

**INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP FOR AUTOCHTHONOUS PEOPLES
GROUPE INTERNATIONALE DE TRAVAIL POUR LES PEUPLES AUTOCHTONES**

GITPA
<http://gitpa.org>

**REPORT ON THE CRIMES AGAINST THE ROHINGYA FROM AUGUST TO
DECEMBER 2017 IN THE RAKHINE STATE (MYANMAR)**

Summary

This report is the first by an organization that specializes in indigenous rights. It provides verbatim the accounts of Rohingya refugees interviewed in March of 2018. The data collected during this inquiry contradicts the report findings of several human rights NGOs.

1. The 2017 crisis should not be isolated, but placed in the context of a long-lasting series of conflicts that have been occurring since the 40s.
2. As often during situations of mass violence, the historiography, including the demographic history, remains disputed and polarized. Reliable demographic figures, except those of the British censuses during the colonial period, are hard to find, which is both cause and effect of this polarization. However, the Muslim presence in Arakan (today's Rakhine) is ancient, as primary sources show.
3. From the 25th of August 2017, the Burmese army (*Tatmadaw*) clearly sought to clear out the townships of (1) Maungdaw and of (2) Buthidaung (both in the Maungdaw District), as well as a (3) micro-region of Rathedaung (Sittwe District) that is adjacent to Maungdaw of their majority Muslim populations. It conducted a campaign of terror that included group executions, rape, atrocities, and at least two massacres.
4. The modus operandi for the violence generally follows a pattern: (1) the army enters into a village, shoots at the villagers, sets areas afire, and sometimes commits atrocities; (2) the villagers then flee and hide themselves in one or several *muro* (forests, mountains) for several days; (3) the army does not follow them; (4) finally, the villagers set off walking, sometimes for many days, to the Bangladeshi border.
5. Violence against women is irrefutable, as proven by testimonies. However, the campaign of terror's main targets have been men; young men between 20 and 30 years of age are disproportionately the main victims of this mass violence.
6. Two sets of explanations have emerged: either the Burmese army launched a counterinsurgency fight, or their actions were premeditated. The former evokes the "functional approach" (the idea that the repression is improvised and follows a historical course); the latter corresponds to the "intentionalist paradigm" (the notion that the policy of repression was premeditated and motivated largely by anti-Rohingya racism). Only a thorough investigation of the Burmese side of the crisis will be able to identify the reasons and authors of this episode of mass violence. It seems clear, however, that the officers and soldiers from Tatmadaw were the main actors, followed by the border police (*Border Guard Police, BGP*). Some Maung civilians (Buddhists, non-Burmese) sometimes participated in the acts of violence.

7. The lack of representation, leadership, and interlocution from the Rohingya is a significant anthropological fact that is politically detrimental to them under current circumstances.
8. All of the Rohingya we questioned want to return to Rakhine, but only on the condition that they be formally recognized as Burmese citizens.

We thankfully acknowledge the College of Liberal Arts at the University of Massachusetts Boston, and Health and Education for All (HAEFA), an NGO working in the Rohingya refugee camps since 2017 – www.haefa.org, for their generous technical and logistical support.

SUMMARY

Introduction
Methodology
Who are the Rohingya?
History and Demographics
What the Rohingya Refugees Say
A Defenseless Minority
Who is Doing the Killing?
From the Burmese Perspective
Bibliography

INTRODUCTION

Starting August 25th, 2017, the Burmese army (*Tatmadaw*) led an unprecedented several-week long crackdown against the Rohingya, a minority of Muslim faith in the north of Rakhine state (ex-Arakan, western Myanmar). Tens of villages were burned down by the army. Testimonies report various acts of violence and rape. More than 600,000 Rohingya have fled towards Bangladesh and to this day live in camps in the far south of the country (Cox's Bazaar region). According to Burmese journalist Moe Myint (2018), the north of the Rakhine state has been cleared out of 90% of its Rohingya population. The humanitarian organization *Médecins sans Frontières* (MSF, 2017) estimates the number of deaths between August 25th and September 24th at 6,700, of whom 730 were children under the age of 5. The methodology used by MSF covers a population of 503,698 people.

This report first provides a short historical context of the situation. We then chose to transcribe verbatim the testimonies of some of the Rohingya we interviewed –not only to give voice to the Rohingya, but above all to give freedom to readers to form their own opinion- before highlighting the main trends of this mass violence.

METHODOLOGY

This report is based on three sources of information: (1) historiography; (2) reports and articles already published on the current crisis; (3) a nine day survey: 28 in-depth interviews conducted in the camps of Kutupalong 2, Bhalukhali 1, Bhalukhali 2, and Hampank. Interviews were conducted with an interpreter, from Rohingya to Chittagonian, a Bengali dialect, or to Bengali. We also

interviewed Moshe Yegar, one of the rare Rohingya specialists. When transcribing interviews, we took care to clarify kinship ties, as the Rohingya have a metaphorical use of kinship that may have misled journalists in the past. The repeated use of the number "5" by informants either accurately refers to the number in question or is a way to designate a small group of people.

WHO ARE THE ROHINGYA?

The Rohingya are a patrilineal, patrifocal, patriarchal, and strictly endogamous population. Apart from a small minority of a few hundred Hindus, the Rohingya practice a pious version of Islam. They also are a differentiated population, a fact hard to discern in the massification generated by their exodus and life in the camps. Rohingya distinguish themselves from the Muslim population adjacent to the province of Chittagong (Bangladesh) by dress customs; culinary habits; and their language, derived, yet clearly distinct from Chittagonian. The rural houses and mosques in Rakhine are also decorated with different styles than those of Chittagong.

It is also a largely rural population. This geographical and socio-economic distribution has been reinforced by government policies that have, at least since 1982, reduced their access to education and geographic mobility. Therefore the 2017 killings occurred almost exclusively in rural areas.

Since the Second World War (see below), the Rohingya have concentrated in the northern part of Rakhine and the vast majority of them live in three townships: Maungdaw, where, before the summer of 2017, they would have formed 94% of the population; Buthidaung, with 86%; and a group of 16 Rathedaung villages nearby Maungdaw (6% of the total population of Rathedaung but the large majority in the sub-region in question).

No real ethnography has been published on the Rohingya. (Anthropologists and ethnographers have neglected this subject, which has tended to be taken over by historians who have neither the methods nor the tools to grasp culture and collective identity questions and bypass human interactions with Rohingya.) In addition, their ethno-genesis is a disputed subject that sees two opposing versions. On one side, the population recognized today under the self-denomination "Rohingya" would mainly be composed of descendants of two groups: the Muslim communities already present in the Arakanese Kingdom before 1785 (year of the Burmese conquest of Arakan) and, essentially the descendants of Indian migrants brought over by the English after 1825 (e.g. Jacques Leider, 2004, 2013, 2017). Observations of colonial administrators, particularly Paton (1828) and Burney (1842), and finally of the WWII English pilot Irwin (1945) corroborate this version. In addition, the Muslim population in Arakan was fragmented into several identities at least up until the Second World War (Leider, 2013:242-3). On the other hand, according to Azeem Ibrahim (2018) and Bangladeshi authors, including Siddiquee (2014), Karim (2000), and Alam (2014), the Rohingya are first and foremost the descendants of the Muslims of Arakan (before the British colonization). This being said, even Ashraf Alam (2014:54) recognizes that the Rohingya "are not an ethnic group that emerged from a tribal affiliation, but descended from a diversity of origins." Abid Bahar (2014:256) agrees. The name "Rohingya" does not appear before 1963, apart from a brief reference in 1799 (see the meticulous work of J. Leider, 2014). We cannot, however, rule out the possibility that the ethno-genesis of this group is the recent product of hostile policies and collective negotiated interests. Anthropologically, the linguistic and social dissimilarities between the Chittagonians and the Muslim Arakanese are measurable enough to suggest a

separation that is not recent. The emigrants who came from Chittagong during the colonial period, whatever their numbers, had to adapt to a Muslim culture already in place.

