewis, S, 'Hardline Monks turn up Political Heat Ahead of Myanmar Elections', *UCA News*, 22 June 2015: http://www.ucanews.com/news/hardline-monks-turn-up-political-heat-ahead-of-myanmar-elections/73822. Accessed 10 October 2015.
173 Lewis, S, 'Buddhist Monks Seek to Ban Schoolgirls from Wearing Headscarves', *The Guardian*, 22 June 2015: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/buddhist-monks-seek-to-ban-schoolgirls-from-wearing-headscarves?CMP=share_btn_fb. Accessed 10 October 2015.

Preachers of hate: 969 and Ma Ba Tha

The two most prominent nationalist movements within the Sangha are 969 and Ma Ba Tha. Both espouse a particularly virulent form of extreme, anti-Islamic nationalism and focus their campaigns on the protection of race (Burman) and religion (Buddhism).

969 is an assortment of monks and their followers, bound by an extreme form of ethno-religious nationalism underpinned by an ideological hatred of Islam. Wirathu is the group's most prominent spokesperson.[174] Wildly anti-Muslim in his sermons, he was imprisoned in 2003 by the military junta for inciting violence against Muslims in Mandalay and for challenging the dictatorship.[175] He served nine years before being released under an amnesty in 2012. He has continued to preach hatred ever since.

Another monk, jailed with Wirathu, described a special relationship the Myanmar intelligence service developed with Wirathu in prison – most especially providing him with food from outside the prison.[176]

Wirathu denies that the 969 movement is responsible for the violence against the Rohingya, but openly calls for boycotts of Muslim-owned businesses, describes mosques as 'enemy bases', warns Buddhists to protect their women from Muslim rapists, and was a vocal proponent of a law restricting marriages between Buddhists and Muslims.[177]

Many of Wirathu's claims centre on the idea that Muslims are significantly wealthier than their Buddhist counterparts and that this economic dominance is part of a conspiracy to Islamicise the country:

> *Muslims have a lot of money and no one knows where that money mountain is. They show that money to attract our young women…That money will be used to get a Buddhist-Burmese woman, and she will very soon be coerced or even forced to convert to Islam…and the children born of her will become Bengali Muslims and the ultimate danger to our Buddhist nation, as they will eventually destroy our race and religion. Once they become overly populous, they will overwhelm us and take over our country and make it an evil Islamic nation.*[178]

Wirathu's anti-Muslim rhetoric is directly reflected in Rakhine nationalist discourse, which suggests that business ambition and success is part of a wider Muslim strategy to dominate Rakhine state through the luring and forced conversion of Rakhine women. Such ideas were frequently cited by Rakhine interviewees:

> *Muslim people came here with a lower standing. They are working class, but now they are trying to become upper class. Muslims started the conflict and. they are funded by international organisations. They tried to marry Arakanese girls with the intention of increasing their popu-*

174 Kyaw, N. N. claims that, "although he does not hold any official position in the 969 movement, he is widely regarded as the movement's de facto leader or most important propagandist". See Kyaw, N. N., 'Islamophobia in Buddhist Myanmar', p. 14.

175 Interview with Wirathu in Mandalay, 20 January 2013. He accused the government of engaging in corrupt business transactions with Muslim businessmen in the transportation sector.

176 Unpublished interview with Tin Aye Kyu, Mandalay, 27 July 2015. Interviewed and shared by Al Jazeera.

177 Kaplan, S, 'The serene-looking Buddist monk accused of inciting Burma's sectarian violence', *The Washington Post*, 27 May 2015: http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/05/27/the-burmese-bin-laden-fueling-the-rohingya-migrant-crisis-in-southeast-asia/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

178 Hla Oo, 'Boycott Muslim Businesses: Nationalist-Monk Shin Wirathu', *Hla Oo's Blog*, 8 March 2013: http://hlaoo1980.blogspot.ca/2013/03/boycott-muslim-businesses-nationalist.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

lation in Rakhine state... The government must not give Muslim people citizenship.[179]

The exterior of Wirathu's Mandalay monastery displays posters that depict destroyed temples and massacred bodies – historical violence that he claims was perpetrated by Muslims against Buddhists.[180] In 2013 he explained to a BBC reporter:

These pictures are here to protect our religion and our national interest... If we do not protect our own people we will become weak, and we will face more mass killings of this kind when they grow to outnumber us. Muslims are only well behaved when they are weak... When they are strong they are like a wolf or a jackal, in large packs they hunt down other animals.[181]

These comments echo closely those of an ANP spokesperson interviewed in the course of this research.[182] In response to a question by ISCI on the possibility of future violence, he said:

When the international community gives them [Rohingya] a lot of food and donations they will grow fat and become stronger, they will become more violent.

In June 2013 another charismatic 969 leader, Ashin Wimala Biwuntha, addressed an audience in Mawlamyine:

We Buddhists are like people in a boat that is sinking. If this does not change, our race and religion will soon vanish.[183]

Attempts have been made to bully and intimidate perceived supporters of the Rohingya. In January 2015, for instance, Wirathu publicly attacked and insulted the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, during a rally, for her criticism of Myanmar's four 'race protection laws' (see below). He said:

We have explained about the race protection law, but the bitch criticised the laws without studying them properly. Don't assume that you are a respectable person because of your position. For us, you are a whore.[184]

ISCI found widespread support for Wirathu, including in national and Rakhine state government, among Rakhine nationalists and, particularly troubling, in Myanmar's historically courageous human rights community (including the 88 Generation pro-democracy group).

The government has, since 2012, afforded considerable protection to the Sangha's promulgation of race and religious hatred. According to Tha Kha Na, a former student of Wirathu's, 'Ma Ba Tha has become "an organization supported by the State".'[185]

179 Rakhine man, 50 years old, interviewed in Sittwe township, 5 December 2014.
180 ISCI researcher observations January 2013.
181 Fisher, J, 'Myanmar's Extremist Monk', *BBC World*, 1 September 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nSihfWY41So. Accessed 12 October 2015.
182 Interview conducted in Sittwe on 21 January 2015.
183 Kyaw Zwa Moe, 'A Radically Different Dhamma', *The Irrawaddy*, 22 June, 2013: http://www.irrawaddy.org/magazine/a-radically-different-dhamma.html. Accessed 11 October 2015.
184 'UN condemns Myanmar monk Wirathu's "sexist" comments', *BBC*, 22 January 2015: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-30928744. Accessed 11 October 2015.
185 Unpublished interview with monk Tha Kha Na, Yangon, 30 June 2015. Interviewed and shared by Al Jazeera.

Indeed, to date there have been no legal ramifications for the political interventions made by nationalist monks, and 969 appears to be openly supported by government officials. Following the publication in 2013 of an article in Time magazine depicting Wirathu as a Buddhist terrorist, the presidential office released a statement criticising the magazine for undermining 'efforts to rebuild trust between faiths and that the monk's order was striving for peace and prosperity'.[186] It went on to state that 969 'is just a symbol of peace' and Wirathu is 'a son of Lord Buddha'. Unsurprisingly, the offending issue of Time was banned in Myanmar.

In an interview with ISCI researchers, Wirathu claimed that he has been involved in 'nationalistic affairs of politics' since his release from prison in January 2012.[187] He reported that his relationship with the government had initially been difficult, with permission for his sermons sometimes withdrawn.

The relationship improved, however, in 2012, notably following the violence in Rakhine state, when it became clear that Wirathu was an ally in the government's plans to excise the Rohingya from Myanmar's political and social landscape. Wirathu told ISCI in 2013:

> *At the time I arranged those demonstrations [against the OIC opening an office in Myanmar] very carefully, very peacefully, so as not to become violent. Since that time, the government understood my objective. Some politicians are creating demonstrations that get violent – but I am not like that. I also object to those who are violent because I am also afraid of the army seizing power again. So the government realised my attitude and accepted me.*

Following the boat crisis in May 2015 Wirathu warned the government not to allow those recently rescued from the sea to remain in Myanmar. He said:

> *They might let them just go into the villages... If they do that, then they will launch a jihad against the local Rakhine Buddhists.*[188]

The other powerful nationalist grouping of monks, Ma Ba Tha, was launched during a meeting of thousands of Buddhist monks, including members of 969, in Mandalay on 27 June 2014.[189] Ma Ba Tha is more explicitly political and centralised than 969 and is well known for anti-Muslim activities and ideology. Charged with 'protecting and promoting' Buddhism, it also demonises Islam as the greatest threat to Buddhist Myanmar. The leaders portray Islam as 'culturally inimical to Burmese values (focusing particularly on the treatment of women) inherently violent and driven by an agenda to take over the country, region, and globe'. [190]

A senior Ma Ba Tha monk interviewed by ISCI expressed concerns of Muslim expansionism:

> *I heard that some Muslim extremists are demanding autonomous Muslim villages, i.e. in Maungdaw and Buthidaung where there is a Muslim majority. This is dangerous for authorities and Buddhists. Because Buddhists then feel afraid and like they have to leave because of strong cultural*

186 'Burmese leader defends "anti Muslim" monk Ashin Wirathu', *BBC*, 24 June 2013: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-23027492. Accessed 11 October 2015.
187 Interview with Wirathu in Mandalay, 20 January 2013.
188 Zaw, J and Lewis, S, 'Hardline Monks turn up Political Heat Ahead of Myanmar Elections'.
189 'Myanmar Buddist Monks Launch Group for "Defending Religion"', *Radio Free Asia*, 15 January 2014: http://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/buddhist-congress-01152014180734.html/. Accessed 11 October 2015.
190 Walton M J and Hayward S, 'Contesting Buddhist Narratives', p. 2.

