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Myanmar: Armies Target Ethnic Rohingya, Rakhine

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A family who fled from Buthidaung, Myanmar, at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, June 25, 2024. © 2024 Mohammad Ponir

(Bangkok) – [Myanmar](#) junta forces and the opposition Arakan Army have committed extrajudicial killings and widespread arson against Rohingya, Rakhine, and other civilians in Myanmar's

western Rakhine State in recent months, Human Rights Watch said today. The military's unlawful recruitment of Rohingya men and boys has stoked communal tensions between the Rohingya Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist communities.

In April and May 2024, the junta military and allied Rohingya armed groups as well as the advancing Arakan Army all committed atrocities against civilians. On May 17, as the Arakan Army gained control of the remaining junta military bases in Buthidaung township, its forces shelled, looted, and burned Rohingya neighborhoods in Buthidaung town and nearby villages, causing thousands of [Rohingya](#) to flee. The clashes have since moved west to Maungdaw, where fighting has surged over the past week, with reports of killings and other abuses against the Rohingya population, including children, women, and older people. All parties to the conflict should halt unlawful attacks, cease the use of hate speech, and allow unimpeded humanitarian access to those in need.

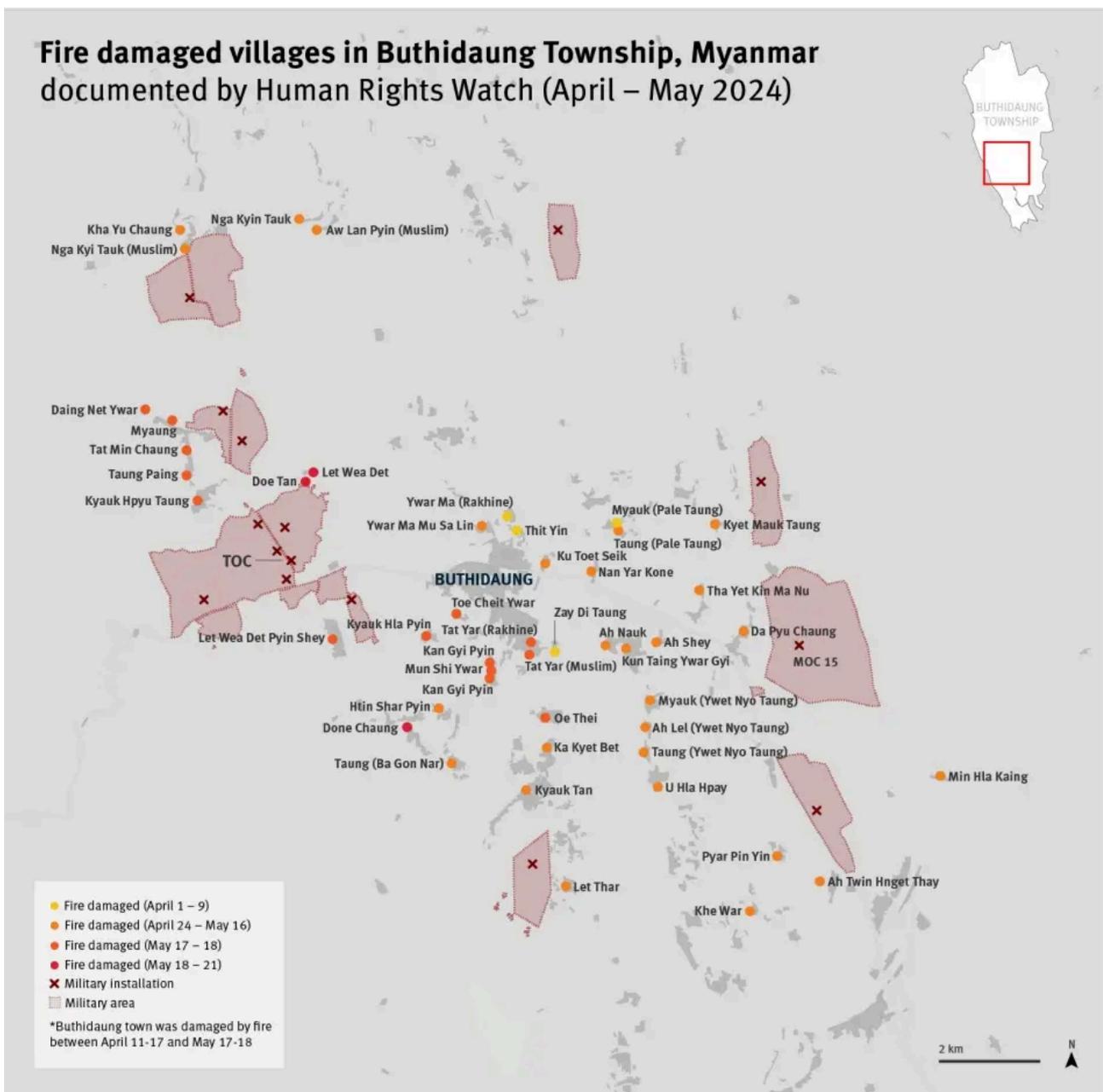
“Ethnic Rohingya and Rakhine civilians are bearing the brunt of the atrocities that the Myanmar military and opposition Arakan Army are committing,” said [Elaine Pearson](#), Asia director at Human Rights Watch. “Both sides are using hate speech, attacks on civilians, and massive arson to drive people from their homes and villages, raising the specter of ethnic cleansing.”

Human Rights Watch interviewed 33 ethnic Rohingya and Rakhine victims and witnesses to abuses and analyzed satellite imagery, open-source material, private videos and photos, and medical records.

The Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group, has engaged in periods of heavy fighting with the Myanmar military for control of Rakhine State since late 2018. Hostilities between junta forces and the Arakan Army have surged since mid-November 2023, ending a year-long unofficial ceasefire. As the Arakan Army has rapidly expanded its control across Rakhine State, the military has responded with [indiscriminate attacks](#) using helicopter gunships, artillery, and ground assaults. From November to July, junta forces carried out over 1,100 airstrikes nationwide, more than one-fifth of them in Rakhine State, according to the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project (ACLED).

By April, fighting had intensified in the predominantly Muslim townships of Buthidaung and Maungdaw, where an estimated 240,000 Rohingya lived. Junta forces and allied Rohingya armed groups carried out arson attacks on ethnic Rakhine villages on the outskirts of Buthidaung town and Rakhine areas within the town in mid-April, according to satellite imagery analysis, witness accounts, and local media reports.

In late April, the Arakan Army began burning Rohingya villages east of Buthidaung town. Satellite imagery and thermal anomaly data analyzed by Human Rights Watch reveal that more than 40 villages and hamlets in Buthidaung township were partially or completely destroyed by fire from April 24 to May 21. Burning destroyed thousands of structures across the township, including predominantly Rohingya areas downtown. Human Rights Watch concluded that the pattern of destruction caused by fire throughout Buthidaung suggests that all these attacks were deliberate.