HISTORY

Historians recognize the following periodization: a Buddhist dynasty reigns over Arakan from the 15th century until 1785, when the Burmese Kingdom suddenly conquers and annexes the region. In 1826, the British crown takes control of Burma and, consequently, of Arakan (Leider, 2004, de Meran, 2005).

The sources mentioned by Patin (1828), Yegar (1972), Leider (2004), Siddiquee (2014), Karin (2000), and Ibrahim (2018:17-53) leave no doubt about the ancient and significant presence of Muslims in Arakan since at least the 16th century. The Kingdom of Arakan saw Buddhist, Muslim, Hindu, and even Christian populations (with the ancient Portuguese presence) who mixed geographically, linguistically, and politically. Many quoted historians use the expression of "fluid identity" to discuss religious identities in the Kingdom of Arakan. However, if one reads correctly the data presented by these historians, this expression actually does not seem to name the fluidity of individual belongings; rather, it refers to the fact that religious affairs did not necessarily influence politics. The court of Arakanese kings and local lords used the competencies of craftsmen, poets, and astrologers and established political alliances without allegiances for religious identities which seem to have "hardened" much later. Yegar (1872:24) notes that even the Burmese king's army included units of Muslim soldiers. On the other hand, the argument, if not the claim, that Arakan was then a Muslim kingdom is contradicted by the engravings of Willem Schouten that show the landscape of the capital Mrauk-U covered with pagodas at the end of the 18th century. We should note that historians do not provide demographic data on ethnic and religious composition prior to 1785. It should also be noted that Arakan is, in the east, geographically cut off from Burma by a chain of mountains and jungles that has long held back Burmese intrusion, while to the west, the Naf River forms the only natural barrier with Chittagong and the Indo-Muslim world.

The Burmese conquest of 1785 was particularly traumatic for the Arakanese, and still remains a matter of grievances against the Burmese state. Several hundreds of thousands of Arakanese were then deported to Burma, effectively clearing out Arakan, then on the brink of anthropological extinction. Arakan was then formally under Burmese rule only between 1784 and 1825 - and then after the 1948 independence. British colonization ran from 1825 to 1948. The British promoted immigration from India which started to kindle resentment in the 1930s, as proven by a report commissioned in 1939 by the colonial authorities (James Baxter, in Leider, 2013:238-239).

In this report, James Baxter foretold clashes that would eventually occur during the Second World War. They may be the main cause of not only the current communal divide—between the southern half of Arakan, populated by Buddhists and the north, populated by Rohingya and Muslim-, but also of a mutual resentment between the two communities. Until then, according to Anthony Irwin (1945:22), an English pilot based in Teknaf (today's southernmost point of Bangladesh) during the War, "Arakan was in its entirety populated by Muslims and Maughs." The Muslim population sided with the British while the Buddhist population, at the beginning at least, became allies of the Japanese. Massacres of Muslims and Buddhists then occurred that further fueled perception and grievances. (It should be noted, however, that most historians mention these

massacres without citing primary sources and we are left to assume that they are talking about collective memory.) When the British first withdrew from the region in 1942, groups of Arakanese attacked Muslim villages in southern Arakan and massacred sections of their residents, despite the opposition from their own public figures (Yegar, 1972:95). Survivors fled north to the Muslim majority Maungdaw District. Outraged, Maungdaw's Muslim population carried out punitive and deadly actions against northern Buddhist villages. An indirect witness to these massacres, Irwin (1945:22-26) is struck by the use of cold weapons. According to Yegar (1972:96), "these reciprocal killings" reinforced Arakan's denominational divide between a Muslim north and a Buddhist south. Irwin (1945:24), who goes beyond describing the war in the region, also notes that the Muslims of Maungdaw are neither Bengalis nor Chittagonians (he does not use the term Rohingya); he also notes that women are more conservative than Muslim communities in India. He compares the Muslims of Arakan with the Jewish people: "They live in a hostile country, and yet they survive. We could compare them to Jews. A nation within a nation, the apple tree hating the growth of mistletoe without being able to destroy it." (Irwin, 1945:25)

The bloody exchange of people between northern and southern Arakan worsened at the end of the war. Many Muslims from the south migrated to the north of the state, while Buddhist populations made a reverse move, which entrenched the denominational divide.

During this short period between the end of the war and Burmese independence (1945-1948), the British gave to Muslims of Arakan positions in the local administration; they were dismissed in 1948 by the new Burmese authorities who chose Arakanese Buddhists to replace them. Independence exacerbated Arakan's Muslims' feeling of insecurity. Several *moulvis* called for *jihad*. The result was an armed movement, "the rebellion of the Mujahids," which was able to use the weapons and ammunition left by the British military (Yegar, 1972:97). Concomitantly, in 1946, the Northern Muslim League of Arakan began to demand annexation to Pakistan (which at the time included Bangladesh, on the other side of the Naf), alarming the authorities in Rangoon. While many Muslim leaders, states Yegar (1972:98), opposed the armed violence of the rebellion, the latter effectively controlled the north of Arakan, with the exception of the port of Akyab (Sittwe). Poorly equipped, Burmese forces then resorted to Maung civilians whom they recruited into militias, the Arakan Territorial Forces. These militias committed acts of cruelty against the Muslims, who in turn engaged in bloody retaliation (Yegar 1972:98). Army crackdowns intensified in the 1950s, targeting not only Muslims in the north but also an endemic Maung rebellion in the south. The New York Times (1952) reported a low intensity conflict waged by both the military and Buddhist civilians, whom the American newspaper suspected of being communist. It was not until 1961 that the Mujahideen rebellion formally surrendered to the Burmese army. Between 1962 and 2017, instability was endemic with episodic feuds of arms. According to Yegar (c.p. 2018), these instances cannot be described as insurrections as they were of low intensity. Nevertheless, they had the effect of alarming the Burmese public opinion.

Formal discriminations against Muslims of Arakan therefore started in 1948. They could not serve in the military, the police, or local administrations. Of the 22,000 Muslim refugees displaced by the Second World War, only 11,000 were able to return, mostly to the Maungdaw District; the others, accused of being Bengalis, remained in East Pakistan. The construction of the figure of the Rohingya as foreign to his nation but also as pro-Pakistani started to be formed during this period. Yegar (1972:98-99) reports propaganda from Rangoon newspapers accusing the Rohingya of being Chittagonians and emigrants. We must also take into account the effect, possibly to this day, of the promises made by the British. As with many people in the region, the British authorities verbally promised some Rohingya that after victory over Japan, they could gain

independence or annexation to India (Yegar, p.c. 2018). Leider (2014:234-235) believes that these separatist tendencies rather date back to 1937, when colonial authorities carved Burma out of India for administrative purposes, thereby creating a need among the Muslims of Arakan to define themselves collectively.

In 1978, "Operation Nagamin", officially aimed at registering the citizens of northern Arakan, scared away nearly 200,000 Rohingya, who in addition to reporting cases of executions, rapes, and various violence (Ibrahim, 2018:52), fled to Bangladesh. Most of them would return in 1979. In 1982, a reform of Burmese citizenship then recognized four categories linked to their supposed indigeneity: citizens, associate citizens, naturalized citizens, and foreign residents. The Rohingya fell in the last category and, thus, could no longer have access to elective offices and study at universities; in addition, they could no longer travel throughout the country without administrative authorization. Many, however, would continue to study at universities and vote. The only full citizens are those whose ancestors were already on Burmese territory at the time of the British conquest in 1825. This is the case for other Muslim minorities in Burma. In 1991, a new wave of repression caused the departure of more than 200,000 refugees to Bangladesh (Ibrahim, 2018:52). Most would be able to return, but many families chose to remain in Chittagong Province, where their children were later able to access higher education. From 2012, clashes between Maugh civilians and Rohingya called communal riots by the Burmese authorities caused many deaths (Ibrahim, 2018:81-82).