> *differences. You cannot tame Muslim youth because they don't respect monks like Buddhists do.*[191]

Sensationalised sermons recount stories of Muslim men forcing their Buddhist wives to convert to Islam, and reinforce the notion that a Muslim conspiracy, backed by foreign Islamic countries, exists to take over Myanmar through economic accumulation and interfaith marriage. Sermons claim that Myanmar is at risk of being overrun by Islam.[192]

On 20 and 21 June 2015, Ma Ba Tha held a conference in Yangon to work on policies to protect Buddhism. They urged the regime to place further restrictions on Muslims, including a ban on girls wearing head-scarves in schools.[193]

The Rohingya, many of whom practice a more visible form of Islam than Kaman or other non-Rohingya Muslims throughout Myanmar, and who reside largely in Buthidaung and Maungdaw, are deemed by these monks to pose the ultimate threat to Myanmar Buddhism.

The use of music and other cultural forms to stir up hatred, also a common feature of genocide, is prevalent in Myanmar. A popular song entitled '*Song to Whip Up Religious Blood*' is often played at 969 rallies. The lyrics refer to people who 'live in our land, drink our water, and are ungrateful to us'. The chorus is repeated over and over, 'We will build a fence with our bones if necessary'.[194]

Extremist voices are amplified through traditional platforms such as leaflets and journals, but also through DVD and online platforms, including popular social media such as Facebook that provide easy and wide dissemination. The accuracy of the claims made through these media is rarely questioned given the moral authority of the monks.

Evidence of the influence of 969 and Ma Ba Tha is apparent in statements by members of the public. An interviewee from a Rakhine village next to a Rohingya village on the outskirts of Sittwe told ISCI:

> *I think Islam is bad... I watched a DVD from 969... In the DVD Wirathu talks about how Muslims are bad. He interprets that Muslims are killing cows and if Muslims kill cows they will also kill Buddhists. The voice of the singing of the Muslims in the DVD is very similar to the voices I hear coming from the Mosque in that village [neighbouring village],which makes me afraid. There are many pictures on the CD of Muslims killing Buddhists. I trust Wirathu as he is a senior monk and I think he is a defender of Buddhism.*[195]

At a protest in Yangon on 28 May 2015 people gathered to denounce the international community's challenge to Myanmar for persecuting its Rohingya minority. Ma Ba Tha-affiliated monk U Pamaukkha ad

191 Interview with prominent Ma Ba Tha monk, 19 November 2014, Yangon.

192 Galache, C. S., 'Who are the monks behind Burma's "969" campaign?' *DVB News*, 10 May 2013: http://www.dvb.no/uncategorized/the-monks-behind-burma%E2%80%99s-%E2%80%9C969%E2%80%9Dmovement-2/28079. Accessed 11 October 2015.

193 Lewis, S, 'Buddhist monks seek to ban schoolgirls from wearing headscarves in Burma', *The Guardian*, 22 June 2015: http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/jun/22/buddhist-monks-seek-to-ban-schoolgirls-from-wearing-headscarves. Accessed 10 October 2015.

194 Kaplan, S, 'The serene-looking Buddhist monk accused of inciting Burma's sectarian violence', *The Washington Post*, 27 May 2015: http://www.washingtonpost.com/news/morning-mix/wp/2015/05/27/the-burmese-bin-laden-fueling-the-rohingya-migrant-crisis-in-southeast-asia/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

195 Young woman, interviewed in Rakhine village, Sittwe, 27 November 2014.

dressed the crowd while members of local 969 branches wore T-shirts declaring 'Boat people are not Myanmar'. Wirathu was not present, but DVDs featuring his sermons were freely distributed.[196] Ko Thar Wa, one of the five spokespeople officially permitted to speak to media at the rally, expressed sympathy for the migrants, would-be asylum seekers and trafficking victims who had died at sea and in camps. However, he argued this should not mean that Myanmar resettles people from Bangladesh.

In an interview with ISCI, a prominent Ma Ba Tha monk attacked the international concern expressed over the Rohingya from Myanmar, adding:

> *The Muslim population is increasing and other religions are becoming diminished. Jihad is taking over. They behead people.*[197]

As the November 2015 elections draw closer, nationalist monks are becoming increasingly political. In Rakhine state, where historic wounds are very real and economic and cultural grievances against the Myanmar State remain, extremist anti-Islamic rhetoric is used to justify the Rakhine Buddhist mission as protectors of Myanmar's 'western gate'. In early June, Ma Ba Tha warned that if a political party did not support 'Buddhism' it would urge voters to boycott that party in the election.[198]

In July 2015, pamphlets containing the Ma Ba Tha symbol were circulated at a charity event. They warned people not to vote for the NLD as to do so would endanger the country and the Buddhist faith because the NLD is an anti-nationalist organisation that opposed the four race and religion bills (see below).[199]

Yangon-based Ma Ba Tha leader U Pamaukkha told local media in June that Ma Ba Tha, with members in over half of Myanmar's cities, could 'quickly mobilise' a campaign against any party that was insufficiently supportive of Buddhism.[200]

Buddhist extremism, with its public expressions of race and religious hatred, is openly tolerated and encouraged, while those seen to criticise Buddhism have been subject to harsh criminal penalties, including imprisonment. For example, a court in Bago, a region near Yangon, jailed a Muslim man for two years in April 2013 after he removed a 969 sticker from a betel-nut shop. He was sentenced under a section of Myanmar's colonial-era Penal Code, which outlaws 'deliberate and malicious acts intended to outrage religious feelings'.[201] Similarly, in March 2015 New Zealander Phil Blackwood and his two Myanmar colleagues Tun Thurein and Htut Ko Ko Lwin were sentenced to two and a half years in prison with hard labour. Their crime was to have promoted their Yangon bar with a psychedelic image of Buddha wearing headphones [202].

196 Wa Lone, 'Nationalists say no to foreign pressure', *Myanmar Times*, 28 May 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/yangon/14718-nationalists-say-no-to-foreign-pressure.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

197 Interview with prominent Ma Ba Tha monk, 19 November 2014, Yangon.

198 Moe Myint, 'Ma Ba Tha Embraces Political Fray, Risking Election Year Sanction', *The Irrawaddy*, 9 June 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/ma-ba-tha-embraces-political-fray-risking-election-year-sanction.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

199 Salai Thant Zin, 'NLD Accuses Ma Ba Tha of Defamation at Charity Shindig', *The Irrawaddy*, 24 July 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/nld-accuses-ma-ba-tha-of-defamation-at-charity-shindig.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

200 Popham, P, 'Burma's "great terror" moves a step closer as Taliban urges Rohingya to "take up the sword"', The Independent, 14 June 2015: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/burmas-great-terror-moves-a-step-closer-as-taliban-urges-rohingya-to-take-up-the-sword-10319254.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

201 Marshall, A, 'Special Report: Myanmar gives official blessing to anti-Muslim monks', *Reuters*, 27 June 2013: http://uk.reuters.com/article/2013/06/27/us-myanmar-969-specialreport-idUSBRE95Q04720130627. Accessed 10 October 2015.

202 'Burma jails New Zealand bar manager over 'insulting' Buddha images' 17 March 2015 , *The Guardian* http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/17/burma-jails-new-zealand-bar-manager-over-insulting-buddha-images. Accessed 12 October 2015.

This level of religious discrimination indicates complicity, if not intentional approval, on the part of the state authorities to foster religious and ethnic divisions, which in Rakhine state are contributing to genocidal processes. An even more powerful illustration of the role of the state is the treatment of moderate monks who denounce anti-Muslim extremism.

In February 2015, the State Sangha Maha Nayaka Committee, a government-appointed body of high-ranking Buddhist monks that regulates the Buddhist clergy, imposed a nationwide ban on the charismatic Buddhist monk U Pinnyasiha for 'speaking out of line with Buddhist doctrine and not following the instructions of his seniors.' U Pinnyasiha, also known as Shwe Nya Wa Sayadaw, had previously criticised the 969 movement as anti-Muslim and in 2013 he calmed communal violence between Buddhists and Muslims in Meiktila. In relation to tensions between Buddhists and Muslims U Pinnyasiha argued:

> *The way of Buddhism is saving people, helping the people, giving loving kindness to all the people. [We should not] take account of the skin colour or the particular religion of people, just give them loving kindness. People who refuse to give loving kindness to certain sorts of people are going against the way of Buddhism.*[203]

On 2 June 2015 Htin Lin Oo, writer and former NLD information officer, was sentenced to two years' imprisonment with hard labour by a court in Sagaing region for 'insulting religion'.[204] His lawyer claims the court was afraid of the monks, given that they, along with nationalist activists, had been demonstrating outside the court demanding a harsh sentence.[205] Htin Lin Oo's 'crime' was to suggest that extreme nationalist ideology was not compatible with Buddhism. A video of Htin Lin Oo's speech was posted online, encouraging complaints from monks linked to Ma Ba Tha. This prompted the local government's religious affairs officer to file a legal complaint against Htin Lin Oo, which ultimately led to his sentencing.

Such action contrasts starkly with the government permitting the leaders of 969 to deliver provocative sermons in the northern Rakhine state towns of Buthidaung and Maungdaw in December 2013.[206]

203 Popham, P, 'Burma's opposition demands government gives citizenship to Rohingya refugees adrift on the Andaman Sea', The Independent, 19 May 2015: http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/burmas-opposition-demands-government-gives-citizenship-to-rohingya-refugees-adrift-on-the-andaman-sea-10262125.html. Accessed 10 October 2015. NB the NLD came out a few days later and said this was not their official line.