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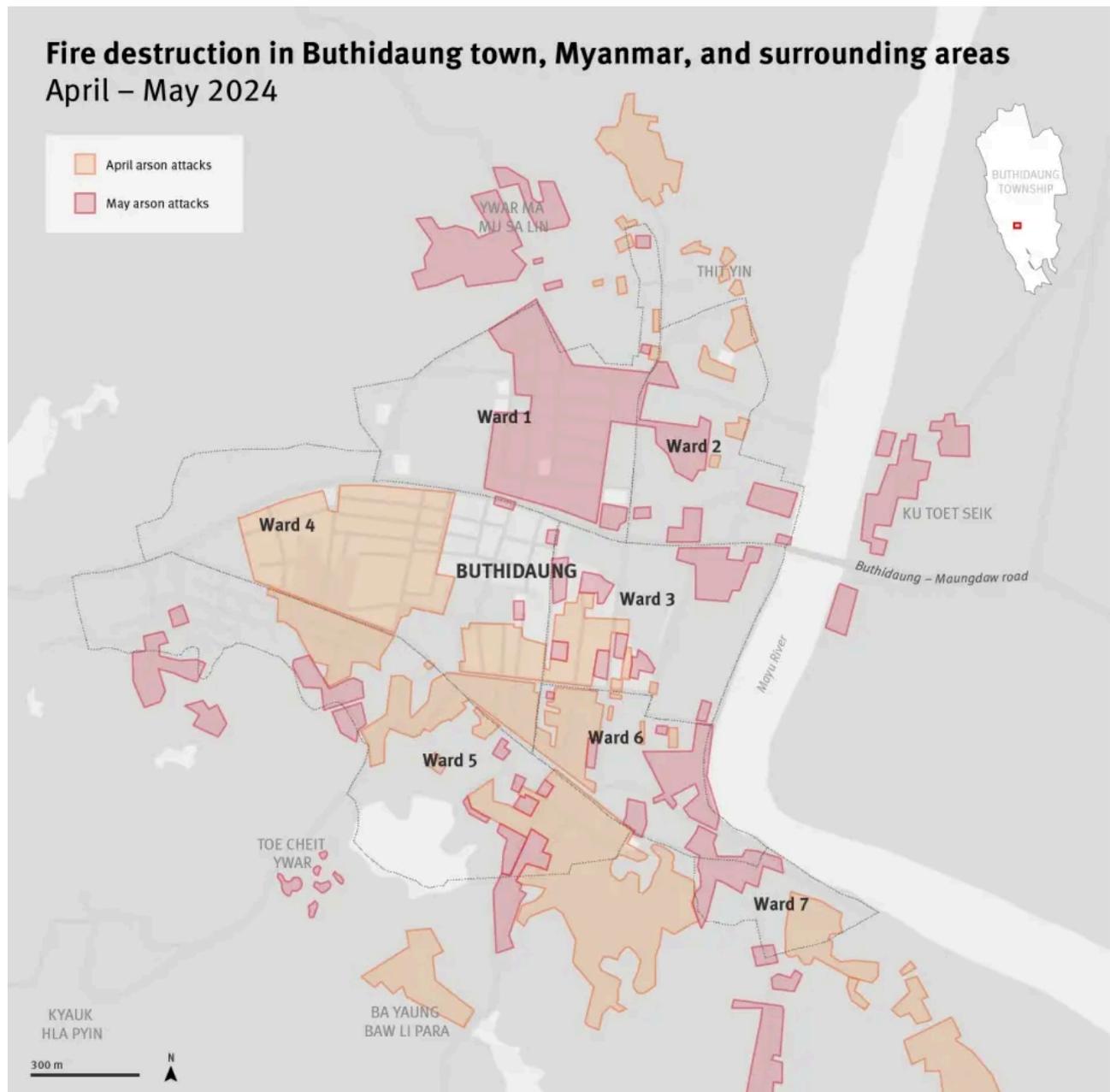
Fire damaged villages and hamlets in Buthidaung township documented by Human Rights Watch during the arson attacks in April and May 2024. Analysis based on satellite imagery and thermal anomalies. Analysis and graphics © 2024 Human Rights Watch. Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU). Military data © Open StreetMap contributors and ASPI.

Residents said Arakan Army fighters began setting fire to Buthidaung town on the evening of May 17, despite having told them to evacuate by 10 a.m. the following day. Thousands of Rohingya displaced from nearby villages were sheltering in schools, homes, and the hospital in downtown Buthidaung. Witnesses said the burning, shelling, and gunfire were not in response to any evident fighting between the forces.

“Without any conflict, the Arakan Army besieged the town,” said a man who fled Buthidaung’s Ward 2. “They started launching heavy weapons and at the same time began setting the houses on fire. People ran, fleeing for their lives, while older people and children were left behind in burning houses. It was a real scene of Qayamat [apocalypse].”

The capture of Buthidaung [displaced an estimated 70,000 people](#), mostly Rohingya, who fled to the west and south amid further attacks. The Arakan Army announced that it had captured all Myanmar junta bases in Buthidaung on May 18. Satellite imagery indicates that the arson attacks continued in the area through May 21, following the paths of people fleeing.

Human Rights Watch also verified videos and photographs posted on social media and shared privately that showed destroyed houses in Buthidaung in April and May and large groups of people fleeing.



[Click to expand Image](#)

Main areas damaged by fire across wards in Buthidaung town and its outskirts. Analysis based on satellite imagery and thermal anomalies. Analysis and graphics © Human Rights Watch. Ward data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU).

Rohingya described being caught between junta and Arakan Army forces, both trying to coerce them to take sides in the conflict. The junta military has unlawfully recruited thousands of Rohingya men and boys from Rakhine State and the refugee camps in [Bangladesh](#), with support from Rohingya armed groups, and has forced Rohingya to participate in sham protests against the Arakan Army. Such efforts have inflamed relations between the Rohingya and Rakhine, triggering the spread of hate speech and misinformation online and offline.

The Arakan Army has denied attacking Rohingya civilians, asserting it issued sufficient warning and that the May 17-18 fires resulted from junta airstrikes and arson committed by Rohingya militia. In an [August 5 letter](#) to Human Rights Watch, the Arakan Army stated, “We do not condone or engage in unlawful attacks or arson attacks against civilians.”

The laws of war prohibit deliberate and indiscriminate attacks on civilians and on civilian objects, such as homes, schools, and hospitals. Summary killings, mutilation of bodies, recruitment of

children, looting, and arson are all prohibited as war crimes. Warring parties must take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians, must cancel attacks if it becomes evident the target is not a military objective, and must provide effective advance warnings of attacks unless circumstances do not permit.