It must be emphasized, however, that none of the populations in question is politically united, either today or in the past. Within each of these groups, moderates have been striving for decades to promote a peaceful solution, as noted by Moshe Yegar (c.p. 2018). The Buddhist Burmese and a part of the population have shown empathy for the fate of the Rohingya. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo (2018) -- the two young journalists imprisoned for thoroughly documenting the killing of 10 Rohingya men at Inn Din -- are Burmese. The assassination in January 2017 of Aung San Su Yi's political advisor, Ko Ni, who was of Muslim faith, sparked widespread anger among the Burmese public. Other examples could be cited. They do not undermine the discriminatory condition of the Rohingya. They should, however, encourage the media towards a more nuanced approach to the conflict.

THE DANCE OF THE DEMOGRAPHIC FIGURES

In 1793 during the first "Burmese period," King Mendaragyee conducted a census in his kingdom (in Burney, 1842:335). The objective was less so to determine the ethnic or religious composition than to determine the number of taxable houses or families. In Arakan, the census reported 120,851, including 103,696 Arakanese (Buddhists and Muslims together?), 783 Burmese, and 15,372 qualified as "Other Places."

In 1826, according to the "demographic sketch" of Charles Paton (1828:372), a colonial administrator who wrote a detailed history of Arakan, the population at that time was composed of 100,00 residents, of whom 30% were Muslims, 60% Maughs, and 30% Burmese. The population of Arakan would increase sevenfold before the end of the century. However, several hundreds of thousands Arakanese who had been deported by the Burmese returned after 1826.

In 1901, out of the 762,102 inhabitants in Arakan, 67.1% were identified by colonial authorities as Buddhists, 21.4% (162,754 individuals) as Muslims, 9.3% as Animists, 2% as Hindus, and 0.2% as Christians (Imperial Gazetteer of India, 1908:390). This census also shows an

already uneven demographic distribution between the north, where 65% of the population lives, and the south where 35% of the population lives.

In 1931, according to the last census conducted by the British (Census of India, 1933:238-239), there were a little more than a million people in Arakan, of whom 65% were Buddhists, 8% animists, 2% Hindus, and 25.3% Muslims. Still according to this census, the majority of these 255,469 Muslims already lived in the north of the state; 50,000 of them being Indian emigrants (religion was not specified) (p. 60). This is confirmed in 1939 in a report by James Baxter (in Leider, 2013:238-9).

The emigration organized by the colonial authorities appears colossal, with nearly 776,000 emigrants in 1931 for all of Burma. The first anti-Indian riots took place in Rangoon in 1930. According to Burmese historian Thyant Mynt-U (2017), Burmese nationalism was born as an anti-emigration movement in the 1930s. However, statistics are lacking on Bengali emigration in Arakan since the Second World War.

In 1952 the New York Times gave a figure of "400 to 500 thousand" Muslims in Rakhine without citing any source.

In 1962, according to Yegar (1972), there were about 300,000 Muslims in Rakhine, which seems a credible increase from the 1931 census. Several scholars have warned us that demographic data after independence are not always reliable, not only because of long-standing weaknesses in the Burmese state but also because the demographic issue is politically-charged.

For instance, in February 2018, The Irrawaddy, a Rangoon-based liberal newspaper, reported figures that corroborate the official view: there would have been in the townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung a total of 767,038 Muslims by August 2017; 70,038 would still be on site (Myint, 2018). Implicitly, if one adds the 700,000 refugees listed in camps near Cox's Bazaar, one obtains the same figure as before the mass killings perpetrated by the Burmese army and thus denied by these figures. In 2014, the total population of Rakhine was, according to the Burmese Ministry of Immigration and Population, of which Jacques Leider estimate the total number of Muslims at over 1 million. (in Leider, 2017:221).

Year	Total	Arakanese		Burmese	Hindus	Animists	Christians	Other
		Muslims	Buddhists					
1793	120,851	104,696		793				15,372
1826	100,000	30,000	60,000	10,000				
1901	762,102	162,754	389,716		15,242	70,875	1,524	
1931	1,000,000	255,469	650,000		20,000	80,000		
1962		300,00						
2007	874,224 ?							
2014	3,188,963?							

PERCEPTION OF THE BURMESE PUBLIC: foreigners, terrorism, and demographic insecurity

The Burmese state and public tend to see the Rohingya as foreigners. Secessionist rhetoric (see above) at the end of the Second World War aggravated this perception. The Burmese media -- but also various political figures such as Chief of Staff Min Aung Hlaing or the former government of U Thein Sein -- refer to the Rohingya as "Bengalis" (Zaw, 2018). In addition to the construction of the Rohingya as a foreigner, the other negative element associated with the Rohingya today is

terrorism (Das, 2018). Yegar (c.p. 2018), always nuanced, believes that, although the armed insurrections since 1945 were endemic, they remained small in size; even the attacks of August 24th, 2017 could have been led by a handful only of young men and only with cold weapons. Finally, the perception of the Rohingya as threatening the demographic balance in Rakhine by their birth rate (we also find this perception today among the Bangladeshi population of Cox's Bazaar) contributes to the idea of the Rohingya as a danger. This triple insecurity - territorial, security, and demographic - is an important part of the context for the current situation. Other Muslim minorities in Burma are not subject to this animosity. The result is a conflict which appears as ethnicized as it is political and religious.

THE 2017 EVENTS

On the night from the 24th to the 25th of August 2017, several police stations in northern Rakhine were attacked - between 24 and 30, according to Burmese authorities and media. This action was claimed by a then-unknown group, the Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The Burmese military immediately embarked on a massive crackdown. Villagers in the Maungdaw district saw tracer bullets fired from nearby military camps as early as 3 am, suggesting immediate communications between the armed forces.

At dawn, groups of soldiers left their respective camps and marched to nearby Rohingya villages. The repression began. It is difficult to determine the exact duration of this initial phase of the military operation. With certainty, it continued with the same intensity until the end of the first week of September. The repression continued nevertheless until November. At least two massacres of several hundred people took place in Tula Toli and Gu Dar Pyn, both in Maungdaw Township.

(We chose not to analyze the killing of 124 Hindu Rohingya in Ka-Maung because the survivors' version has changed and a thorough investigation would be necessary: after accusing their Maugh neighbors, they now accuse the Rohingya Muslims of perpetrating this massacre. We had started interviews in March 2018 but were escorted out of their camp after an hour by members of the Bangladeshi security services.)

The humanitarian organization Médecins sans Frontières (2017) estimated the total number of Rohingya killed between August 25th and September 24th at 6,700, including at least 730 children under 5 years old. The method used by MSF covers a population of 503,698 through interviews with 2,434 heads of families in nine refugee camps. Applying this data to a refugee population of 626,000, MSF concludes that 11,393 people were killed. The numbers given by MSF correspond to the individuals who were killed in front of witnesses; the report does not include individuals who may have been killed in isolation or individuals who drowned while crossing the Naf river, which separates Rakhine (Burma) from Chittagong (Bangladesh).