204 Amnesty International, 'Myanmar: Guilty verdict for "insulting religion" must be overturned immediately', *Press Release*, 2 June 2015: https://www.amnesty.org/press-releases/2015/06/myanmar-guilty-verdict-for-insulting-religion-must-be-overturned-immediately/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

205 ,Lewis, S,'Nationalism and Religious Conservatism, a Toxic Mix in Myanmar', *Nikkei Asian Review*, 18 June 2015: http://asia.nikkei.com/Politics-Economy/Policy-Politics/Nationalism-and-religious-conservatism-a-toxic-mix-in-Myanmar?page=2. Accessed 10 October 2010.

206 Weng, L, 'Extremist Monks Hold Talks Throughout Strife-Torn Arakan State', The Irrawaddy, 26 December, 2013: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/extremist-monks-hold-talks-throughout-strife-torn-arakan-state.html, Accessed 7 October 2015.

Rakhine monk on the outskirts of Sittwe, December 2014

4. HARASSMENT, VIOLENCE AND TERROR

Boat departure beach near Ohn Daw Gyi fishing village

> *At this stage, policies are aimed at forcing the out-group to leave, rather than killing it outright. Those who cannot flee into exile are subject to social exclusion. This exclusion marks a much more important step towards extermination than exile, because isolating the victimized population people within the "normalized" society does not solve the dispute between the same and different, but simply creates a need in the minds of the authorities to find a "final solution".* (Feierstein) [207]

207 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice*, p. 114.

As of June 2015 the UNHCR estimates that over 150,000 people have fled from the Myanmar/Bangladesh border area since January 2012.[208]

In the first six months of 2015 an estimated 31,000 people fled Myanmar and Bangladesh.[209] The main departure point in Sittwe is the beach near Ohn Daw Gyi West, a fishing village adjacent to what is known as Coconut Village. There, within full view of a police outpost, observed by ISCI researchers, ISCI was told the Rohingya board small boats that take them to larger boats waiting out at sea. Camp residents reported that traffickers pay the police to look the other way.

The Myanmar State consistently denies that conditions in Rakhine state are forcing Rohingya to flee.[210] For example, Rakhine state's then Chief Minister Maung Maung Ohn said in June 2015:

> *Even though we try to stop the smuggling and trafficking, they are still leaving of their free will through their own connections... It does not make sense that the boat people are fleeing from the camps because Myanmar is torturing them. We might have our weak points but that doesn't cause them to flee.*[211]

The truth is that the Rohingya have such wretched lives, stripped of all human dignity, that tens of thousands of them have felt they have no choice but to flee. One woman, speaking while weeping, described to ISCI the misery her family and community endure, how they have no medical care, not enough food, and that their children have no education opportunities.[212]

Institutionalised discrimination

The harassment, violence and terror experienced by the Rohingya have their roots in successive and well-documented discriminatory State policies.

ISCI interviews and observations reveal that in parts of Rakhine state the process of institutionalised discrimination began over 25 years ago when Muslim businesses were slowly but systematically driven from town centres, and Rohingya were removed from civil service positions. An elder from Aung Mingalar ghetto described his own experience:

> *I am a native [of] Kyauk Taw township, in 1983 in the market there – there were 43 Rohingya shops – without any reason the government confiscated the shops and expelled the Rohingya. In 1992 I came to Sittwe and opened a pharmacy shop in Sittwe market. During the violence my*

208 UNHCR, *South-East Asia Irregular Maritime Movements*, January – November 2014, indicates that between January 2012 and November 2014 over 120,000 had fled, URL no longer available, accessed March 2015; UNHCR, South East Asia Irregular Maritime Movements, April - June 2015, http://www.unhcr.org/53f1c5fc9.html, which claims around 31,000 fled in the first half of 2015.

209 UNHCR, 'UNHCR urges States to help avert Bay of Bengal boat crisis in coming weeks', *Briefing Notes*, 28 August, 2015: http://www.unhcr.org/55e063359.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

210 'Beaten and starving, some Rohingya flee boats, return to camps', *The Straits Times*, 21 May, 2015: http://www.straitstimes.com/news/asia/south-east-asia/story/beaten-and-starving-some-rohingya-flee-boats-return-camps-20150521. Accessed 10 October 2015.

211 'Hundreds of Migrants Waiting Repatriation', *Mizzima*, 18 June, 2015: http://www.mizzima.com/news-domestic/hundreds-migrants-waiting-repatriation. Accessed 7 October 2015.

212 Interview conducted in Sittwe's IDP camps on 10 December 2014.

shop was taken by the state government... My property is not important. I'm very sad and more concerned about the loss of historical mosques.[213]

Mosque fallen into disrepair, outskirts of Sittwe, November 2014

In Mrauk U, the de-Islamification of town centres in the 1990s was accompanied by the destruction of mosques by the Myanmar military.

Across Myanmar, Muslim populations are under state surveillance. ISCI obtained leaked evidence from the state government of a predominantly Christian region describing the current level of overall surveillance of Muslims nationwide. In a series of communications from the state's Religious Affairs office to the township's State Police Officer,[214] concern is raised over the movement of Muslim families into a village in the township and a teashop that opened in the same village by a Muslim police sergeant which is visited by Muslim families, and a religious teacher. The letter requests an investigation into whether the teashop is in fact a mosque.[215]

213 Elder, Aung Mingalar ghetto, 29 January 2015.

214 Leaked document 4: Letter from the [REDACTED] State Religious Affairs Office to [REDACTED] State Police Office, 14 March 2013.

215 Leaked document 5: Letters from District General Administration Department, [REDACTED] District, [REDACTED] to Township Administrator, [REDACTED. Letter No. 100/1-1/U1 (4643), 'Matter relating to people of Islamic faith', 12 September 2013.

Compelling evidence also suggests that since the 1990s, local authorities have used the justification of 'population explosion' to impose severe restrictions relating to marriage, birth control, child rights and travel on the Muslim residents of Rakhine state.[216] The use of forced contraceptives was reported as early as 1995, when a UNHCR official informed Human Rights Watch that Ministry of Health officials were using contraceptive injections on returning Rohingya refugees.[217]

In 1994 the authorities ceased issuing birth certificates to Rohingya babies. Many Rohingya parents have been prevented from complying with other registration procedures for their children because of restrictions on movement and lack of awareness and resources.[218] Punishment for the violation of child-birth restrictions can result in imprisonment of up to 10 years. Children whose birth is considered to have violated these restrictions are 'blacklisted' and thus denied many basic services.

Race and religion laws

The State has long driven Rohingya-targeted policies of cultural and political exclusion. For example, on 1 May 2005 the Maungdaw Township Peace and Development Council released Regional Order 1/2005, outlining a number of restrictions on marriage and mandating that 'those who have permission to marry must limit the number of children, in order to control the birth rate….' An addenda to this order instructed law enforcement officials to make 'people use pills, injections, and condoms for birth control'.[219]

The most recent demonstration of institutionalised discrimination came with the passing of what are known as the 'four laws to protect race and religion' – the Population Control and Health Care Law (19 May 2015),[220] Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law (7 July 2015), Monogamy Law (22 July 2015),[221] and Religious Conversion Law (20 August 2015).[222]

The swift passing of these laws is seen as providing electoral advantage to the ruling USDP in the run-up to the November elections.

The Population Control and Health Care Bill was passed into law 10 days before the 2014 census results were released. The law, promoted by nationalist Buddhist groups, allows local authorities to request the President to introduce birth-spacing measures[223] if surveys in their area demonstrate that 'resources are un

216 Township Peace and Development Council, Maungdaw, Regional Order No. (1/2005) (1 May 2005), reproduced in *Fortify Rights, Policies of Persecution*, p. 33.

217 Human Rights Watch, *Burma: The Rohingya Muslims: Ending a Cycle of Exodus?* (New York: Human Rights Watch, September 1996). http://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/b/burma/burma969.pdf. Accessed 20 October 2015.

218 See, for example: The Arakan Project, 'Issues to be Raised Concerning the Situation of Stateless Rohingya Women in Myanmar (Burma)', *Submission to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*, October 2008, p. 3. http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs6/CEDAW_Myanmar_AP_Submission-Final-Web.pdf.

219 As cited by Fortify Rights, *Policies of Persecution*, p. 33.

220 Dinmore, G and Shwe Yee Saw Myint, 'President signs off on population control law', *Myanmar Times*, 25 May 2015: http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/14648-president-signs-off-on-population-control-law.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

221 Soe, P, 'Monogamy Bill sails through Lower House', *DVB*, 23 July 2015: http://www.dvb.no/news/monogamy-bill-sails-through-lower-house/55068; Solomon, F. 'Burma Parliament Approves Contentious Race and Religion Bills', *The Irrawaddy*, 20 August 2015: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/burma-parliament-approves-contentious-race-and-religion-bills.html. Both accessed 10 October 2015.

222 'Myanmar president signs two controversial religion bills', *dpa-international*, 29 August 2015: http://www.dpa-international.com/news/asia/myanmar-president-signs-two-controversial-religion-bills-a-46437122.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

223 Whereby women must leave 36 months between the birth of children.

balanced because of a high number of migrants in the area, a high population growth rate and a high birth rate'.[224] Wirathu claimed that the law had the dual purpose of protecting women's health and 'stopping the Bengalis that call themselves Rohingya, who are trying to seize Rakhine state'.[225]

The Special Marriage Law[226] concerns all Myanmar Buddhist women aged 18 and over and their non-Buddhist husbands. The law permits township registrars to publicly display a couple's application for marriage for 14 days, and permits any objections to the marriage to be taken to a local court. The law further requires that existing interfaith couples register their marriages; women under the age of 20 obtain consent from their parents or legal guardian to marry a non-Buddhist; and non-Buddhist husbands respect the free practice of his spouse's Buddhist religion and refrain from insulting the feelings of Buddhists.[227]

The Monogamy Law prohibits married persons entering into a second marriage or 'unofficially' living with another person whilst still married. Its targets are religious minorities where polygamy and extra-marital relationships are perceived to occur more frequently,[228] even though the Penal Code already criminalises polygamy. Rohingya men are frequently accused of having multiple wives who give birth to large numbers of children as part of the alleged strategy to 'Islamicise' Myanmar.