The Myanmar junta and Arakan Army should urgently allow access to Rakhine State to an independent international inquiry and to humanitarian agencies, Human Rights Watch said.

“The military junta and Arakan Army need to take immediate steps to protect civilians and civilian property during the hostilities,” Pearson said. “Governments with influence over the warring parties should weigh in forcefully or once again face a situation of ethnic cleansing.”

Names have been withheld or replaced with pseudonyms to protect the identities of victims and witnesses.

Crisis in Rakhine State

In 2017, more than 750,000 Rohingya fled the Myanmar military’s crimes against humanity and acts of genocide in the same areas beset by armed conflict today, seven years on. About 630,000 Rohingya remain in Rakhine State [under a system of apartheid](#) that leaves them exceptionally vulnerable to renewed fighting.

Since the February 2021 coup, the Myanmar military has committed crimes against humanity and war crimes across the country. Security forces have continued to persecute the Rohingya, arresting thousands for “unauthorized travel” and imposing [new movement restrictions and aid blockages](#) on Rohingya camps and villages.

The conflict [has displaced](#) an estimated 310,000 people in Rakhine State and southern Chin State since it resumed in November 2023. Yet the junta has ramped up its deadly blockages of humanitarian aid to civilians across Rakhine, a form of collective punishment that violates international humanitarian law. Security forces have shut down major roads and waterways, banned the transport of medical supplies, and attacked healthcare facilities. Internet and telecommunication outage data and reports from civil society groups demonstrate a total lack of internet services in Rakhine State between January 10 and May 31, 2024. These restrictions sustain the military’s longstanding “four cuts” strategy, designed to exert control over an area by isolating and terrorizing civilians.

Unlawful Forced Recruitment; Rising Hostilities

The military has been stoking communal tensions between the Rohingya and Rakhine communities through forced recruitment and other exploitative tactics, similar to its efforts during the [2012 ethnic cleansing campaign](#), Human Rights Watch said.

In late March, the military coerced Rohingya to participate in anti-Arakan Army protests in Buthidaung and Sittwe townships, threatening to burn down their homes, launch artillery attacks, or detain them if they refused. The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [reported](#) that the military organized the protests “most likely in order to destabilize Rakhine State to its own advantage by inflaming communal tensions.”

The military activated the 2010 People’s Military Service Law in February, enabling conscription of Myanmar citizens. Despite having long been denied citizenship and regarded as foreigners, the Rohingya became the [first targets](#) of the conscription campaign.

Security forces have abducted and forcibly recruited thousands of Rohingya men and boys through nighttime raids, coercion, false promises of citizenship, and threats of arrest, abduction, and beatings. The military has been sending forced recruits to [abusive two-week military training](#), then

deploying them to the front lines, where some have been killed or injured. Local media reported in late April that the military had conscripted 5,000 Rohingya into military training.

Yusuf, who lived in the village of Htin Shar Pyin, said that junta soldiers forcibly recruited him with about three dozen other Rohingya in a 3 a.m. raid in late March. “The military now wants us to join them in their fight against the Arakan Army almost seven years after they brutalized our mothers and sisters in 2017,” he said. “None of us joined them willingly.” Yusuf said he saw over 1,000 Rohingya conscripts at the cantonment. For two months, he was deployed to the front lines in Buthidaung.

In Bangladesh, where one million Rohingya refugees live in camps, [Rohingya armed groups](#) forcibly recruited and smuggled at least 1,800 refugees into Rakhine State on behalf of Myanmar junta forces between mid-March and early June. A camp *majhi* (community leader) said that the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO) armed group had tried to force the majhis to provide lists of 25 young men per camp block.

A Rohingya refugee said that on May 4, RSO members took his 15-year-old son, 17-year-old nephew, and about 20 other young men and boys to Myanmar. “We have stopped eating and drinking due to grief,” he said. “I want to get my son back. He is too young to understand anything about war.”

Rohingya said that the forced recruitment inflamed hostilities with Rakhine communities and made them a target of the Arakan Army. “Five young men were forcibly taken from our village by the military for conscription,” said a resident of Nan Yar Kone, a village attacked in early May. “I think this was why the Arakan Army launched the attack on our village in retaliation.”

In March and April, official Arakan Army social media accounts, including leader Twan Mrat Naing’s, referred to the Muslim Rohingya as “Bengali,” a pejorative term long used by the military to label them as foreigners. Both Rakhine and Rohingya accounts have spread misinformation and hate speech online.

“Before the recent clashes in Buthidaung, our relationship [with the Arakan Army] wasn’t so bad,” said Sadek, 19, from Htin Shar Pyin. “After these clashes, they started looting our houses and took all of our belongings on trucks.”

Another villager from Htin Shar Pyin said that during attacks on his village on May 14, Arakan Army fighters told them: “‘You sent your sons to the military for training to kill us. The military is your father. Is the military coming to protect you now? You don’t have the right to live in this area anymore.’ Afterward, they started burning the houses.”

April-May Violence

Between April 11 and 20, the junta military and Rohingya armed groups looted and set on fire ethnic Rakhine areas in Buthidaung town and villages to the south, according to satellite imagery reviewed by Human Rights Watch, witness accounts, and local media reports. Within the town, property in predominantly Rakhine, Hindu, and Khami areas in Wards 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, and 7 were set on fire in arson attacks between April 11 and 17, with Ward 4 most affected. The damage visible in the satellite imagery resulted from numerous fires originating in different parts of the town over several days, suggesting they were deliberately ignited. A Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) office and pharmacy [were burned down](#) on April 15.



[Click to expand Image](#)

Satellite imagery from April 27, 2024, showing the main burned areas in wards 4 and 5 of Buthidaung town during the arson attacks from April 11-17. © Planet Labs PBC. Analysis and graphics © Human Rights Watch.

A 26-year-old Rakhine villager from Buthidaung town said:

[Rohingya] Muslims collaborated with the SAC [State Administration Council junta] to destroy Rakhine villages and loot everything from the houses. The Muslims came in groups. The SAC forces were few, maybe around 10 or 20, but there were over 100 or around 200 Muslims. They destroyed our Buddhist religious buildings. They broke into the houses, took everything they wanted, loaded them onto their trucks, and then finally burned the houses. They also shot at us as we fled.

A 13-minute video made up of five clips was posted on Facebook by the account “Democratic Voice of Arakan” on May 26. The video, recorded from a moving vehicle, starts in Ward 3 and shows destroyed or partially destroyed buildings on both sides of the road in Wards 3 and 6 for the first five minutes. Satellite imagery captured on April 27 shows that most of the buildings filmed in this video were destroyed during the April attacks.