ROHINGYA ACCOUNTS, INTERVIEWED BY GITPA

Abu Jaber, 49 years old, majhi (village chief)

Merula Village, Maungdaw Township

"I was one of the *majhis* in a hamlet in Merula. I was chosen in 2012 by about 400 people. Eight people were living in my house. Until 1984 (1991?), there were only Muslims in the village. That year, the army brought Maughs, several hundred of them, then Shakmas. They came in a truck. The Maughs and the Shakmas took our land.

The day before Eid-ul-Ahza (September 1st), the army entered the village in the morning. There were several hundred soldiers, and about twenty Maughs with them, guiding them; they were all men and all young. They 9th Maughs) did not carry weapons. The soldiers were walking down the street and shooting at those they saw. I ran and hid first in an irrigation canal in the rice paddies. I personally saw three people being killed in three different places in the village. There were 28 killed in all: 27 men and a 10-year-old girl. She died while she was running, while the soldiers were executing two men in a burst of gunfire by automatic weapons in front of their house. One of the 27 men was a maternal cousin. Then the Maugh civilians burned the village. An 8-year-old boy also had a bullet go through his leg. His father later carried him here. He carried him on his back a first, and then the men made a stretcher out of bamboo [when we walked to Bangladesh].

We then took refuge in a *muro* for two days. On the first day, a group of five to ten brave men left the muro and returned to the village to bury the dead. They started digging a grave, but as they saw soldiers coming back, they only had time to bury five. Then, two days after Ei-ul-Azha (September 4th) we decided to leave. We walked for two days. Soldiers fired at those who ran. When they saw people carrying luggage, they did not shoot. When we arrived at the border, there were people coming from everywhere. I saw people wounded by knives, people who had been shot, and people who had been burned.

We crossed the Naf River by night. There were thousands of people. We were crossing on boats made on site (rafts). The [Burmese] army was waiting for us, they took five men, between 20 and 30 years old, who were all strong. No, I did not know their names. We did not see them again. No, the army did not open fire on the crowd. The soldiers were saying "leave, leave." "

28 shot dead (27 adult men, one 10-year-old girl)

Mohammed Chopik, 40 years old, eight children

Shaktiana para hamlet, Maungdaw Township. Chopik is a rice farmer. He owned raice paddies, a buffalo, several cows, and a herd of goats. He lived with his extended family, including his parents, his wife and their eight children (four months to twenty years old). In total, twenty people lived in his house located inside the village.

"The army arrived in the morning of August 30th. There were about 50 soldiers, all with green uniforms. They shot as soon as they enter the village, and they shout very loudly. I ran out of the house, everyone left. Everyone was running in the village. I started running too. My father, Adur-Ur-Jaman, and my mother, Saera Khatun, were behind me, they were slower. [Suddenly] I heard a burst of gunfire, right behind me, and I saw my father and mother fell. Everyone ran out of the village. I kept running too. Meanwhile, in the village, the soldiers continued to shoot. Later, I learned that at that moment my nephew, Ramatula (2 years old), fell to the ground and was killed by a soldier's gunstock strike to the head. Once outside of the village, I hid first in an irrigation canal. I watched what was happening. I saw a soldier with a flamethrower who burned the houses (made of bamboos and thatched roofs). They continued to shoot. When they left the village, we left the rice paddies and went to hide further in a muro two hours walk away. I learned [through my sister-in-law] that my younger brother, Muhamed Hussein, had been killed with his 4 year old daughter Aziz Nahar, and his 10 year old son Aziz Ula. I also learned that my youngest brother, Dolil Ahmed, Ramatula's father, had also been killed. They were all killed by gunfire, except Ramatula, who was killed by gunstock strikes. We did not return to the village to bury the dead.

The soldiers returned two more times in the same day. We spent one night in the muro and left the next day [for Bangladesh]. We arrived on September 1st.

The soldiers came from a camp called Sakaya that is located less than two kilometers from the village. It is a tent camp, not a hard (permanent) camp. We often saw them. They changed every six months, so I did not recognize any (when they attacked). The last ones came from Rangoon. All the soldiers had green uniforms. There was also a Maugh village next to their camp, with about 100 houses. During the attack, I recognized several of them. One was named Tchakora, about 50 years old, and one named Twen-Show, about 40 to 45 years old. On the day of the attack, they were given a uniform, but they did not carry a weapon. They showed some houses to the soldiers. They also shouted in rohingya, they said to go to Bangladesh. Before that, they were rice farmers. They had arrived about 20 or 25 years ago, with two or three dozen [Buddhist] families, in army trucks. They had been given some forest land. The army and we too helped them to clear their land so they could plant rice. Our village had about 400 Muslim houses and 200 Maugh and Shakma houses.”

Killed during the attack:

Adur Ur-Jaman, 60 years old

Saera Khatun, 55 years old

Mohammed Hussein, 30 years old

and his children: Aziz Nahar, 4 years old

Aziz Ula, 10 years old

Dolil Ahmed, 25 years old

And his son Ramatula, 2 years old

Zubeida Khatun, 65 years old, 1 son

Toung Bazaar Village, Buthidaung Township. Hamlet of 160 Muslim houses. A Maugh Village is located a few kilometers away.

"There was a Maugh village a few kilometers away, behind a small river (*khal*). I have never been there and I do not know anyone there. There is a common market (bazaar), but only men go there. The army had a camp in front of the village just across the river. They often came to [patrol] the village and then would leave.

In the middle of the night (of August 25th), they started firing from their camps. But we were used to it, they had already done it [in the past], so we did not run away. In the morning, around 7 o'clock, a hundred soldiers arrived. They started shooting in the air and shouting loudly. No, there were only soldiers, but they all had green uniforms. But some shouted in Rohingya and they shouted that we had to leave. The soldiers entered into the houses, grabbed people, and shot them outside. Some managed to escape. They separated the men and the women. Even the children were separated. Everyone had to sit on the floor [outside]. There, they killed many men, between 10 and 15 of them. They killed them in front of their houses, in groups of two to three people with bursts of gunfire. No, they did not kill all the men. They took them from their homes, threw them out, and executed them with automatic weapons. Outside, they told the old women to leave, they took the young women and brought them back inside the houses to rape them. No, they did not kill them after, they only killed the men. Some women (who had been raped) could not escape afterward and were taken to the military camp.

We could not bury the dead, we fled immediately [to a muro]. After two nights [in a muro], we left [to Bangladesh]. Later, we learned that they (Rohingyas) told that they buried the bodies in a grave and put landmines [in the grave]. That's what they said. The whole village fled. We were several hundred people. My husband Abdu Ahmed and my son Ibrahim were with me. The first night we slept in a field. On the second day, we went through a military detachment where they screamed at us to walk faster or else they were going to kill us. Later (in November), we learned that there were still 10 to 15 people (Rohingyas) in the village. That's how we learned that the bodies were buried with landmines. No, the army stopped killing in this village.

[Mobile phones are banned in refugee camps, and interviewees deny that they use them. But absolutely everyone we met in the camps has a mobile phone. Sometimes, with their old Burmese SIM cards, they walk the few kilometers that separate them from the border and call their relatives, neighbors, or acquaintances left in Burma.]

10 to 15 deaths by automatic weapons,
and an undetermined number of rapes.

Mohammed Sufik, 28 years old, married, two children
Dokhin Para hamlet, Merula Village, Maungdaw Township



"I owned my house in Dokhin Para, I had several fields, three cows, and several goats. I had a motorcycle. I grew chilis and vegetables. The house was very beautiful, as you saw in the photos, fully decorated, with two floors. I have two children, a girl and a boy. My wife came with us, we all survived.