The Religious Conversion Law establishes a state-governed procedure whereby those who seek to change their religion have to apply to township Religious Conversion Scrutinisation and Registration Boards made up of two local elders and five local officials appointed by township administrators. In addition, the law bans conversion with the intent to 'insult, disrespect, destroy, or abuse a religion' and prohibits people from bullying or enticing someone to convert or to deter them from doing so.[229]

The 'Protection of Race and Religion Laws' represent a very clear and disturbing expression of the institutionalisation of discrimination against Muslim communities. The justificatory rhetoric surrounding the introduction of the laws speaks to the increasing segregation and sense of otherness imposed upon Myanmar Muslims and particularly the Rohingya. The laws represent a formal commitment on the part of government to stigmatise, monitor and control Muslim cultural and reproductive practices.

In June 2014[230] and January 2015 civil society groups released statements opposing Ma Ba Tha's inter-marriage law,[231] claiming it discriminated against women and ethnic minorities. In response, Ma Ba Tha labelled the groups 'traitors on national affairs' and attempted to undermine their credibility by suggesting

224 Dinmore, G and Shwe Yee Saw Myint, 'President signs off on population control law', *Myanmar Times*, 25 May 2015.
225 Ibid.
226 'The Myanmar Buddhist Women's Special Marriage Law (draft)': http://www.burmalibrary.org/docs21/2015-Myanmar_Buddhist_Women_Special_Marriage_Bill.pdf. Accessed 12 October 2015.
227 Human Rights Watch, 'Burma: Reject Discriminatory Marriage Bill: Imperils Right to Marry Freely, Fuels Anti-Muslim Groups', 9 July 2015: https://www.hrw.org/news/2015/07/09/burma-reject-discriminatory-marriage-bill. Accessed 10 October 2015.
228 Human Rights Watch, 'Burma: Discriminatory Laws Could Stoke Communal Tensions'.
229 Human Rights Watch, 'Discriminatory Laws Could Stoke Communal Tensions'.
230 'Religious Conversion Law Threatens Religious Freedom in Burma/Myanmar', *Burma Parternship*, 12 June 2014: http://www.burmapartnership.org/2014/06/religious-conversion-law-threatens-religious-freedom-in-burmamyanmar/. Accessed 12 O ctober 2015.
231 Roebuck, M, 'Mass call from Myanmar's civil society to drop "Nation, Race and Religion" bills', *Reliefweb*, 28 January 2015: http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/mass-call-myanmar-s-civil-society-drop-nation-race-and-religion-bills. Accessed 10 October 2015.

they were influenced by foreign actors.[232] Prominent leaders of these CSOs reportedly received death threats following their public objections to the laws.[233]

Organised massacres: June 2012

The institutionalised discrimination described above has formed the justificatory backdrop for organised violence against the Rohingya.

The government portrayed the violence of 8-12 June 2012 in Rakhine state as spontaneous inter-communal fighting sparked by the rape and murder of a Buddhist woman, Ma Thida Htwe. However, evidence derived from ISCI interviews with Rakhine Buddhist perpetrators suggests that in fact the conflict involved planned, highly organised state-sanctioned attacks. A picture of local Rakhine politicians and civil society leaders arranging transport, coordinating the violence and providing refreshments for those preparing to attack Rohingya villages emerged from the interviews, though most interviewees were careful to conceal the identity of the organisers or claimed they had no knowledge of who they were.

The violence was carried out with apparent impunity. It appears that not a single perpetrator from the Rakhine community has been prosecuted for their involvement in the massacres and arson attacks in Sittwe. When asked directly how many perpetrators had been successfully prosecuted for the June 2012 violence in Sittwe, the Attorney General for Rakhine state said: 'None … it happened at night time so there is no evidence'.[234] He reported that the police had closed all their investigations. Witness testimony suggests that state security forces were involved in extrajudicial killings, rape, sexual assault and torture.[235]

The June massacre of the Rohingya in 2012 was for all intents and purposes Rakhine state's Kristalnacht – designed to terrorise and displace the local population as well as to test the response of higher government authorities. In Sittwe, the areas of Nasi and the Rohingya fishermen's village were razed to the ground as the Muslim population was driven to the detention camp complex beyond Sittwe's Bumay junction. The testimony collected from both Rakhine and Rohingya in and around Sittwe makes it possible to trace how the violence played out.

Some days before the violence erupted, Rakhine activists sent letters to the administrators of the Rakhine village tracts in the Sittwe hinterland. The letters urged each household to send at least one man between the ages of 20 and 40 to participate in the planned attacks on Rohingya neighbourhoods, while others were to remain behind in order to defend their village in case of retaliatory attack. The men were to be ready on the morning of 8 June to be collected and bussed in to Sittwe. They were informed that it was their duty as Rakhine to participate in an attack on the Muslim population and so they armed themselves with knives and bamboo spears in anticipation of the arrival of 'express buses'. Hundreds if not thousands of Rakhine

232 Nyein Nyein, 'Nationalist Monks Call NGO's "Traitors" for Opposing Interfaith Marriage Bill', *The Irrawaddy*, 12 May 2014: http://www.irrawaddy.org/burma/nationalist-monks-call-ngos-traitors-opposing-interfaith-marriage.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

233 Thein, C, 'Myanmar women object to proposed restrictions on interfaith marriage', *The Washington Post*, 18 December 2014: http://www.washingtonpost.com/national/religion/myanmar-women-object-to-proposed-restrictions-on-interfaith-marriage/2014/12/18/36fc82e6-86f6-11e4-abcf-5a3d7b3b20b8_story.html. Accessed 10 October 2015.

234 Interview with U La Thein, Rakhine state Attorney General, Sittwe, 17 February 2015.

235 Human Rights Watch, '"All You Can Do is Pray."'

men and women were transported to Sittwe by these buses. Some were dropped off near Nasi village and joined in the arson attacks on the houses there. Most Rohingya fled for their lives; some tried vainly to defend their homes and families. The Rakhine perpetrators were dropped off at the bus station and at various designated points around the town. They were instructed to block fleeing Rohingya from all routes except those that led to the diesel electricity generators and on toward the camp complex area.

While in Sittwe, Rakhine perpetrators were given free meals and returned to their villages at around 4pm each day. The transport and catering required high levels of organisation and funding. Rohingya survivors and Rakhine participants identified local Rakhine businessmen, Rakhine civil society leaders and ANP politicians as the chief organisers.

One man from a Rakhine village described his involvement on the attacks in downtown Sittwe, Nasi and Aung Mingalar as highly organised with a certain degree of compulsion:

> *During June 2012, the express bus came to get every man to attack Sittwe. Every house had to go. If there were two people, one had to stay and one had to go. The administrator made this rule. Express buses took villagers from here and dropped at Sittwe bus station. Then, we were split up. The buses were free of charge… The organisers dropped us near Nasi. The main responsibility we had was to block the Muslims so that they could only exit from the generators… The administrators told us, as Rakhine, we had to go. Everybody was taking a stick so I took one too. We went on the second day of the conflict. We left at 9am and got back at 3 or 4pm. It was one day. I saw houses on fire. I didn't see any injuries.*
>
> *All men in village went to participate in violence for three days. We rented busses and went with bamboo and knives to fight. We were afraid some people living downtown might be killed by Muslim people so we all rallied together to protect people from Kyauktaw and Rathidaung. We used boats and car, transport was free. Daily food – lunch and dinner was provided from a group of people downtown. People came to the village to invite us to go to Sittwe and fight. There was also fighting in Rathidaung and Rakhine people were killed. A group of Rakhine activists came to recruit us, I don't want to give the name of the group. We needed to kill Muslim people because two-three Arakanese people were killed.*[236]

There is compelling and corroborated evidence that the State did not intervene in any way until the fourth day of violence. A Rakhine man said:

> *After three days the government prevented the situation from escalating so I did not need to keep going. The response was just and fair to both sides. The government could not maintain the situation well enough with just the police so they brought the military in. The military confiscated land, half the villagers have had land confiscated by the government. The land was used to set up military barracks. I disagree with this practice but during the conflict want to thank the military for their involvement. I don't want to live together with Muslims because of the rape and killings.*[237]

236 Par Ta Lay village, Rakhine state, 34-year-old Rakhine man, 5 December 2014.
237 Rakhine man, interviewed in Par Teh Leh Rak village, Sittwe on 4 December 2015.