A photograph posted in a series on Facebook by *Western News* on April 24 shows dark smoke clouds filling the sky. Initially geolocated by [Bellingcat](#) and verified by Human Rights Watch, the photograph was taken south of Buthidaung Road in Ward 4 on April 14, according to the image timestamp.

While defeating junta units in Buthidaung, Arakan Army forces also began launching arson attacks on the surrounding Rohingya areas. Predominantly Rohingya villages and hamlets on the eastern bank of the Mayu River show destruction by fire in late April and early May, while smoke plumes and fires were detected on a dozen villages.

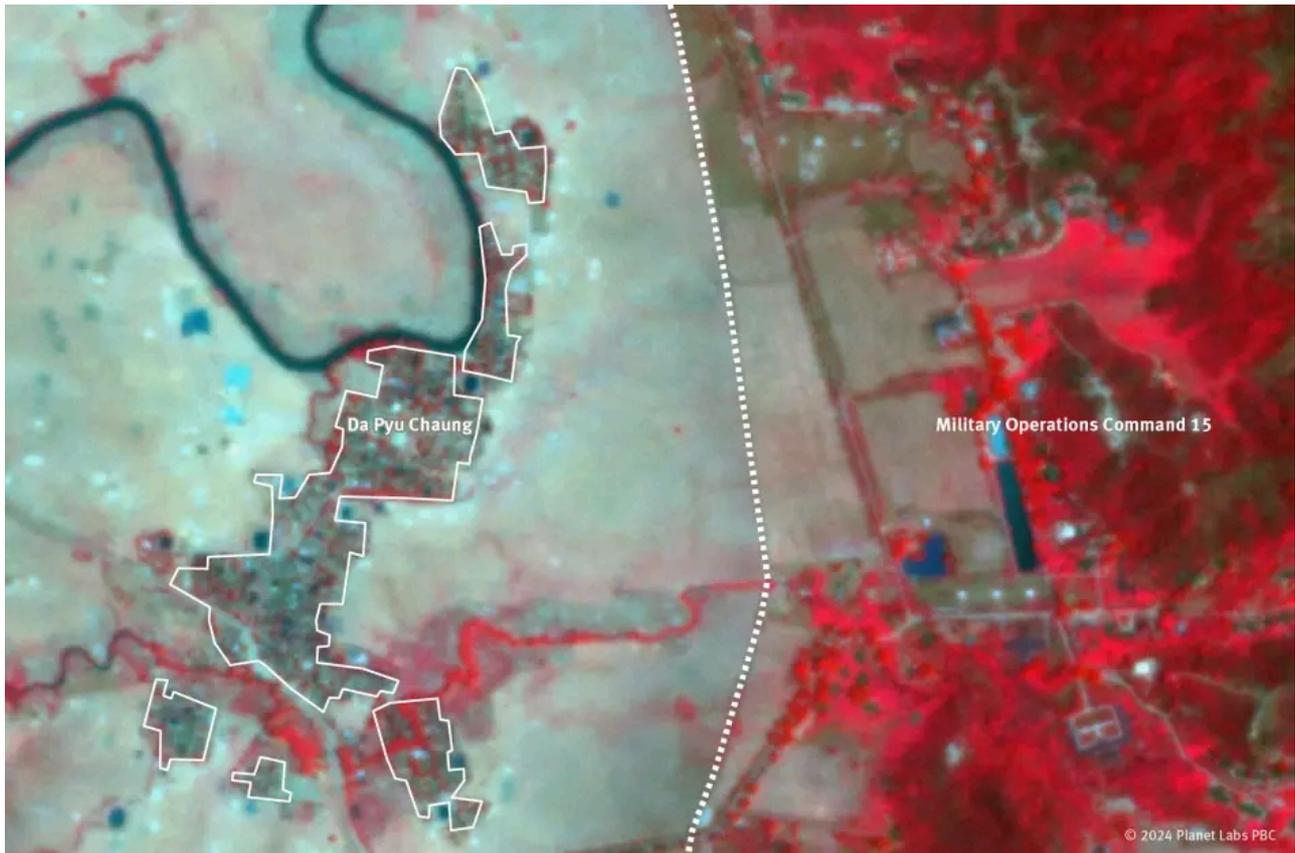
Ibrahim, 28, was severely injured in an attack on his village, Da Pyu Chaung:

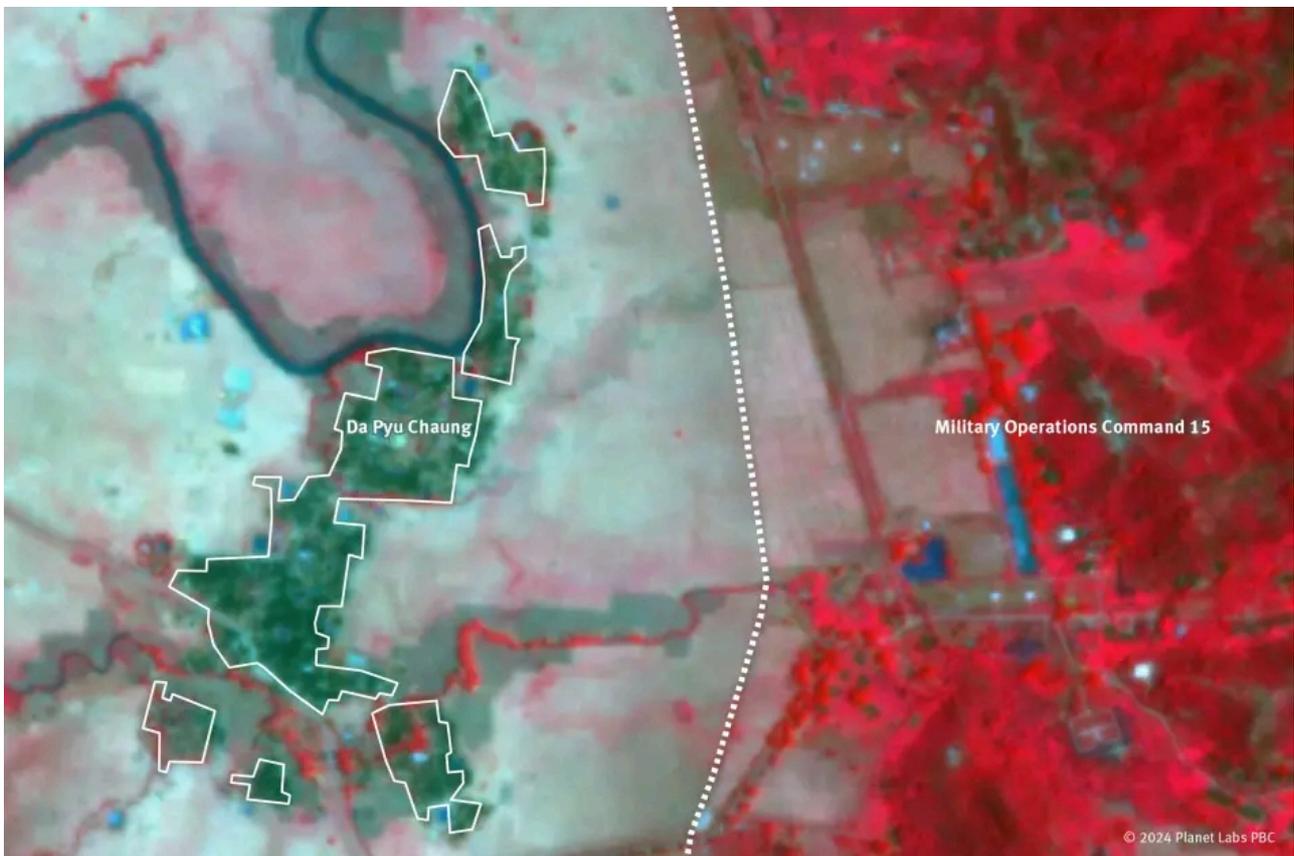
Many people were killed in our village when the Arakan Army carried out random shootings and drone attacks. I was lying on the porch at our house. Suddenly a bomb fell on my