The army entered the hamlet at night. They had green uniforms, but some had gray uniforms, a metallic color (possibly the Border Guard Police). When they arrived, everyone left their houses and started running. They were shooting. They used a flamethrower to burn houses. People went to take refuge in a muro. I returned to the hamlet on the second day with a group of men. My house had been burned down. We saw the bodies of nine men killed. One body [at least] had been cut [mutilated] by Maughs. No, I did not see them do it. I was told that they were Maughs [who had mutilated the body]. We could not bury them, we immediately returned to the muro and decided to go to Bangladesh.

We left Merula on September 2nd, we walked with thousands of other people. At night we had the children sleep on our knees. We arrived on the other side of the border on September 5th. Now I live here at Balukhali Camp."

List of deaths, by bullets, in Dokhin Para, Merula:

1. Azizula Mubarak, 25 years old
2. Asim Mula, 28 years old
3. Mohammed Ayaz, 18 years old
4. Mohammend Toyab, 22 years old
5. Mohammed Zubayer, 21 years old
6. Mohammed Rufik, 25 years old
7. Noor Hussein, 32 years old
8. Abdulah, 17 years old
9. Anes, 22 years old

Noor Alom, 30 years old

Ciddar para hamlet (adjacent to Dokhin para), Merula Village, Maungdaw Township

“The army entered the village by the road that goes to Merula (center). Soldiers set houses on fire. I was outside, and I started running. I did not see my mother so I came back to my house to look for her. Yes, the others were running the other way. I arrived and saw my mother's body on the ground. I saw the soldiers behind, they had black uniforms. They shot a burst of gunfire and I fell. (He received bullets in his chest (one), in both shoulders, and in one thigh, and showed the scarred impacts that indicate a small caliber, perhaps the QBZ-95 Chinese rifle; a bullet went through his thigh. He was still conscious then, but lying on the ground.) I felt fingers under my nose and heard them talking, asking if I was still alive. So I felt the fingers under my nose and refrained from breathing. Moments later, another came and put his finger under my nose again. I refrain from breathing again. (Then, he apparently lost consciousness.) At night, my father and my brother came back to the village to look for me. They took me to the muro [where the village population was hiding]. There I was looked after. I learned that four other people had been killed apart from my mother. There were several thousand people in the muro. We hid for seven days. There were no incidents [during this period] and we had enough to eat. Then we set off. I was carried [on a sort of improvised stretcher]. It took us four days to reach the Naf River. There, we rode rafts. The army told us to return to Myanmar, but we continued.”

Killed:

1. Noor Alom's mother
2. Four men

Sueidul Amin, 54 years old, khotib (preacher)

Fuk para (eastern hamlet), Merula Village, Maungdaw Township

“The soldiers burned down the mosque on September 1st, around 11 am, with a bottle of gasoline. They also burned the madrasa next door and the seven buildings that made up the compound of the mosque. People were already gone. The mosque was half brick, but the madrasa was bamboo. It was the first time that they were burned down. The madrasa was closed once in 2012 by the government's orders. The [Buddhist] chairman came with a decree, signed by Maungdaw District Police Chief, and we had to close it. They also prohibited religious students from moving from village to village, claiming a curfew. Otherwise, our area was wide, and only populated by Muslims, there were no Buddhist villages [nearby], so the Maughs did not venture there. Except

in 2012, Maughs came in [often] with army uniforms to intimidate us. Sometimes they would arrest someone and lock him up for days. The nearest Maugh village was 4 kilometers away. There was little contact between the Maughs and us. It was during the markets day that Maughs and Muslims met. The Maughs sold fish and vegetables to the Muslims. Muslims sold rice, chilis. Some Maughs paid for everything they bought. But those who worked with the military, they did not pay the full price. We were scared [to ask].

[In September 2017] it took them four days to burn the entire village. They came back and forth. There were 40 killed from our village, 35 men and 5 women, including a 45-year-old woman who was killed with knives. The others were shot dead. We stayed for a long time in the muro, several days. The chairman, M. S. called us on our cell phones and told us that if we did not leave immediately, the army would come to the muro to kill us. No, he said that to protect us, not to intimidate us. So we set off. After that, it took us two days to get to the border. We walked at night and hid during the day. But it was not easy because we were thousands of people. The whole population of Merula was on the move."

Ahmed Rashid, 30 years old, married, 2 children, majhi

Same hamlet as the previous account.

"On the night of August 31st to September 1st, we heard and saw from afar the army launch fires (tracers) in the sky. We all left before dawn, and when the army came in, there was no one left in the village. I was a farmer, a breeder, I had a fish farm and several fields. I had a small van and a motorcycle. It was hard to leave, to leave everything behind. We stayed six or seven days in the muros. We brought some food with us, and some other things. At night, we put mats on the ground and we slept on them. During the day, when it rained, we took the mats and put them up on sticks for shelter. The army went back and forth into the village. At the night they would return to their camp, and by day they went back to the village. They did this many times. It was the 536th Light Infantry Battalion.

Two days after the village was burned down, I received a call on my cell phone. It was the officer who commanded them, Gwien-Sien-Aug. Later, I learned that he had called the other chairmen as well. He called us three times. I communicated with the other Rohingya chairmen of Merula (via mobile phone) who were hiding in other muros. Our cell phones continued to work in the forest because we had small portable solar-powered chargers. People were going around, we were trying to understand what was going on and what to do. The next day, the [Burmese] officer called again and said that he had spoken with the other chairmen and asked us to come to the camp, all eight chairmen of Merula. We told them that we were afraid, that the army had burned the village, so we refused. We spoke in Burmese. All chairmen speak Burmese because we all finished high school. The officer had probably found our names and numbers from the administration's registry, since we were officials. When we told him that we did not want to go to the military camp, he threatened us.

One or two days later, we, the chairmen, even though we were spread over several muros, we decided to meet. We went to the muro where M. S. [the most important chairman] was. It was after the soldiers had burned the mosque. The meeting was in the jungle. There were eight chairmen in total. We came from several muros. It was during this meeting that Gwien-Sien-Aug called M. S. on his cellphone. We stopped talking and M. S. put on the speakerphone so that we could all hear. The officer said that we had 24 hours to leave or that we would all be killed, and that the army was about to enter the muros. The conversation lasted a few minutes, in Burmese.

So we immediately took the decision to all go to Bangladesh. M. S. called the people in all the muros to tell them to leave. The following night, we all set off, several thousand people."

(M. S., Merula's most important Rohingya leader, lives semi-underground in one of the camps at Cox's Bazaar.)

Mohammed Selim, 20 years old

"Kamongsi" (Kongsi ?) para, Sittwe district.

Mohammed finished high school. He speaks not only Rohingya but also Burmese, a little English, and Bengali. He lived in a hamlet of 6 houses outside the village of Kongsi, Akhiab District. Rufik Alom's experience (see below), who is from another hamlet of the same village, is noticeably different. This village had no Buddhist neighbors.

"The army entered the hamlet in the morning. There were about a hundred of them. They were shouting loudly [in Burmese], 'Where are AKSA's men?' They said that AKSA was hiding in this village. They went inside the houses, pushing everyone outside. A soldier started shooting in the air while he was leaving a house. They separated the men and women and made us sit down on the ground. Children were also separated by sex. They shouted loudly 'Where is AKSA? We know that Akxa is hiding in this village.' [At that moment], they hit us with their boots. Then the soldiers searched the houses. We sat for a moment. Then a soldier with a flamethrower burned down the houses. They screamed at us to leave and we ran in all directions. I found myself in a muro with the others. There, we waited. In the evening, some returned to the village to look for things but everything had been burned. We spent the night in the muro and the day after we went to Bangladesh.