In Thandoli's June 2012 'battle of the creek', police were reported as explicitly authorising Rakhine attacks on Rohingya. A Rakhine village administrator told researchers:

> *People were invited to fight. I also joined the fight at Thandoli [Rohingya village]. They had a loud speaker, members of a group, but I don't want to give the name of the individuals/group who came. I didn't want to kill anyone because they were my workers [Muslims]. Nobody was injured from my village. 30-40 villagers from here went to fight. Three Rakhine were killed. I saw one body of a Muslim man who was killed. Fighting went on for 30 minutes. Villagers from here went to burn down the Muslim village with fire torches, with hay. We tried to burn the village in the first day but we couldn't. Muslim villagers were shooting into the air so we were frightened and ran away. Thirty minutes later, we tried again and that time we ended up fighting each other. We had sticks and knives to fight.*
>
> *The police came, as well as a three star general, because I informed them that Rakhine had been killed. I told the police that we wanted to go back and fight. They [police] authorised us to attack the Muslim village after checking with us if we thought we had enough men to win, once we confirmed we did, they withdrew. The police allowed us to attack the Muslims. The police, they were from Sittwe. Many Muslim people fled when the attack happened.*[238]

The evidence strongly suggests not only that a calculated decision was made by the State authorities to allow the massacres to take place, but also that security forces participated in some instances. This lends credence to the claim that the killings of Rohingya and the destruction of their neighbourhoods was both planned and managed by State authorities. One Rakhine villager told ISCI:

> *The villagers from this village were involved in the fighting. I think that about 200 people went from my village out of a population of 1,500 … the express bus came to the entrance of the village and we all went to Ming Chin … apparently the military police arrived and the villagers split up into small groups because the police shot into the air. We left the village at 9am and we were back on the express bus around 3-4pm.*[239]

Rohingya eyewitnesses reported the involvement of large numbers of Rakhine women wielding knives and spears. According to one Aung Mingalar elder:

> *Many Rakhine women were also involved, they were wearing short pants, they never wear these, not longi. I saw this with my own eyes. They had long knives and hand spears. There were maybe 20 – 30% women in Sittwe township.*

Many eyewitnesses described how the security forces failed to protect Rohingya and Kaman Muslims who called for assistance. Rather than defend those under attack, police were reported, in many instances, to have aided the attackers. One woman recounted her experience of police complicity in violence in October 2012:

238 Rakhine man, aged 45, informal village administrator, interviewed in village on outskirts of Sittwe, 6 December 2014,
239 Rakhine man, aged 52, interviewed on 5 December 2014.

> *I saw Rakhine going and passing in front of my house with long knives and gasoline water... We called the police but they didn't come quickly... later the police arrived at my house. Instead of accusing the Rakhine they accused us. I was badly injured and they killed my mother but the police ordered us from our house... they were not protecting us, the injured people instead*
>
> *they were protecting the Rakhine attackers. So the police were involved at the time, they were pointing their guns at us – at the injured.*[240]

A Rohingya village headmaster told researchers not only of violence against the Rohingya but against moderate Rakhine and Chin who were seen to be assisting their Muslim neighbours:

> *This was just like a genocide; they came to our houses just to finish everybody and everything. In Myebon, we were on the hilltop, and around the hill there were maybe 50,000 Rakhine surrounding us... Later they brought a gasoline petrol pump and they threw the petrol at houses... and then they burned, they set fire there, but because of our fortune and good luck the fire didn't burn the IDP people area, the fire went over the other side... An ex-army man who was bringing the goods for the Rohingya people was attacked in front of the police station and he was beaten while helping the Bengali people... he's of Chin ethnicity and a Christian, his wife is Buddhist.*[241]

Violence has continued sporadically throughout Rakhine state, making the threat of it part of the daily experience of the Rohingya. There is corroborated evidence that some of this violence is coordinated, between state security forces and the Rakhine. A confidential UN incident report dated 20 January 2014[242] refers to multiple attacks in Dar Chee Yar Tan, including the alleged killing and abduction of 8 Rohingya on or around 9 January 2014 when an armed Rakhine mob attacked a group of 44 Rohingya. An eyewitness was unable to determine if the attackers were police or armed civilians, however, the incident report referred to collusion between state security police and armed Rakhine men in an attack on 12 January 2014.

240 Interview conducted in Sittwe, 17 November 2015.
241 Interview village headmaster, 7 November 2014.
242 UNHCR, *Confidential Incident Report*, 20 January 2014: http://genocidewatch.net/2015/07/06/myanmar-update-unchr-report-on-duchiridan/. Accessed 18 August 2015.

5. ISOLATION AND SEGREGATION

Rohingya man, IDP camp, Sittwe, November 2014

> *At this stage, the focus shifts to social and territorial planning … the goal … to demarcate a separate social, geographical. Economic, political and even ideological space for those who are 'different' and at the same time to sever their social ties with the rest of society.* (Feierstein)[243]

243 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice*, p. 115.

The forced movement in 2012 of some 138,000 Rohingya into a secure and isolated zone required high-level planning and coordination. The organised funnelling of those fleeing the violence and their burning villages created an exodus of Rohingya. They were marched through the main streets of Sittwe, many struggling to support those who were less able (including heavily pregnant women, the elderly and infirm) and carrying the few belongings they had managed to retrieve. Most of their possessions had been lost to the fires and subsequent looting.

In shock, the Rohingya walked to their uncertain fate. Rakhine lined the roads, shouting abuse at the desperate men, women and children as they made their way to the perceived security of the camps. One of those fleeing told ISCI that some Rakhine threw rotten fruit at them as they passed; others smashed glass onto the road so that the Rohingya without shoes would suffer further.[244] All of this would have been in full view of the local police, military and political elite.

Most of the Rohingya were herded into what is now the detention camp complex beyond Bumay Junction where they found shelter in schools and other administrative buildings, Rohingya villages and 'host' communities.[245] The violence played out over three days before the authorities intervened, by which time the main objectives of the organisers had been accomplished. The social bonds between the communities had been severed and the Rohingya population had been terrorised, physically isolated and segregated.

The impunity that followed effectively reassured the Rakhine activists who organised and participated in the violence that their actions were 'justified' and supported at the highest levels of government. This emboldened many to pursue their goal of the complete removal of the Rohingya from Rakhine state.

Police buildings under construction adjacent to Rohingya detention camp complex, Sittwe, December 2014

244 Interview with 51-year-old Rohingya man from Nasi, 6 November 2014, Sittwe.
245 Host communities refer to established Rohingya villages hosting displaced Rohingya.

The Rakhine State Action Plan

The Rakhine State Action Plan,[246] described by Human Rights Watch as 'nothing less than a blueprint for permanent segregation and statelessness,'[247] provides further evidence of the Myanmar State's planned and institutionalized programme of discrimination against, and stigmatization and permanent segregation of, the Rohingya.

The six-point plan primarily aims to control and contain the Rohingya population.[248] It outlines the activities required to operationalise the State's key objectives of 'preventing illegal aliens from entering Myanmar'; increasing border securitization; ensuring city, township and village security; preventing further violence in the state; and 'restoring stability and calm'. The activities reveal an increasing and intrusive pattern of intelligence-gathering and state surveillance through, for example, 'nurturing and supporting suitable persons' within communities and ensuring 'the capacity to gather intelligence on activities of terrorist groups especially in the Maungdaw township'.

In keeping with the plan, ISCI observed new fences had been constructed between December 2014 and January 2015 in close proximity to Aung Mingalar Rakhine village, the Rohingya villages of Don Pyin and Mo La Wei, and inside Sittwe's detention camp complex.

The plan has no commitment to reuniting the two communities, nor any plan to re-introduce mixed schools or market places or for the return of Rohingya to higher education. There is no mention of curbing anti-Muslim demonstrations or of prohibiting the anti-Muslim and, specifically, anti-Rohingya hate speech endemic in the state.

The plan is underlined by a singular commitment to remove 'illegal Bengali immigrants' from the purview of Myanmar responsibility.

246 Myanmar Government, *Rakhine State Action Plan*: http://www.scribd.com/doc/244605800/Rakhine-Action-Plan-by-Myanmar-Government. Accessed 10 October 2015.

247 Human Rights Watch, 'Burma: Government Plan Would Segregate Rohingya'.

248 The Rakhine State Action Plan addresses the 2013 recommendations of the Rakhine Investigative Commission set up by the President Thein Sein in the aftermath of the 2012 massacres. An unpublished extended version of Section 1 of the plan was shown to us by Fortify Rights.

Detention camps

Unregistered Rohingya IDP camp, Sittwe

The Rohingya IDP camps are referred to as detention camps in this report. This is effectively what they are for the Rohingya and the Kaman. This is not the case for the internally displaced Rakhine or Maramagyi who are free to leave and enter their camps at will. Rohingya and Kaman are confined to their camps and villages by the very real fear of violent attack from hostile Rakhine should they be found outside the camp confines and in some cases because of the presence of police and military security. Access to the camps and the ghetto is highly restricted and ISCI researchers had to employ persuasive methods to circumnavigate security forces. In the course of this research ISCI visited all of the IDP camps surrounding Sittwe, including two which housed Rakhine displaced from their homes in 2012, and one camp housing Maramagyi IDPs.

ISCI researchers noted the recent and ongoing construction of a large police barracks in Sittwe, immediately adjacent to the camps housing the Rohingya. This and other means have been employed by the state to further securitise and isolate the Rohingya, specifically from international researchers and journalists.

Prison villages

The villages around Sittwe are of varying sizes (usually housing around 1,000 people) and are organised administratively into 'village tracts' of three to seven villages. The official Administrator of a tract is paid by the government and is usually Rakhine. Tracts can be a mix of ethnic villages and each village has an unpaid, 'informal' administrator who reports to the official Administrator. Some Rohingya villages north of downtown Sittwe have police stationed along the main road leading into them, restricting the movement of the Rohingya villagers. Rakhine villages have no such security arrangements. The host villages and Rohingya camp complex on the outskirts of Sittwe are adjacent to the University complex. Rakhine students are bussed to University on tuk-tuks and provided security as they travel past the Rohingya IDP

camp complex – passing Muslims who were former students, but no longer allowed to attend university. There are two Buddhist temples inside the Rohingya camp complex, guarded by the military. A small Rakhine community continues to live within the Rohingya host village at Thae Chaung. Several young Rakhine men and women interviewed from this community in January 2015 told ISCI researchers that they are not afraid to live inside this Muslim enclave because the Rakhine here have been friendly neighbours to the Rohingya for as long as they can remember. These Rakhine are free to come and go, unlike their Muslim neighbours. The host community population at Thae Chaung has increased dramatically since June 2012 as a result of the influx of tens of thousands of Rohingya IDPs. The local market has grown as a result and Rohingya fishermen from around Sittwe now fish from one small inlet inside the camp complex. It is the only business that the Rohingya have been allowed to keep operational, albeit a fishing fleet of greatly reduced capacity.