neighbor's house. Fragments severely damaged my face. The whole family of six next door was killed – two parents and four children – along with five others who were sheltering there. Days after the attack on our village, the Arakan Army captured MOC [Military Operations Command] 15. The Arakan Army also burned our village down.

The Arakan Army announced it captured the junta's Military Operations Command 15 headquarters on May 2, about six kilometers east of Buthidaung town, after two weeks of fighting. A few days later, junta forces blew up the main bridge entrance to Buthidaung town from the east.

Da Pyu Chaung village is located less than 500 meters from the MOC headquarters. Satellite imagery captured in early May shows the village reduced to ashes along with other settlements nearby.





April 25, 2024: © 2024 Planet Labs PBC. *May 6, 2024:* © 2024 Planet Labs PBC.

Infrared satellite image comparison between April 25 and May 6, 2024, showing all the structures in Da Pyu Chaung village in the Buthidaung township reduced to ashes. On infrared images, the vegetation appears in red and the burned areas in darker colors.

A Rakhine villager who witnessed Arakan Army fighters burning houses in U Hla Pay and Ywet Nyo Taung said the Arakan Army framed the attacks as “clearance operations” against the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

Rohingya fleeing attacks in late April and early May sought shelter across the river in Buthidaung town. Much of the ethnic Rakhine community had already fled the town, escaping earlier attacks and hostilities or having been evacuated by the Arakan Army.

May 17-18

Rohingya said that Arakan Army fighters warned them to leave Buthidaung town by the morning of May 18 but began setting fire to houses the night before. “Arakan Army fighters gave us an ultimatum to vacate the town by 10 a.m. tomorrow,” a 28-year-old Rohingya man said during a phone interview the night of May 17. “But now they suddenly came and forced us to leave instantly and started setting every house on fire. Now everywhere is in flames.”

An 85-year-old man from Ward 2 said his son had attended a meeting with Arakan Army fighters who told Rohingya to leave their houses by 10 a.m. on May 18. “But they came at around 10 p.m. on May 17 and started firing and setting fire to the houses while villagers were busy preparing food and packing their belongings to leave the next day,” he said.

Rohingya told Human Rights Watch that Arakan Army fighters set fire to buildings across Buthidaung town; fired artillery shells; shot at villagers who were fleeing or not willing or able to leave; and looted houses. “They didn’t hesitate to torch our houses, even with people inside,” said Kabir, who lived in Ward 1. “They started setting fire to our homes around 9 p.m. We were inside when they began. They launched mortar shells at our houses and burned our village mosque.” Satellite imagery reveals fire damage in all seven wards, with Wards 1, 2, 3, and 6 most affected.



[Click to expand Image](#)

Satellite imagery from July 15, 2024, showing the main burned areas in wards 1 and 2 of Buthidaung town during the arson attacks from May 17–18. © Planet Labs PBC. Analysis and graphics © Human Rights Watch.

Witnesses reported mortar and drone attacks on Buthidaung General Hospital, a mosque in Ward 1, a guest house in Ward 2, government buildings, schools including the high school, and other buildings where thousands of displaced Rohingya were sheltering. New tents and shelters are visible in the courtyard of Basic Education High School in Ward 1 in satellite imagery captured since late April.

Thermal anomalies were detected by an environmental satellite on May 17 in all seven wards. Satellite imagery from May 18 confirmed that the thermal anomalies were caused by fire, and that the destroyed areas were Rohingya neighborhoods that had not been affected during the April attacks. Residential buildings and other infrastructure surrounding the Basic Education High School in Ward 1 and Buthidaung General Hospital in Ward 2 were destroyed, along with Buthidaung market in Ward 6.

Fatema, 22, lived in Ward 4 with 10 family members, 6 of whom were killed on May 17. She fled her house with her husband and two children when it was set on fire at about 8 p.m., but five other family members, including her 70-year-old father-in-law, were trapped on the upper floor: “After we got out of the house, we waited a long time for them, but they never came out.” Arakan Army fighters started shooting at the masses of fleeing villagers, she said. “Without saying anything, they started shooting toward the crowd. My brother-in law was hit and killed by a bullet. We couldn’t pick up his dead body or gather other remains because we were all running to save our own lives.”

Fatema said she saw 10-12 people shot and killed while fleeing, including a young boy. “His mother had to leave him by the road,” she said.

“The Arakan Army didn’t let us retrieve the bodies,” Kabir said.

Witnesses said they identified the Arakan Army fighters by their uniforms and insignia, and heard them speaking Rakhine.

Arson attacks were also carried out in villages south of Buthidaung town. Residents of Htin Shar Pyin said Arakan Army troops had first attacked the village a few days earlier, launching shells and burning houses. Sadek said that the attacks resumed the evening of May 17, reaching his home around 9:30 p.m. He had gone to a nearby shop while his parents were finishing dinner. “Suddenly, countless mortar shells were launched at our houses, and they were set on fire,” he said. “I saw from the shop that my house was burning. I saw it burn to ash.”

Sadek fled with other villagers. “I saw almost 15 dead bodies scattered around as I fled,” he said. “The bodies were covered with cloths so I couldn’t identify anyone. Arakan Army troops were guarding the bodies: no one was allowed to approach them. I don’t know if my family members are still alive.” Another villager from Htin Shar Pyin said his 16-year-old cousin had been killed.

Satellite imagery from May 18 shows at least three impact craters with a diameter of about 2.5 meters located less than 100 meters from the southern part of Htin Shar Pyin village, people visible in the fields next to the village, and large vehicles along the road between Htin Shar Pyin and Done Chaung.