Our village is only a 5 hour walk from the border. We left with the cattle (cows and herds of goats). There were about twenty people from my hamlet. But at the border, the BGP did not let us cross with the animals. This lasted a long time. We tried arguing [with them]. This is when a man died. (The circumstances are not clear, but it seems that the man continued to argue, to convince the police to let them cross with their cattle). They opened fire with an automatic weapon, right into his back. He fell. They told us to leave and we could not bury him. We walked another hour, then the Bangladeshi army trucks drove us here."

One man killed,
at the border, by the BGP

Rufik Alom, 55 years old

Rufik Alom's hamlet is located a few hundred meters from that of Mohammed Selim.

"The soldiers entered the hamlet firing [in the air]. But when they arrived up to my brother-in-law's (affine: his sister's husband) stall, they fired an entire load. Abdu Rukim died instantly. He was shot in the stomach and in the shoulder. There was also an employee (he does not remember the employee's name; he was 35 years old and had 4 children): he was killed instantly as well. At that moment, everyone ran. We took refuge in a muro. No, the soldiers did not pursue us. But we saw them from the muro. They stayed in the village for a long time. Only one old man was unable to leave, because he was handicapped, so he stayed. Later that day, when we were in the muro, some saw the soldiers push him into his house before setting it on fire. It was the third death for

the village. Almost the whole village was burned down. They did not use a flamethrower, they had lighters, which they brought to the thatch roofs to set them on fire.



We stayed in the muro for three days. We could see the soldiers from a distance. We made a circle, in the middle of the muro, and put the women and children inside. The mounted guards , day and night. To make the children sleep, we sat crouching and holding them in our arms. [see photo]. On the second day, we went back to the village, took the bodies and buried them. We left on the third day. We arrived near the ghera (frontier), but there was barbed wire, a lot of them, and they were very high. We followed it for a long time, and then we saw an opening [through the barbed wire]. But right away we saw four bodies with their feet torn off. We understood then that the ground had land mines, but we continued anyway into the opening. We crawled while holding the children. It went fine, and we started walking once we were across the border. But half an hour later we heard an explosion, someone from another group behind ours must have jumped on a mine.”

Killed:

1. Abdu Rakim
2. a 35-year-old man
3. a handicapped person burned to death

Somina, 30 years old, widow, three children (one girl and two boys)
Shita Purika village, Maungdaw Township

"When the army attacked the village, we all fled. We went to take refuge in a muro. Later that day, once the soldiers had left the village, my husband, Abdur Raman, his brother, Ruhul Amin, and three other men left us in the muro and went back to the village to see if there was anyone left alive. We waited, but they didn't come back. So our majhi called the village chairman (Buddhist) on his cell phone. The chairman told him that five men had been captured by the army, taken to the [military] camp, and slaughtered. One day after arriving to Bangladesh, I learned that the army had attacked the muro where people from the village were still staying.

Killed:

1. Abdur Rahman
2. Ruhul Amin
3. Three other men

Tamzur Alim, 18 years old, Noor Akim, 23 years old, Tomzur Alam, 18 years old

These three young men grew up in different villages in the Buthindaung Township but were studying together at a boarding school, Ataka High School, in Sittwe. They returned to their respective villages on August 26th, and each fled with their families. They have not witnessed executions or killings but claim that authorities are targeting educated Rohingyas.

"At school, there were 2,600 students, including 2,300 Rohingyas. The others were Maughs. No, we did not have any friends among them. The two groups stayed separated. Were there friendships between people from these two groups? No, we don't know about that. There are no friendships between Maughs and Muslims.

There were 140 teachers at the school, 4 of whom were Rohingya. All the other were Buddhists. The teaching was all in Burmese. We were not treated badly by [the Buddhist] teachers. The army killed the Rohingya teachers. They killed Master Selim (54-year-old math teacher). He was our teacher. Soldiers came in jeeps to his village next to Sittwe, went into his house, and executed him in front of his family. No, they didn't kill his family, they're still there.

The army targets good students. When the army sees that a Rohingya is a good student, they kill him. They do not want us to succeed. Some go to study in Malaysia, it's safer there. It's very difficult to go to Rangoon [to study]. The army does not want [Rohingya] to be teachers."

Killed: 1, Master Selim, 54, math teacher.

Mohammed Jaber, 37 years old

Morong hamlet, northeast of Buthindaung Township

"We left our village before the army arrived. We had learned that the army was burning down villages and killing Muslims. The whole village left [between September 1st and 4th]. We took some rice and some clothes and we left. We arrived at the border many days later. Every night we stayed in a muro. My father could not walk anymore. I was the one who carried him. At some point we were coming out of a forest and had to cross a road, but we were afraid of being seen. We waited hours before crossing. Finally, we decided to cross but then the army appeared and started shooting. I could not run. I had to leave my father in the forest. I left him on the ground. Yes, the soldiers were shooting. I don't know where they were shooting from, we didn't see them. We continued to walk. Afterward, we were not attacked until the trucks [of the Bangladeshi army, who led them to the camps.]"

Hafez Ahmed, Imam, 56 years old Foira Bazaar, Maungdaw Township

Noor Mohamed, muezzin, 60 years old Renauk Ngatha, six km from Foira Bazaar

Ahmed: "Eight days before Eid-ul-Azha (September 26th), injured people arrived in our village and told us that the army was killing people at That Oo Chaung, right near a military camp. We closed the madrasas and fled into a muro. After that, we set off for the border. There were thousands of people walking. We carried the injured ones who had come to our village."

Mohamed: “Five days before Eid-ul-Azha (September 28th), we left to hide before the army arrived. The army came close, about two kilometers from the village. They fired from far away. There were injuries. A woman was shot in the shoulder. People ran. We crossed a river (boddhal or borhal) and we arrived to a very high muro (possibly a mountain) with 250 houses (families). It rained for three days, without stopping. This is why the soldiers didn't continue or come into the muro. There was nothing to eat for three days. Then we left on foot, but we didn't go through the Naf [river]. We went [north], by the mountains. We left the muro early in the morning and arrived at the border at night. Many of the injured died on the way.”

Amye Tuhla, 35 years old, married, five boys

Gora Hali village, Maungdaw Township. Rice farmer, father of 5 boys

"There was a military camp just a 30-minute walk from the village. We fled before the soldiers arrived because we had been warned. People came and said that hundreds of soldiers came with BGPs and Maughs. We took some things and supplies and left. When they arrived, they burned down the village. We hid for 6 days in a muro. At night, men returned to the village. One day, my younger brother, Noor Alom, returned to the village with three other men to search for supplies. They were caught and killed. Yes, we were able to bury them later.

After six days, we decided to leave the muro, but it took us almost two weeks [to get to the border]. We hid each night. One day, we arrived at an empty Rohingya village that had been set on fire, Soon Hda (possibly Sorhodda). Soldiers were staying right next door, but we had not seen them. They came and took five men from the group and killed them on the spot. After that, we continued. I don't remember what day we arrived at the border."

Executed:

Eight young men, including Noor Alom, 35

Hussein Ali, 55 years old, "chairman"

Kin Taug hamlet union, Nanthadaung Village, north of Maungdaw District (less than 15 miles from the border)

“On August 26th, very early in the morning, we saw fires (tracer bullets) in the sky. The 352nd [Light Infantry] Battalion had a camp that was within one kilometer of the village and the BGP camp was less than two kilometers further away. On the 26th, they attacked the village together. But we had left the previous night.

There were also Maughs, Shakmas, Burgwa (sic) and Hindus with them. They stole from our homes, stole food, stole livestock. How do we know that? Witnesses saw them putting stolen things into rickshaws and vans and leaving with them. Hundreds of Maughs came from the outside to join the local Maughs.

In the village, the soldiers slaughtered a woman who had stayed in the village, Halima Khatun (she was mentally ill according to Ali). The others were killed later, as they strayed away from the group.