In a confidential telegram to Washington DC, in 2008, the US Embassy reported on a meeting with the UNHCR High Commissioner regarding the dire situation of the Rohingya:

> *UNHCR staff based in Maungdaw reported that the protection situation in NRS is terrible; severe restrictions on the 750,000 Rohingya Muslims, who represent 85 percent of the total NRS population, continue. Over 90 percent of the Rohingyas are landless and 80 percent are illiterate. Malnutrition and infant mortality are higher in NRS than in other parts of Burma. The Rohingyas face severe restrictions including the lack of legal status and denial of citizenship; no freedom of movement, even between villages; burdensome marriage permission requirements; social prohibitions; and strict enforcement of prohibitions against unauthorized construction/ repair of homes or religious buildings. Rohingyas who violate these restrictions face imprisonment and torture. Other human rights abuses include forced labor and widespread extortion, which exacerbate the poverty.*[249]

Segregation between Rohingya and Rakhine villages is enforced by rigid travel restrictions, both locally and nationally. Rohingya in the north, where the segregation of Rakhine and Rohingya is not formally enforced, are required to gain permission to travel the hour long journey from Buthidaung to Maungdaw. Those wishing to travel between these towns must visit the immigration office and present their household documents and the receipt from their confiscated White Cards as well as provide details of name, address and destination. The permit takes around a day to process and costs 1,000 kyat [USD 93c]. If granted permission they must upon arrival at their destination notify authorities there.[250] Several Muslims reported to ISCI on the long-standing discriminatory checks they had faced when travelling across Rakhine state borders. Behind these accounts are official policies of segregation as evidenced by, for example, a leaked letter from the Thandwe District General Administration Department to the Chairman of Township Traffic Lines Control committee (dated 24 October 2012) instructing that named bus routes between Thandwe, Taunggup and Yangon 'must be strictly controlled to ensure that no Muslim is on board.'[251]

249 UNHCR and Burma: NRS Presence at Risk: High Commisioner May Visit Telegram from US embassy Yangon 12 December 2008, https://wikileaks.org/plusd/cables/08RANGOON936_a.html.

250 Francis Wade, unpublished field observations, October 2015. Reproduced with permission of author.

251 Leaked Document 6: Letter from the Thandwe District General Administration Department to the Chairman of Township Traffic Lines Control committee, 24 October 2012.

ISCI found that Muslims are generally afraid to leave villages, not necessarily because they are physically restricted from leaving (police and military are only stationed outside some villages), but for fear of vio-lence outside. In one Kaman village ISCI visited, researchers were told that up to four Kaman in the village are able to access downtown Sittwe's market because they look Rakhine. They visit two to three times per month and bring back supplies to sell to the rest of the villagers. One of these Kaman, interviewed in Sittwe area, 4 December 2015 described the fear associated with travelling to market:

> *Before the conflict I could identify myself as Kaman when I went shopping, but now I cannot identify myself as such, because I would get attacked, I have to pretend to be a Rakhine Buddhist. I can go freely because they don't know I'm Kaman so I can buy anything…I have to hide my religion…I feel afraid that someone will find out my identity when I go to the market.*[252]

These fears are well founded. ISCI interviewed an elderly Kaman woman who, while visiting Sittwe market in 2013, was beaten so severely she lost consciousness. Her case reveals that the Kaman are as vulnerable to racist violence as the Rohingya. Before she lost consciousness she remembers the crowd shouting, 'Beat her, beat her, beat the Kaman – Kaman is the same as 'kalar''. She was rescued by police who admonished her for entering the town "Kaman aren't allowed to go to downtown Sittwe" they told her.[253]

The Rohingya village ISCI visited in Mrauk U is at the end of a village tract comprising four Rakhine villages and one Rohingya village, the latter separated from the neighbouring Rakhine village by a small stream. The only way ISCI could locate and access the village was by hiring bicycles and riding several kilometres across paddy fields and dirt paths with the navigational aid of an OCHA map. On the way the researchers were repeatedly told there was nothing of interest in the direction ahead and encouraged to turn back. Police were stationed at the only entrance to the Rohingya village and adjacent IDP camp. Upon arrival, the village administrator immediately notified the police by telephone that internationals had entered the village and within two hours a police vehicle arrived. A number of Rohingya in villages in the Mrauk U area were afraid to be interviewed unless explicit permission was given by the authorities.

The ghetto: Aung Mingalar

> *In Aung Mingalar, I heard the echoes of my childhood. You see, in 1944, as a Jew in Budapest, I too was a Rohingya. Much like the Jewish ghettos set up by Nazis around Eastern Europe during World War II, Aung Mingalar has become the involuntary home to thousands of families who once had access to health care, education and employment. Now, they are forced to remain segregated in a state of abject deprivation. The parallels to the Nazi genocide are alarming.* (George Soros)[254]

Some 4,500 Rohingya remain in Sittwe. All are effectively imprisoned in the squalid, overcrowded ghetto of Aung Mingalar. Aung Mingalar is the most heavily militarized of the Rohingya areas in and around Sittwe, given its location in the heart of the capital and the fact that it has suffered from numerous

252 Interview with young Kaman Sittwe area, 4 December 2015.
253 Interview with elderly Kaman woman in Sittwe area, 4 December 2015.
254 George Soros, speaking (by pre-recorded video) at The Oslo Conference to End Myanmar's Persecution of the Rohingyas, 26 May 2015.

One of seven security checkpoints, Aung Mingalar Ghetto

attempted attacks since 2012. Access to the ghetto is severely restricted; various security forces police the seven entry checkpoints into the neighbourhood. Permission to enter is rarely granted and suspicion of international visitors is high. ISCI researchers gained access and spent a day interviewing residents and observing the conditions there. ISCI's researchers were followed closely by soldiers for the duration of the visit. On four separate occasions they were stopped by military security, questioned and asked to hand over passports.

ISCI researchers observed a situation of systematic weakening based on a denial of health care, restriction of food and a complete loss of livelihoods. The residents of Aung Mingalar are not classified as IDPs and as such the authorities have denied humanitarian aid to the residents. Hunger and illness were visible throughout the ghetto and discussions with a wide range of residents revealed an increasingly desperate situation in relation to inadequate food and medical supplies.

The only primary school, built using a Japanese donation in 2005, serves as the base for a military battalion ostensibly there to protect the Rohingya from hostile Rakhine incursions. The school accommodates 1,100 children in two shifts. There are only 18 official, government-appointed teachers and another 12 volunteer teachers from the Rohingya community. There is only one high school and it takes just 100 students. There are 30 students present at any one time. All the teachers at the high school are Rohingya volunteers. The young headmaster told ISCI:

> *Because of the great problems very few 16 year old students can join the class – most have no money, no food and their parents have no jobs. Education is free. All of the volunteer teachers collect donations from the village – they are getting a very small salary, almost half what they should.*

The military is stationed in Aung Mingalar's only primary school

The lack of education for the entire Rohingya community in and around Sittwe was reported to us as one of the most pressing and depressing issues, young people effectively having had their futures removed from them over the course of a few days in 2012.

The government allows Aung Mingalar residents to leave the ghetto twice a week (Mondays and Wednesdays) to visit relatives in the detention camp complex. The elders are required to make a list in advance of those who wish to travel, which must be presented at the ghetto's security office. When they return they are required by the security forces within the ghetto to be signed in.

Discussions with Aung Mingalar elders revealed that the Rakhine government maintains close surveillance over the leadership and management of the ghetto. According to one elder,

> *When the government wants to know about our desires they come to the IDP camps and listen – it's not a discussion... Whenever the government calls and wants to know anything about our situation, we can leave and attend meetings.*[255]

In order to leave the ghetto for these meetings they must, however, be escorted by government military officers.

255 Aung Mingalar elder interviewed, 29 January 2015.

Other indicators of segregation

The State's strategy of ideological marginalisation is aided by the media, if not always directly then through a pattern of self-censorship. An internal *Myanmar Times* memo, published by Foreign Policy in 2014, reveals the power of government discourse. In it the Editor in Chief delivers a resounding message to his editorial team,

> *... no material is to be run in any of our newspapers with regard to the Rohingya, Bengalis, Muslims and Buddhists and the ongoing issues in Rakhine without direct approval from my desk... Our coverage is unlikely to matter substantively in the scheme of things and there appears little sense in placing our heads on the block right at this time...*[256]

Aung Zaw, founder and editor of the Irrawaddy magazine, said:

> *A lot of local editors, Burmese editors, even if they do not issue such a memo, would still definitely tell their reporters to be careful with their reporting, or to ignore these issues completely...*
>
> *There is a profound fear [of backlash]. There is a lot of self-censorship, especially on the issue of the Rohingya.* [257]

The Rakhine state authorities have, as much as possible, attempted to isolate the Rohingya from both wider Myanmar society and the international community. Rohingya known to have spoken to journalists and UN Special Rapporteurs have been harassed and beaten by the authorities. In light of this, ISCI visits to Rohingya camps, villages and Aung Mingalar ghetto were, of necessity, clandestine. As noted above all requests by ISCI to enter northern Rakhine state were denied and Rakhine state's Security Minister made it explicit to the Attorney General that ISCI was to be denied access to northern Rakhine state in order to prevent the team from meeting with Rohingya living there.

The majority of INGO staff members interviewed requested anonymity both as individuals and in terms of organisational affiliation in order not to jeopardise staff security and operations, both in Rakhine state and other regions of the country. Given MSF's expulsion in 2014, this reticence is understandable but demonstrates a disturbing and chilling effect on the international community's advocacy function.