On May 18, the Arakan Army announced it had seized Buthidaung town and overtaken all military bases.

The UN [told Reuters](#) that at least 45 Rohingya died during the attack and its immediate aftermath.

Fleeing the Town

Thousands of Rohingya fled Buthidaung town the evening of May 17. With the main bridge providing access from the east side destroyed, people were forced to flee west and south of the town.



[Click to expand Image](#)

Screenshot from one of the 13 videos Human Rights Watch received from a source, filmed along the Buthidaung-Maungdaw Road near Buthidaung jail between 10:37 p.m. on May 17 and 5:46 a.m. on May 18, according to the metadata. The videos show hundreds of people – men, women, and children, including a woman using a wheelchair – traveling in the dark along the road with their belongings in the opposite direction of the red, smoke-filled sky. © 2024 Private.

Large numbers were trapped in Ward 5, which was only partially burned, or outside the Buthidaung jail. “The Arakan Army is allowing Rohingya to stay in Ward 5, but they aren’t allowing us to flee to Maungdaw,” said a man sheltering at a warehouse. “It’s like a confinement.”

“Arakan Army fighters say those who violate their orders will be punished,” another man said.

Those who escaped the town to the west converged with junta troops retreating from the remaining bases overtaken by the Arakan Army, including the military’s Buthidaung Tactical Operations Command (TOC), which was captured after intense fighting on May 17. Witnesses said that Arakan Army fighters began firing at civilians and setting fire to houses in their efforts to overrun the military troops, some of whom continued fighting along the route.

Ahmad, 21, fled to Tat Min Chaung, near the Tactical Operations Command:

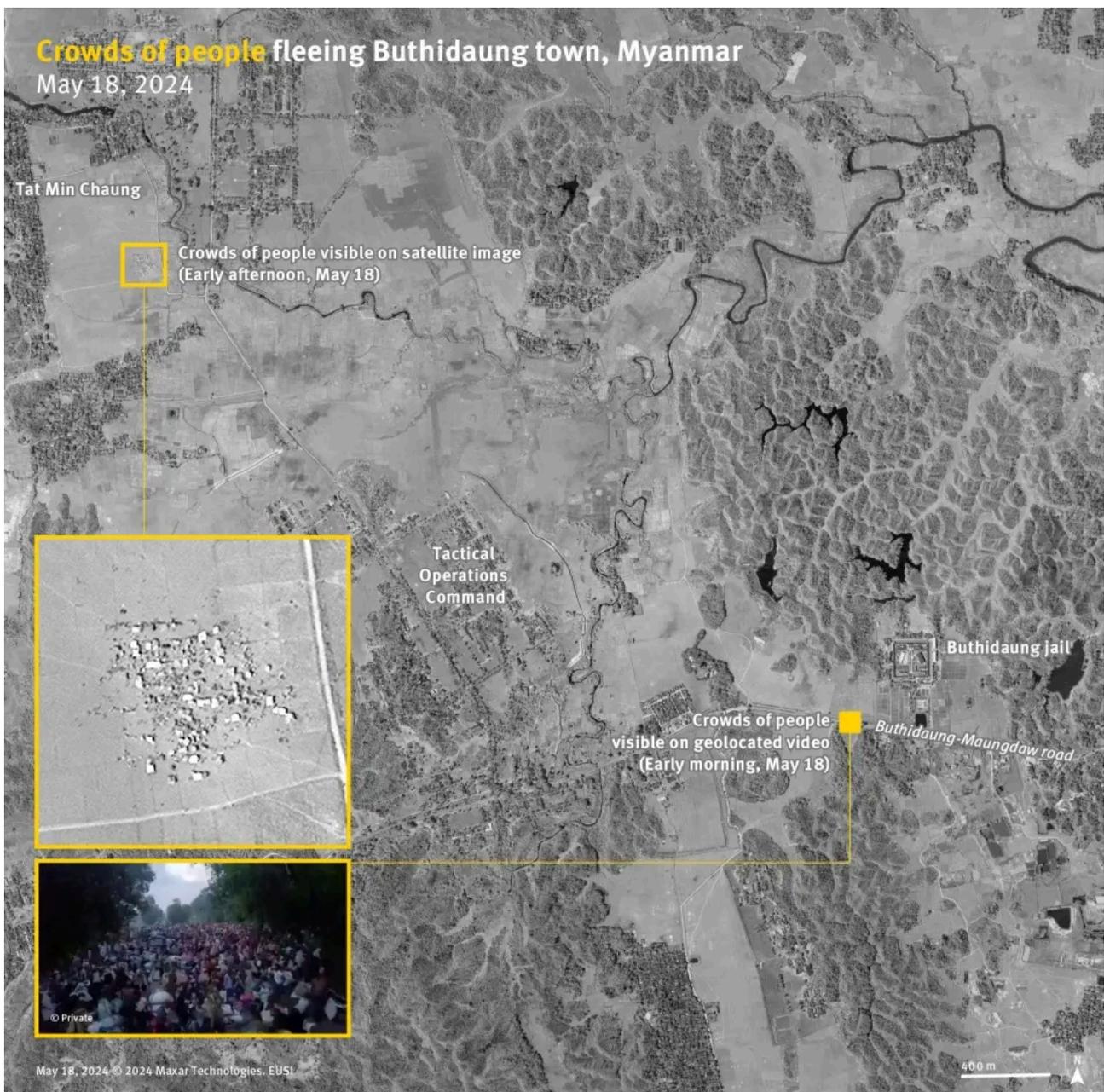
The scene was chaotic, with the military fleeing ahead and us caught in the middle. Many fleeing villagers were killed or arrested by the Arakan Army. I was hit in the shoulder by a bullet. People were killed before our eyes as we ran for our lives in the paddy fields. Some were hit by bullets, others were killed by heavy artillery shells. After arriving in a forest, we looked back and saw the village and the TOC on fire.

Sadek had fled to Tat Min Chaung from Htin Shar Pyin. “That night, a group of Arakan Army fighters were burning houses and launching heavy artillery,” he said. “The next day, they called us and started detaining villagers, accusing them of being recruited by the military or having ties with it.” Sadek was also shot during the attacks: “I was holding the wound with one hand as I ran to the crowd in the rice field.” Human Rights Watch reviewed his medical records from a hospital in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, including x-rays that show a bullet in his chest. His medical chart from May 24 states: “Gunshot 7 days ago over right side of chest. One entry wound; no exit wound.”