We hid for three days in the forest. There were tens of thousands of us. There were people everywhere. When we set off, there were thousands of people walking. At the border, we saw the BGP in the distance. As there were thousands of us, it took us a long time to pass through. At one point, the BGP opened fire. A young man, Dolaya, was hit and died soon after.”

Five people killed
 Halima Khatun, 50 years old (slaughtered and mutilated)
 Ilias, 18 years old
 Mowlobi Rashid, 40 years old
 Shiraz-Ul Saquee, 18 years old
 Dolaya, 17 years old (killed by bullets at the border from afar)

Nurul Haque, 28 years old, majhi
 Shidar para village, Maungdaw township

“I was already the majhi of my village before arriving here and be chosen as majhi by the Bangladeshi army. (In Myanmar) I got my position by buying it. In my village, there were Muslims, Buddhists, and Hindus. Hindus were artisans, barbers, they had no land. There were three Buddhist communities: Shakmas, Maughs, and Chaks. My nearest Buddhist neighbor was about 300 meters away, I knew who he was but I didn't know him. No, I never talked to him. There was a military camp far from the village, but soldiers came regularly, and each time they stayed in one of the village schools. From time to time they would take a cow to eat it. If we protested, they would hit us. It was the army, they had green uniforms. They came in groups of 50 soldiers.

On August 25th, they entered the village and set the mosque on fire during the daytime. It was made of bamboos. It was the second time that the mosque was burned. The first time was a long time ago, but it had been monks who had burned it. Some said that they were actually soldiers dressed as monks. This 25th of August they were shooting too, but in the air. We left immediately for the border, slept in a muro, and arrived in Bangladesh on August 26th. I want to come back [to Burma] but with my rights as a citizen. Otherwise, I prefer to stay here.”

ASPECTS OF THE VIOLENCE

The Escape: Villages are attacked by surprise. The residents' reactions vary little: they flee, often under fire; those who manage to escape often go first to rice paddies adjacent to the village. The places that come up the most are irrigation canals, which allows one to observe the events (acts of violence, gunfire) in the village while remaining relatively hidden -- an irrigation canal is between 5 and 50 centimeters deep; the escapees are mainly hidden by the rice plants.

Once the army leaves the village, the villagers leave their hiding place and head for a muro (a common term in both Rohingya and Chittagonian languages that refer to forests, hills, mountains; a place that is neither a village, nor cultivated lands). This muro is generally located between 40mn and 3 hours from the village and known to men from the village. All the testimonies point to a prolonged period of time spent in these places - there, villagers suffer from hunger, are traumatized, care for the wounded, all the while uncertain about the fate of their loved ones. During this period, small groups of men return to villages to search for survivors, food, or to bury the dead. These expeditions are sometimes deadly: in at least three cases, these men find themselves face to face with soldiers who execute them on the spot or in military camps.

Androicide and Eliticide: The two main patterns of the violence, as reported by the survivors, appear to be androicide and eliticide.

Violence against women is established by Rohingya testimonies and reports by Razia Sultana (2018) and OHCHR (2017). However, men between the ages of 20 and 30 are disproportionately the main victims of the killings committed between August and November of 2017. According to HAEFA, the refugee camps in Bangladesh consist of 50% minors, 30% women, and 20% men; a "deficit" of men that calls for further investigation. When they take the time to choose their victims, the soldiers almost always kill men. The executions and mutilations at Inn Din appear paradigmatic: hundreds of Rohingya villagers are gathered by soldiers and armed civilians ('paramilitary militia' according to Reuters) who choose ten men among a seated and frightened crowd of 200 people; these ten men are then isolated, and later executed in cold blood, including two by cold weapons (Lone, Soe Oo et alii, 2018). According to the Reuters investigation, the army and armed civilians then let the other Rohingyas escape.

In addition, many of the Rohingya we interviewed said that their elites (educated people in particular, but also local leaders, labor group leaders, and landowners), who are all men, are targeted by the Burmese army. Two kinds of local leaders, able to create working groups of several hundred men at a time, would have been executed. At least two Rohingya teachers were targeted, with soldiers going to their homes to execute them. These are the only executions in urban areas that we collected. Further investigation, however, is necessary to verify an eliticide pattern.

Finally, the possible targeting of Muslim material heritage in Arakan, often alleged but rarely verified, also needs to be investigated. A Bangladeshi author named Jamal Uddin, who spent nine months without being tried in a Burmese prison in 2008 for conducting a survey on Islamic monuments in Arakan, has just published a book on the topic, *Niyontrito Arakan e Nirjateeto Rohingya* (Chittagong: Balaka Prakashan, 2018).

A Defenseless Population

- (1) Rohingya civilians do not have weapons. Not a single act of self-defense was reported during the attacks on Rohingya villages or refugees by our informants, in other reports, nor even, to our knowledge, by Burmese authorities. We can therefore assert that all these killings are committed in cold blood.
- (2) The absence of a significant educated class among the Rohingya is an important factor in their current plight. Since access to education has been limited since independence, only a very small intellectual elite has emerged. They have thus not been able to produce a counter-argument to the representations that have constructed the Rohingya in the public space and media as the enemy figure. In the absence of Rohingya lawyers, officials and NGOs, this population has not been able to activate institutional mechanisms during the previous waves of repression (1978, 1991, 2012, 2016). The existence of a significant educated class is not to be construed with the activism of fringe elements and marginal websites.
- (3) The Rohingya are a people without allies. To the hostility of the Burmese authorities, one should add the indifference of the region's neighboring Muslim countries. In 2012, Indonesia and Malaysia have formally refused to welcome Rohingya refugees, even if their public opinions openly support the Rohingya. Malaysia's main contribution in the current humanitarian effort is currently an under-equipped field hospital. Indonesia has little involvement in the humanitarian effort. Public opinion in neighboring Thailand largely supports the Burmese authorities. Moshe Yegar (2009) noted in his doctoral thesis more than 40 years ago that the Rohingya have not been able to build transnational alliances. In Bangladesh, the Chittagonian population has made considerable efforts, but is now

showing signs of humanitarian fatigue. The first refugees who arrived at the end of August were greeted by Bangladeshi people, even though they were themselves impoverished. Bangladeshi public opinion has been supportive for a long time, and the Bangladeshi army and government must be recognized for their efforts. Nevertheless, a weariness is felt amongst the population, as well as a set of fears: particularly in terms of demography, security and impact on natural resources.

- (4) **The Rohingya' lack of representation,** leadership, and interlocution is a fact of enormous consequences and an extremely prejudicial absence for a traumatized and politically passive population. Even in the Cox's Bazaar area, where 700,000 Rohingya are gathered in a space of 5 out of 10 kilometers, no leadership seems to have emerged, either in the form of an organization or as "organic" leaders. This situation is not new, as noted by Yegar (2009:321) "the Muslims of Arakan were not able to produce a leadership from among themselves whose stature was such that it could unite the entire Rohingya people, or, for that matter, even most of the Rohingya. Neither were they able to build a network linking them to international Muslim bodies and Islamic countries." Already in the 1960s and 1970s, Rohingya who had settled and were educated in Rangoon attempted and failed to form political groups or produce political representatives (Yegar, c.p. 2018). This has been the case in the recent decades too, where mainly fringe groups, such as the Rohingya Solidarity Organization and the National Rohingya Organization of Arakan seem to have attracted attention. The lack of genuine and legitimate interlocution is now giving the Bangladeshi authorities, UN agencies, and international NGOS a "hold" on Rohingya interests. At the Humanitarian Aid Coordination Cell at Cox's Bazaar weekly meetings, where about 30 international organizations meet under the auspices of the United Nations, there are no Rohingya representatives present.