The claim by the UN on 25 May 2015 of 'recent improvements in the conditions in Rakhine, including efforts to improve the situation of the IDPs'[258] is gravely misleading. ISCI's research reveals continued persecution designed to bring about the destruction of the Rohingya. The UN is in a position to know this and in making such statements, diminishes the profound suffering experienced by the Rohingya, which is highlighted by the systematic weakening of the community.

256 Traywick, C and Scobey-Thal, J, 'The Self-Censorship Shuffle: Why One Australian Media Mogul Chose to Kowtow to Myanmar's Generals', *Foreign Policy*, 29 May 2014: http://foreignpolicy.com/2014/05/29/the-self-censorship-shuffle-why-one-australian-media-mogul-chose-to-kowtow-to-myanmars-generals/. Accessed 11 October 2015.

257 Ibid.

258 Made by a delegation led by Vijay Nambiar, Special Advisor to the Secretary-General on Myanmar http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/un-secretary-general-s-special-advisor-myanmar-and-senior-un-representatives-visit

6. SYSTEMATIC WEAKENING

Unregistered Rohingya camp, Sittwe camp complex

> *Once the victims have been isolated from the rest of society, the perpetrators typically implement a series of measures aimed at weakening them systematically.* (Feierstein) [259]

259 Feierstein, D, *Genocide as Social Practice*, p. 116

ISCI's findings indicate that the Rohingya have been systematically weakened – physically, psychologically and collectively – to such an extent that their agency and purposefulness has effectively been destroyed. This weakening has been orchestrated through planned illness, hunger, loss of livelihood and the removal of basic human rights. Compounding the physical and psychological weakening that illness, hunger and humiliation bring, the Rohingya suffer sporadic and unpunished violence, torture and killings. As a result the Rohingya have effectively been deprived of the capacity to organise politically, to campaign, protest or otherwise resist the policies of the State.

Conditions of detention

Rohingya living in the ghetto, camps and villages in and around Sittwe are subjected to wretched living conditions; characterised by overcrowding, hunger, illness and despair. There are virtually no opportunities to engage in livelihood activities, and IDPs are almost wholly reliant on monthly aid deliveries from the World Food Programme (WFP). Without work and education people mill around without purpose or direction. Some are reduced to begging from other IDPs and the few internationals that gain access to the camps. Depression is apparent in all the Rohingya camps and there are reportedly high levels of domestic violence. Women, who in the past would have been occupied with visits to market, cooking, cleaning, socialising and caring for children, lie on the floors of their cramped huts in the middle of the day, a sense of hopelessness pervading the atmosphere.

Stripped of agency and human dignity, the Rohingya are living in broken communities where social cohesion no longer exists. Interviewees explained to ISCI that they are experiencing humiliation, abuse, and harassment at the hands of the authorities and the arbitrarily appointed camp leaders. As a result, lives and relationships are fractured and shrouded in despair. One interviewee in the Ohn Daw Gyi West camp explained that despite the existence of a nearby school, neither he nor his children had the energy or motivation to walk the 15 minutes from their camp shelters.[260] An activist reported accounts of sexual abuse and of men raping their own daughters: 'when you put human beings in a situation where only animals can survive, they become animals. They lose all sense of human values.'[261]

The Rohingya are living an existence so wretched that tens of thousands have been forced to flee. One woman, after describing the misery of life for her community in the camp, pleaded through tears, *if the international community can't help us, please drop a bomb on us and kill all of us.*[262]

260 Interviewed on 24 January 2015.
261 Interview with political activist in Dhaka, Bangladesh, 4 February 2015.
262 Interview conducted in a Sittwe Rohingya IDP camp on 10 December 2014.

Registered Rohingya IDP camp, Sittwe

In stark contrast to the Rohingya and Maramagyi camps visited, many Rakhine IDPs are housed in relatively high quality, permanent buildings. In Sat Yoe Kya camp, the houses are laid out along wide well maintained streets and run alongside a river which provides an alternative boat route for travel to downtown Sittwe. Each family has its own house with an indoor toilet, separate living and sleeping areas. The houses are large and raised on stilts to protect from flooding, also providing a cool and spacious outdoor cooking and living area. Interviews with residents revealed that their new homes were generally of a better quality than the ones they had lived in Sittwe before the violence. One older man, a trishaw driver caring for his blind wife, told researchers that 'This house is better than my Nasi house... before [the 2012 conflict] back in our village we lived in a very poor condition, so it's a lot better compared to then...back then we even had to worry about the food and we didn't even have enough money to buy rice'. He noted that his family now received food donations, from the government he thought.[263] The sense of community here was evident during this interview when a young neighbour and her small sister arrived and prepared food for the couple.

263 Middle aged Rakhine man interviewed at Sat Yoe Kya Rakhine IDP camp, November 2015.

Sat Yoe Kya Rakhine IDP camp

It is worth noting that the conditions for Rakhine IDPs in Set Yone Su 2 are not as comfortable. Awaiting new houses, promised them by the government, a group ISCI spoke with complained that their IDP Rakhine neighbours had:

> *better single houses with gardens [at Sat Yoe Kyaw] and we live in shelters. They have their own toilets. Here, there is one toilet between two households. In one household, there are sometimes 6-10 people...Its difficult living in this camp. We need more assistance, more food and more rations. Living here is difficult, especially transportation to Sittwe. Most jobs are in Sittwe and it takes one hour to get to Sittwe market and costs 500 kyat.*[264]

The shelters in the Rohingya camps are, however, of a different order and house up to four families. Those interviewed complained about the stifling heat and a complete lack of privacy – each family's section consists of up to two rooms and house up to eight people. The shelters were built as a temporary solution three years ago and it is unclear how long they will last. On the longevity of the shelters, a senior INGO respondent reported that it is, "Anybody's guess. As long as they stand ... [and] if any tropical storm comes, they're wiped out. And, even in the rainy season, they're in low-lying areas, and they become flooded."[265]

On the outskirts of the official IDP camps there are small squalid shelters made out of tarpaulin and plastic sheets. These are home to the unregistered IDPs, who live in deplorable conditions without the assistance of INGOs and who eke out a living by begging from IDPs who do receive rations.

264 Interview with Rakhine IDPs, Sittwe, 23 January 2015.
265 Interviewed on 23 February 2015, Yangon.

Denial of healthcare

Rohingya IDP children, IDP camp complex, Sittwe, November 2014

The Myanmar government has been responsible for a series of key decisions to remove all but the most rudimentary healthcare services from the Rohingya in Rakhine state. Removal of healthcare is a powerful means of weakening a community. ISCI's observations when visiting camps and villages and its discussions with residents, occasional clinic staff and local pharmacists revealed widespread chronic illness, including: diarrhoea, tuberculosis, stress ailments, glaucoma, depression and infant malnutrition. ISCI researchers witnessed in camps around Sittwe and Mrauk U and inside Aung Mingalar ghetto a visible health crisis, with empty, largely unstaffed clinics; minimal or no medical equipment; and reported healthcare visits from Rakhine doctors once or twice a week for up to two hours. A Rohingya man expressed his frustration at the health situation in Sittwe's Rohingya camp complex, 'The government builds clinics, but there are no doctors.'[266] ISCI researchers observed sick, dying and dead children during the course of this research, all from apparently preventable disease.

In February 2014 Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF Holland), the only provider of emergency referrals and healthcare services to Rohingya in northern Rakhine state, was expelled from Myanmar following the announcement of their treatment of 22 Rohingya victims in the northern Rakhine State village of Dar Chee Yar Tan following a concerted attack by local Rakhine. The government denied reports that a massacre had taken place and expelled MSF from Myanmar for making false and 'provocative' claims.[267]

In a Mrauk U Rohingya village (beside one of the most deprived and squalid Rohingya camps observed by the researchers), a teacher explained the worsening health crisis:

266 Interview conducted in Rohingya IDP camp complex, 24 January 2015.

267 'Medecins Sans Frontieres' shock at Myanmar suspension', *BBC*, 28 February 2014: http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-26379804. Accessed 10 October.

They only have clinics in Rakhine villages, there are none here. The ICRC come twice a month, if there is a problem we call them. When the ICRC run out of medicine, after two hours, they leave. We have no emergency medicine, so many people are dying in our village. Now we can't go to the other side, we used to go to Mrauk U township general hospital... we used to be able to pay 50-70,000 kyat [USD $39 - $54] and apply one month in advance for a 14-day permit, to go to hospital, in Minbya, Kyauk Taw and Sittwe. Now we are not allowed to Mrauk U township we can only stay in the Muslim area.

Pharmacy at a Rohingya IDP camp, Sittwe, November 2014

Researchers heard a number of accounts of children under four dying of diarrhoea and of individuals being denied the possibility of treatment in Sittwe hospital. Discussions with a range of informants indicated that there is no government monitoring of disease or health services in the Rohingya camps, villages and Aung Mingalar. This represents conscious neglect and indifference by the Myanmar state to the health of its Rohingya inhabitants.

Together, the action and inaction of the authorities provide compelling evidence of the deliberate creation of a humanitarian health crisis. For the Myanmar State, untreated disease and medical complications are a powerful form of unwanted population control.

Hunger crisis

Food aid deliveries arriving in Sittwe IDP camp complex, 7 November 2014

ISCI saw evidence of a hunger crisis within all Rohingya camps and communities. Researchers observed the signs of malnutrition on a daily basis in the camps, including children with distended abdomens and discoloured hair. This was especially prevalent in the 'unregistered' areas of camps. Similarly, within Aung Mingalar ghetto a source reported:

> *The state donates 200 bags of rice for the whole community – we need 900 bags of rice so we have to ask donors in Rangoon [Yangon] from our Rohingya side. The international community provides nothing because this community is not registered IDP... People are desperate for food because the state rations are so meagre.*[268]

These observations were corroborated by informal discussions with representatives from the international community, who described dire conditions in the detention camps and reported concerns over food shortages.

