

URGENT ACTION

SAFETY CONCERN FOR PEOPLE IN NORTH RAKHINE

After attacks on police outposts in the north of Myanmar's Rakhine State, the authorities initiated a major security operation placing thousands of already vulnerable people at risk. Amid reports of human rights violations by security forces, access for humanitarian organizations, independent journalists and human rights monitors has been restricted.

On 9 October, unknown assailants attacked three police outposts in the north of Myanmar's Rakhine State, killing nine Border Guard Police officers and seizing weapons and ammunition. Following the attacks, the authorities initiated a major security operation and sealed off the area, placing thousands of already vulnerable people at risk.

Before the start of the security operation, around 150,000 people in northern Rakhine State, home to the majority of Myanmar's Rohingya population, were reliant on humanitarian services. This is in large part due to severe restrictions on their movement and other rights. Since 9 October, the authorities have restricted humanitarian access to the area, suspending regular humanitarian services and preventing an assessment of the needs of an estimated 15,000 newly displaced people. Tightened restrictions on movement have also meant many Rohingyas are confined to their villages. Access to healthcare, including lifesaving medical-treatment, is also restricted. On 6 November, the World Food Programme (WFP) was allowed to conduct a rapid assessment in four affected villages and was able to supply food aid, however other villages in the area have yet to receive any aid or assistance.

Amnesty International is also deeply concerned about continuing allegations of human rights violations being committed against Rohingyas by members of the Myanmar security forces in the context of security operations. These includes reports of unlawful killings, rape and other crimes of sexual violence, and arbitrary arrest and detention. The government has denied these allegations, yet has effectively barred independent observers and human rights monitors from accessing the area.

Please write immediately in English, Burmese or your own language:

- Calling on the Myanmar authorities to take immediate action to protect all civilians in northern Rakhine State and allow humanitarian organizations and agencies full, safe and unfettered access to the region;
- Calling on them to allow independent observers, journalists and human rights monitors to access northern Rakhine State; and
- Calling on them to immediately initiate an impartial and independent investigation into allegations of human rights violations by the security forces. Where sufficient evidence is gathered, those suspected of responsibility for crimes – including those with command responsibility – should be brought to justice in trials which meet international standards of fairness, without recourse to the death penalty.

PLEASE SEND APPEALS BEFORE 27 DECEMBER 2016 TO:

Commander-in-Chief of the Myanmar

Armed Forces

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing

Ministry of Defense, Office 24

Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: +95 (0) 67404299

Email:

admm.myanmar@mptmail.net.mm

Salutation: Dear Senior General

State Counsellor

Minister of Foreign Affairs

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Office No. 9

Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: + 95 (0) 67412396

Salutation: Your Excellency

And copies to:

Dr. Win Myat Aye

Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement

Office No. 23

Nay Pyi Taw

Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Fax: + 95 (67) 404 335

Salutation: Dear Minister

Also send copies to diplomatic representatives accredited to your country. Please insert local diplomatic addresses below:

Name Address 1 Address 2 Address 3 Fax Fax number Email Email address Salutation Salutation

Please check with your section office if sending appeals after the above date.

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**



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ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Northern Rakhine State – the name commonly given to the townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung - is situated in the west of Myanmar and borders Bangladesh. It is populated mainly by the Rohingya minority, but also by other ethnic minorities such as the Buddhist Rakhines. The Rohingya have faced decades of repression and discrimination. This includes severe restrictions on their movement, impacting their ability to access healthcare, education and livelihood opportunities. This ongoing repression has caused thousands of Rohingya to flee and seek asylum abroad in recent years.

The situation in northern Rakhine State has deteriorated significantly since the 9 October attacks. The authorities responded by accusing Rohingya groups of responsibility – though to date the identity of the perpetrators remains unclear – and by initiating a major security operation, conducting sweeps of the area to find the perpetrators and uncover the stolen weapons. Authorities also claim that a second attack on a border post on 3 November, in which one officer was killed, was the responsibility of Rohingya groups. While Amnesty International recognizes that the Myanmar authorities have the duty and the right to maintain protect the population – and officials – from attacks, and to investigate and bring to justice those suspected of responsibility for the 9 October and 3 November attacks, they must ensure that measures taken in response to the attacks are proportionate and do not involve human rights violations. Investigations should be conducted in a fair and transparent manner, in accordance with international law.

Since the start of the security operation, a number of UN experts have expressed concerns about the situation in northern Rakhine State. On 24 October a group of UN experts, including the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the Special Rapporteur on Extra-Judicial summary or arbitrary Executions and the Special Rapporteur on internally displaced persons issued a joint statement urging the Myanmar authorities to address serious violations of human rights in northern Rakhine State and allow humanitarian access. On 8 November, the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) issued a statement highlighting grave risks faced by children in northern Rakhine State as a result of restrictions on humanitarian assistance. On 11 November the UN Special Representative on sexual violence in conflict issued a statement urging the Myanmar authorities to investigate allegations of sexual violence by the security forces.

Government officials have repeatedly denied reports of human rights violations by the security forces, claiming that they have been fabricated to gain international support. Some have accused Rohingya villagers of burning down their own homes to make it look as if their village was set on fire by the Myanmar military, while state media has accused those involved in the attacks of “destabilising the situation with the aim of scaring away local people who are beginning to return home and scapegoating security forces”.

Name: People in northern Rakhine State

Gender m/f: both

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