Who Kills?

Army soldiers and officers are the main perpetrators of the violence and killings of the Rohingya. They are often identified by the victims by their green uniforms. These forces of repression are sometimes assisted by the Border Guard Police, identified by their gray uniforms. Finally, one testimony cites murderous intervention by the Burmese police, identified by their black uniforms. The accounts of atrocities vary: some informants were the witnesses of killings of children and acts of mutilation; others not. The breaking of the soldiers' ethical blockages is thus clear in several cases, but does not seem to be shared by all the soldiers. Finally, the use of drugs by the repression apparatus, at the instigation of their superiors or not, needs to be investigated.

The same is true of the exact role and scope of participation of Maugh and Shakma civilians (identified grossly in the media and reports by Amnesty, Human Rights Watch, and the United Nations by their religious affiliation). One case only reported Rakhine civilians who participated directly to the killings; in all the other cases reported here, these civilians served as informants, were not armed, and showed to the soldiers the houses to burn down. They were sometimes dressed as soldiers. In some cases, they were recognized by the victims in the midst of the attack. Their participation may correspond to "massacres of neighbors": this is partly the case of the Inn Din massacre, as documented by Lone and Soe (2018). In others, however, the Maughs were unknown to the attacked villagers. The pivotal question of their motivation, which could well be distinct from that of the official forces of repression, deserves better than generalizations in the

international media and should be better examined before reducing it to one single cause -religious hatred or material interests.

Much uncertainty still remains about the objectives of the Burmese military. Rather than surround the village before attacking it, soldiers often enter from one side. They sometimes seem to shoot bursts of gunfire at random or in the air; and when they take the time to target their victims, they often choose men. According to the testimonies gathered, they do not usually continue to pursue the villagers who flee. No testimony tells of soldiers entering fields or muros in pursuit of the survivors. In addition, testimonies that mention the racketeering perpetrated against the fleeing victims by security forces at border points show, by default, the opportunity they would have had to shoot at the refugees. Additionally, several thousand Rohingya have chosen to remain in Rakhine still to this day, including in attacked and damaged villages. Finally, the testimonies of two majhis from Merula (see above) report telephone conversations between them and a Burmese military officer. The latter pressured them to leave, supported by death threats, but he did not chase them. Other testimonies suggest that, on several occasions, repressive forces were in contact with lines of refugees and had the opportunity to kill but did not - and sometimes, yes, they shot and killed. The testimonies collected thus suggest that the principal intention of the Burmese repressive apparatus was to clear the townships of Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung of their Muslim population –at any cost. The terror campaign carried out by the military (including atrocities against children, rapes, executions and mutilations) could be part of this objective. Only a thorough investigation in Burma and by Burmese speakers on the orders that were transmitted, their authors –and the margin of interpretation of the field officers who received those orders- will be able to determine the responsibilities and the causes of the violence and atrocities. However, a careful examination of the nature of violence and the testimonies presented in this report clearly suggest that a Crime Against Humanity has been committed by the Myanmar army against the Rohingya in Rakhine.

Survey conducted by Jean-Philippe Belleau
University of Massachusetts Boston

Acknowledgements: We thank HAEFA (www.haefa.org) for the interpreting service during the interviews of the Rohingya refugees.

Bibliography

Alam, Mohammed Ashraf, " A short history of Arakan and the Rohingya," in M.M. Siddiquee, *The Rohingyas of Arakan : history and heritage*, Chittagong : Ali Publishing House, 2014.

Amnesty International, *Remaking Rakhine State*, March 12, 2018, 24p.

Arcaro, Pascal, Desaine, Loïs, *La Junte birmane contre " l'ennemi intérieur". Le régime militaire, l'écrasement des minorités ethniques et le désarroi des réfugiés rohingya*, Paris : L'Harmattan, 2008.

Burney, H, "On the population of the Burman empire ", *Journal of the Statistical Society of London*, vol. 4, n.4, 1842, pp. 335-347.

Census of India, *Burma. Part II, Tables*, Rangoon : Office of the Supdt., 1933.

Das, Bidhayak, "Transnational Terrorism and ARSA's Fight for a 'Just Cause' ", *The Irrawaddy*, February 17, 2018.

Defert, Gabriel, *Les Rohingyas de Birmanie, Arakanais, musulmans et apatrides*, Paris : Aux lieux d'être, 2007.

de Mersan, Alexandra, "L'expression du particularisme arakanais dans la Birmanie contemporaine ", *Moussons*, vol. 8, 2005.

Ibrahim, Azeem, *The Rohingyas : Inside Myanmar's Genocide*, Hurst, 2018.

Imperial Gazetteer of India, *Vol V*, Oxford : Clarendon Press, 1908.

Irwin, Anthony, *Burmese Outpost*, London : Collins, 1945.

Karim, Abdul, *The Rohingyas : a short history of their history and culture*, Chittagong : Arakan Historical Society, 2000.

Leider, Jacques, "Transmutations of the Rohingya Movement in the Post-2012 Rakhine State Crisis", O.K. Gin & V. Grabowsky, eds., *Ethnic and Religious Identities and Integration in Southeast Asia*, Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books, 2017, pp. 191-239.

Leider, Jacques, "Rohingya : the name, the movement, and the quest for identity ", in *Nation-Building in Myanmar*, Yangon : EGRESS/Myanmar Peace Center, 2013.

Leider, Jacques, *Le royaume d'Arakan, Birmanie. Son histoire politique entre le début du XV^{ème} et la fin du XVII^{ème} siècle*, Paris : Ecole Française d'Extrême-Orient, 2004.

Lone, Wa, Soe Oo, Kyaw, Lewis, Simon, Slodkowski, Antoni, "How Myanmar forces burned, looted, and killed in a remote village ", *Reuters*, February 8, 2018 : <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-rakhine-events/>

MSF, " At Least 6,700 Killed During Attacks in Myanmar ", December 14, 2017 <http://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/article/msf-least-6700-rohingya-killed-during-attacks-myanmar>

Myint, Moe, "Ninety Percent of Rohingya Population Ejected from Rakhine", *The Irrawaddy*, February 23, 2018.

Mynt-U, Thyant, "Myanmar, an Unfinished Nation", *Aisan Review*, June 2017.

New York Times, "Burma Moslems Battles Buddhists ; Karachi Scans Situation Closely ; Small-Scale War is Raging in Province Just Across the East Pakistan Border", *New York Times*, March 21, 1952, p.3.

Paton, Charles, "Historical and Statistical Sketch of Aracan", *Asiatic Researches*, vol. 16, 1828, pp. 353-381.

Sassen, Saskia, "Is Rohingya persecution caused by business interests rather than religion ?", *The Guardian*, January 4, 2017.

Siqqidi, Mohammed, ed., *The Rohingyas of Arakan : history and heritage*, Chittagong : Ali Publishing House, 2014.

Sultana, Razia, *Rape by Command*, Chittagong : Kaladan Press Network, 2018.

Yegar, Moshe, *The Muslims of Burman. A Study of a Minority Group*, Wiesbaden : O Harrassowitz, 1972.

Yegar, Moshe, " Some Comparative Notes on Three Muslim Rebellions in Southeast Asia (Burma, Thailand and the Philippines)", in E. Tagliacozzo, *Southeast Asia and the Middle East : Islam, Movement, and the Longue Durée*, Singapore : NUS Press, 2009, pp. 319-348.

United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner (OHCHR), "Mission report of OHCHR rapid response mission to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh", September 13-24, 2017.

Zaw, Htet Naing, "Unchecked Conflict Could Lead to Disintegration of Rakhine State", *The Irrawaddy*, February 6, 2018.