In July 2015, however, the WFP announced it would be reducing rations to IDP camps, a move that it claimed was "predominantly motivated by the changing humanitarian situation as a result of improved household food security situation among IDPs."[269] Rice supplied to IDPs is to be reduced by 10% and

268 Aung Mingalar elder interviewed, 29 January 2015.

269 Stoakes, E, 'Myanmar's Most Vulnerable Face Rations Cut', *The Diplomat*, 25 July 2015: http://thediplomat.com/2015/07/myanmars-most-vulnerable-face-rations-cut/. Accessed 7 October 2015.

non-food items by around 20%. The same week, July 2015, the State-run newspaper *Global New Light of Myanmar* ran an article with the headline: 'Excess relief goods sold at stalls in Rakhine: sources'. The article claimed that an oversupply of relief goods had been provided by international organisations who were relying on numbers submitted by camp committees due to difficulties associated with counting the refugees.[270] ISCI interviews provided a very different picture. Rohingya consistently reported to us that food aid was arriving up to three weeks late, and that people would go hungry or borrow from others based on the expectation of the arrival of the food at some future stage. Reported food delays were denied by the WFP in discussion with ISCI. The reports, however, were numerous, consistent and corroborated by many Rohingya in different geographical areas. In an isolated Rohingya host village in Mrauk U, in January 2015, ISCI was told:

> *We've had no WFP deliveries since December [2014]. Two hundred households get rations from the WFP, their houses were burned. Five hundred others don't have the right to food. … Some of the people receiving rations live in the IDP camps and some in the village … We don't have enough food … Before we could buy food and work as fishermen and in Rakhine villages, but now we have no freedom. There are no fish in the river. We cannot go far down the river because of the aggression.*[271]

Interviews in a range of camps revealed that Rohingya did sell rice and other forms of aid at market because it was the only means by which they could secure the money to purchase fresh vegetables and other necessities not provided by aid organisations. The food provided by the WFP – oil, rice, chickpeas, salt – is not only insufficient, it is also devoid of major vitamins and minerals.

270 'Excess relief goods sold at stalls in Rakhine: sources', *The Global New Light of Myanmar*, 16 July 2015: http://globalnewlightofmyanmar.com/excess-relief-goods-sold-at-stalls-in-rakhine-sources/. Accessed 10 October 2015.

271 Interview with Rohingya village administrator, Mrauk U, 27 January 2015.

Loss of livelihood

Cow dung being dried for fuel, inside Rohingya IDP camp, Sittwe

ISCI heard many accounts of how Rohingya livelihoods had been lost or destroyed. Rohingya villagers reported that since the 2012 violence virtually all opportunities to work had been removed:

- *All businesses are lost, our position are lost. If the Rakhine are indebted to us they don't have to pay back, but the Rakhine come to the village to collect debt.*[272]

- *We are powerless. This used to be a rich village, there were doctors here. We are poor, we have no education and business, we are nothing.*[273]

Inside the Rohingya camps the only 'gainful' activity observed was the collection and drying of cow dung for fuel, which was mainly done by children who have no schools to go to. Some Rohingya have been employed as casual labourers to build the new, vast police barracks and the new parliament buildings being constructed on the outskirts of Sittwe, while others can engage in limited fishing activities. However, the vast majority of Rohingya have absolutely no opportunity to earn money and rely on the charity of a stifled international community and a government interested only in their ultimate removal.

272 Interview with Rohingya man Mrauk U 27 January 2015.
273 Interview with Rohingya elder Mrauk U 27 January 2015.

Food aid sold at Thae Chaung Market, January 2015

7. CONCLUSION

The Rohingya face the final stages of genocide. Decades of persecution have taken on a new and intensified form since mass killings in 2012. The marked escalation in State-sponsored stigmatisation, discrimination, violence and segregation, and the systematic weakening of the community, make precarious the very existence of the Rohingya.

The report analyses the persecution of the Rohingya against the six stages of genocide outlined by Daniel Feierstein: stigmatisation (and dehumanisation); harassment, violence and terror; isolation and segregation; systematic weakening; mass annihilation; and finally symbolic enactment involving the removal of the victim group from the collective history. The report concludes that the Rohingya have suffered the first four of the six stages of genocide. They have been, and continue to be, stigmatized, dehumanised and discriminated against. They have been harassed, terrorized and slaughtered. They have been isolated and segregated into detention camps and securitised villages and ghettos. They have been systematically weakened through hunger, illness, denial of civil rights and loss of livelihood. All of this places them at high risk of annihilation.

The evidence documented reveals that these genocidal processes have been orchestrated at the highest levels of State and local Rakhine government. They have been led by State officials, Rakhine politicians, Buddhist monks and Rakhine civil society activists. The Rohingya have been subjected to a virulent and official nationwide policy and propaganda campaign which has incrementally removed them from the State's sphere of responsibility. The State's persistent and intensified 'othering' of the Rohingya as outsiders, illegal Bengali immigrants and potential terrorists has given a green light to Rakhine nationalists and Islamophobic monks to orchestrate invidious campaigns of race and religious hatred reminiscent of those witnessed in Germany in the 1930s and Rwanda in the early 1990s.

The broader parallels with other genocides are stark and serve as a bleak and urgent warning. In Rwanda, the state achieved its goal of mobilising ordinary Hutus to commit mass murder through propaganda, terror techniques and the elimination of moderate Hutus and the political opposition.[274] The Sangha-led stigmatization of the Rohingya described in this report vividly recalls the Rwandan government-backed propaganda campaigns, where the 'othering' had the effect of both mobilising and desensitizing Hutu perpetrators to the mass killing of their Tutsi neighbours.

274 Newbury, D, 'Understanding Genocide', *African Studies Review*, 41(1), April 1998, p. 80.

In both Germany and Rwanda the use of ethnically marked identity cards became central in the implementation of the genocide. For the vast majority of Rohingya, the absence of an identity card or the possession of a white or green identity card marks them out as people without citizenship and entitlement.

Dehumanisation and stigmatisation techniques are reinforced through segregation and systematic isolation.[275] Social and physical exclusion are key elements of genocide controlled by the state. In Germany, Jews were banned from public places, excluded from work in a wide range of professions, ghettoised and later forced into concentration camps where they were systematically weakened to the point of death. In the Rohingya camps, villages and Aung Mingalar ghetto a deeply weakened and traumatised population endures the barest of lives and denial of basic human rights with the ever-present fear of violent attack.

In addition to a high level of cooperation between the state security forces and the bureaucracy, the participation and complicity of the majority of the local population is a necessary prerequisite for genocide.[276]

Once a group has been classified and clearly identifiable or segregated in ghetto and camp-like spaces, the distinction between 'us' and 'them' is physically reinforced. The state and its proxies can then continue with an unhindered programme of dehumanisation aimed at securing the complicity of the local population through a combination of propaganda, coercion and terror. The Rakhine people, who themselves have suffered decades of oppression and neglect at the hands of the Myanmar government to the point where their own culture is under threat, are particularly receptive to nationalist and religious propaganda.

In Myanmar's genocidal process, two stages remain: extermination and 'symbolic enactment'. While extermination or mass killing on the scale of the German, Rwandan, Kosovan or Cambodian genocides is not inevitable, it cannot be ruled out. This report demonstrates that the infrastructure and ideological base for mass killings exist, and that the elimination of the Rohingya, though not always visible, is well under way. Myanmar's Rohingya are being slowly annihilated through sporadic massacres, mass flight, systematic weakening and denial of identity.

Elements of 'symbolic enactment' are also present – not least in the state's elimination and denial of the 'Rohingya' ethnicity and its effective removal of the word from the lexicon of the Myanmar language.

This report concludes with an urgent warning to civil society in Myanmar, to international civil society, to the government of Myanmar and to international states. A genocidal process is underway in Myanmar and if it follows the path outlined in this report, it is yet to be completed. It can be stopped but not without confronting the fact that it is, indeed, a genocide.

> *The government is not killing us with guns but is indirectly killing us through a lack of healthcare and forcing us to leave to third countries. We are prisoners, living in a prison. We are not getting a normal food supply. We have no education here. We have nothing here. How can we continue with life here?*[277]

275 Lecomte, J M, *Teaching about the Holocaust*, p. 49.
276 Mukimbiri, J, 'The Seven Stages of the Rwandan Genocide', p. 823.
277 Rohingya man, Thae Chaung, IDP camp 7 November 2014.

Child playing in Rohingya registered IDP camp, Sittwe

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Leaked document 1: Submissions presented to Myanmar President Thein Sein by letter, dated 15 October 2013, by representatives of Rakhine state. Seen and sanctioned by Shwe Mann. Leaked to Fortify Rights; acquired by ISCI researchers from Al Jazeera.

A. Submitted by U Thar Pwin (Lawyer), 'Peace and stability of Rakhine state and the importance of geo-politics'.

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C. Summary findings of submissions presented to Myanmar President Thein Sein, 15 October 2015.

D. U Zaw Myo Naing, 'Submission by a student for the Rakhine State'.

Leaked document 2: SPDC Rohingya Extermination Plan, adopted in 1988 on the basis of the proposals submitted by Col. Tha Kyaw (a Rakhine), Chairman of the National Unity Party.

Leaked document 3: Nyi Pyi Taw Divisional Military Headquarters, No (13) Combatants Organizing School, 'Fear of Extinction of Race', Lecture by Bo Toe Naing, Gazette No- Army 62505, Ka Tha No. 32, 26 October 2012. Acquired from Al Jazeera.

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