Fatema said that when she arrived at the Tactical Operations Command around 2:30 a.m. with other fleeing Rohingya, they were questioned by Arakan Army fighters. “They asked us if any Myanmar military were in the crowd,” she said. “We said no, since there were none. But they selected some young people and accused them of having ties with the military or being military recruits. They kicked and punched them and took them inside the base. They didn’t let us proceed so we stayed there the whole night.”

Two people said that while fleeing west, they saw bodies of people who had been beheaded, including at least two children. “When we arrived in Thar Mai Khali [Tat Min Chaung], we saw a mother and her child on her lap, both beheaded,” Yusuf said. “Then we saw another adolescent girl who had been beheaded. All were lying beside the road to the east of the mosque. We also saw thousands of villagers, including women and children, in the bushes. Children were screaming at the entrance of the village, and we saw four houses being burned down.” The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights [confirmed](#) at least four beheadings.

At 1:42 p.m. on May 18, satellite imagery captured a large crowd of people in a rice field, appearing to carry plastic sheltering, around 350 meters east of Tat Min Chaung.

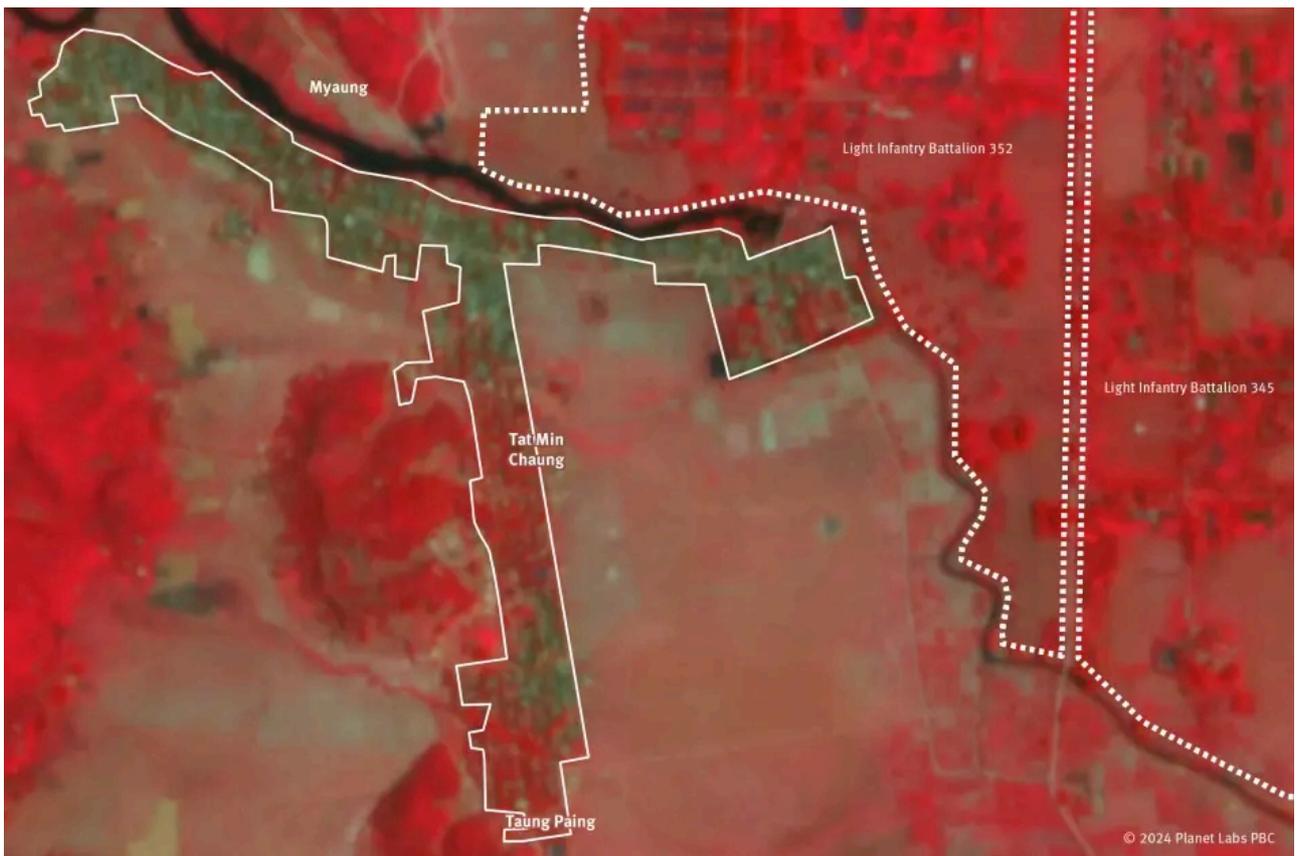
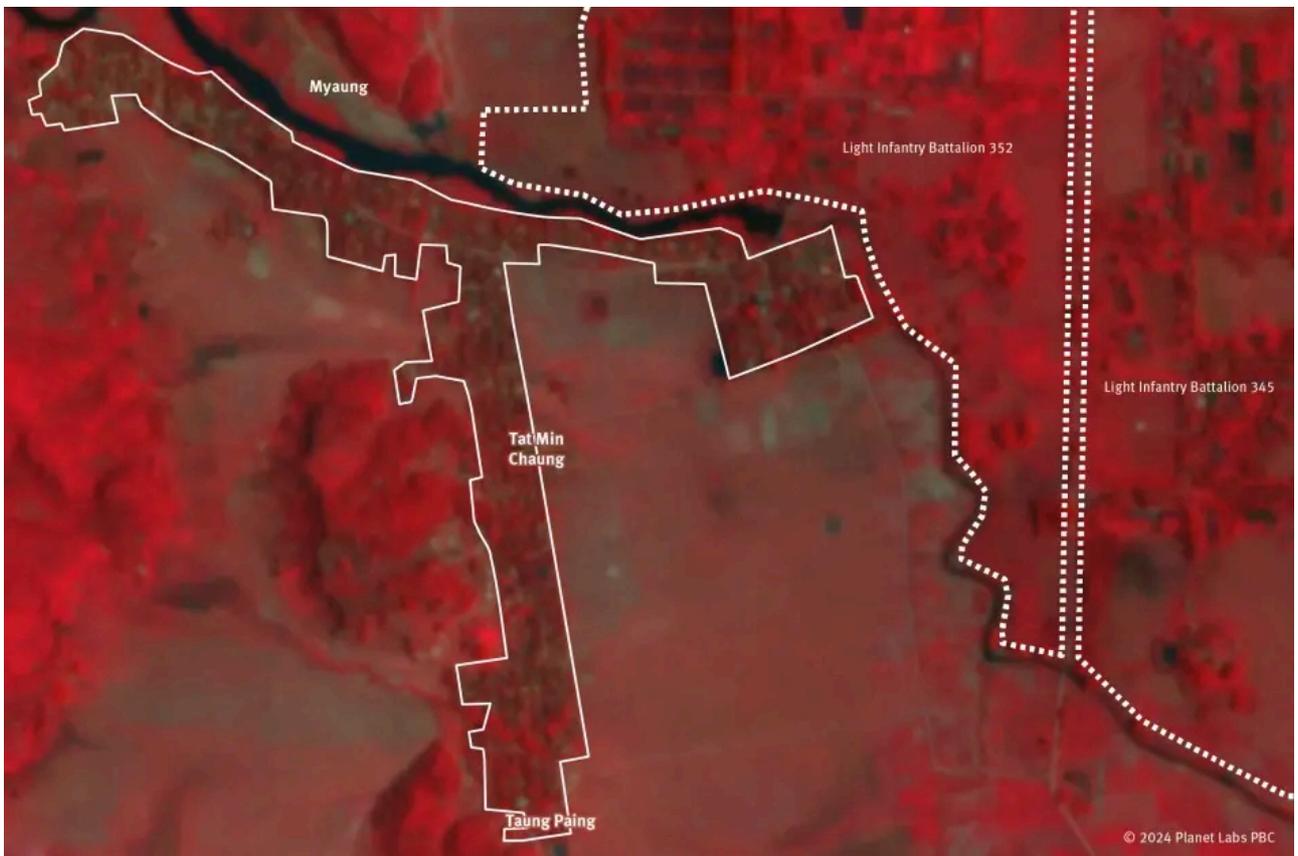


[Click to expand Image](#)

Satellite image recorded early afternoon of May 18, 2024, showing crowds of people next to Tat Min Chaung village. Crowds of people carrying their belongings were also visible, reported to be taken a few hours before, next to Buthidaung jail on a video geolocated by open-source investigators, geoconfirmed with help from Asia Intel and Myanmar Witness, and corroborated by Human Rights Watch. © 2024 Private. Satellite image © 2024 Maxar Technologies. Source: EUSI. Analysis and graphics © Human Rights Watch.

Tat Min Chaung and nearby villages in the area show traces of burning. The image also shows impact craters across the Buthidaung Tactical Operations Command.

Satellite imagery shows that from May 17 to 21, about 17 additional villages south and northwest of Buthidaung town were burned, following patterns where people from downtown and surrounding villages had been trying to flee, including around Tat Min Chaung and Htin Shar Pyin areas.



May 16, 2024: © 2024 Planet Labs PBC. *May 22, 2024:* © 2024 Planet Labs PBC.

Infrared satellite image comparison between May 16 and May 22, 2024, showing more than 70 percent of the structures in Tat Min Chaung village in Buthidaung township destroyed by fire. On infrared images, the vegetation appears in red and the burned areas in darker colors.

Thousands who fled south ended up sheltering in schools and makeshift camps in Sein Hnyin Pyar under a curfew, movement restrictions, and limited aid. “I don’t know how my family is surviving without food,” Yusuf said. He fled to Bangladesh, but his wife, children, mother, and brothers

remain in Buthidaung. “People are now very helpless and in extreme and dire situations. They are living under the open sky in rain and shine. I cried so much for my family; I have run out of tears.”

Many attempted the arduous journey into Bangladesh; only some succeeded. Border Guard Bangladesh forces have ramped-up [pushbacks](#) of asylum seekers along the Rakhine border since January. “On our way to Bangladesh, we suffered a lot: no food, no rest,” Fatema said. “We only survived on tender leaves of trees and water.”

Ibrahim from Da Pyu Chaung floated on the Naf River for two days after the Border Guard Bangladesh pushed his boat back, before finding another area where he could enter. He arrived in Bangladesh a month after his face and jaw were severely injured in the attacks. “During these days, we starved many times,” his father said.

Sadek arrived in Bangladesh after a week in the jungle. “On my way, I didn’t see any village untouched,” he said. “I was always in fear of being found.”

Ahmad traveled for six days through the mountains with his gunshot injury but was unable to cross the border. “I need to go to Bangladesh to get treatment for my bullet wound,” he said. “I’m currently struggling. There are no medical facilities in Maungdaw. The border is sealed, and more border security forces have been deployed. I still don’t know my parents’ whereabouts.”

Blockages of Aid, Telecoms

The junta’s increasing and deliberate obstruction of humanitarian aid has endangered millions of people. In Rakhine State, an estimated 1.6 million people [have been cut off](#) from hospital access since early 2024, according to the UN.

MSF [said](#) on June 27 that it had been forced to suspend all medical activities in northern Rakhine State due to the “extreme escalation of conflict, indiscriminate violence, and severe restrictions on humanitarian access,” leaving people “with zero access to healthcare in the face of huge needs” and contributing to the “total decimation of the healthcare system.” Both Buthidaung and Maungdaw hospitals [were shut down](#).

On June 22, a World Food Programme (WFP) warehouse in Maungdaw storing a month’s worth of lifesaving food and supplies for 64,000 people [was looted and burned](#).

The UN and humanitarian organizations have reported that lack of access to medical care has caused growing [malnutrition](#), [waterborne illness](#), and [preventable deaths](#), including of children due to treatable diarrhea and of pregnant women. “All communities are without proper primary and secondary healthcare and our teams observed pregnant women and unborn babies losing their lives due to the lack of healthcare,” MSF [said](#).

“We do not know what to do or how to survive,” said a Rakhine villager displaced in April. “No food. Our children are sick. We urgently need medicine. We are filled with fears of aerial attacks and artillery.”

For months, the junta has severely restricted internet and phone services, with grave impacts on access to information, the humanitarian response, and the ability to document attacks. According to the Internet Outage Detection and Analysis (IODA) project, Rakhine State experienced a complete internet outage from January 10 until May 31. Human Rights Watch also documented through use of the tool GPSJam multiple instances of likely Global Navigation Satellite System (GNSS) jamming in and around the Buthidaung area, affecting telecommunication providers.

The Rohingya population remains particularly vulnerable to the junta’s restrictions, which contravene the [December 2022 UN Security Council resolution](#) and numerous other international calls.

In January 2020, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) imposed provisional measures ordering Myanmar to prevent all genocidal acts against the Rohingya while it adjudicates alleged violations of the Genocide Convention. In a June report, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights concluded: “Actions taken by all parties that endanger the Rohingya appear inconsistent with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.”

On July 10, the UN Human Rights Council adopted a resolution on the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar in which it “strongly condemns the attack in Buthidaung township on 17 May 2024 and the continuous targeting of Rohingya Muslims ... and urges all parties to the conflict to fully comply with the provisional measures ordered by the International Court of Justice.”

“For Rohingya people – oppressed, scapegoated, exploited, and stuck between warring parties – the situation carries echoes of the lead-up to genocidal violence in 2016 and 2017,” the UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar told the Human Rights Council on July 3.