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“Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere”

Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya
Muslims in Hoyyar Siri, Myanmar



“Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere”

**Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya Muslims
in Hoyyar Siri, Myanmar**

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“Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere”

Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya Muslims in Hoyyar Siri, Myanmar

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Map of Rakhine State in Myanmar



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Summary

In July 2024, Omar Ahmod along with other Rohingya Muslim villagers sneaked back into their now desolate village of Hoyyar Siri in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Two months earlier, they had survived a massacre in the village by the Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group. Omar Ahmod said that when the villagers returned to salvage some belongings, they found their homes looted and burned and the remains of their loved ones and neighbors:

We saw no cattle in the village, though every household once had livestock and poultry. I heard the Arakan Army had taken them.... I also went to the paddy field where almost 80 villagers, including my immediate relatives, were massacred. There, I saw heaps of skeletons and skulls scattered everywhere, clothes still intact though the flesh had decayed.

Human Rights Watch research shows that on May 2, 2024, the Arakan Army may have killed at least 170 Rohingya men, women, and children – and likely injured or killed hundreds more – in Hoyyar Siri village (known as Htan Shauk Khan in Burmese), in Buthidaung township, northern Rakhine State. Fighters had fired upon civilians as they were attempting to flee fighting between the advancing Arakan Army and Myanmar military forces at nearby army camps.

The mass killing could only be confirmed more than a year later, when survivors eventually crossed into Bangladesh and found their way to the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. Omar Ahmod, for instance, only reached Bangladesh in July 2025. The United League of Arakan, the Arakan Army's political wing, denied killing civilians at Hoyyar Siri. Survivors said that the group coerced some villagers, while still in Rakhine State, to provide false video testimony exonerating them.

This report sets out a detailed account of the May 2, 2024, massacre and its immediate aftermath, drawing on interviews with 41 witnesses. These accounts were corroborated through satellite imagery, as well as photographs and videos posted to social media or shared with researchers, that Human Rights Watch has analyzed and verified.

Human Rights Watch found that the Myanmar military may have violated the laws of war by not taking adequate measures to protect civilians from harm. More significantly, the Arakan Army's mass killing of civilians and destruction of civilian property amounted to numerous grave violations amounting to war crimes. War crimes committed included deliberate attacks on civilians, murder, unlawful detention, torture and other mistreatment in custody, arson and other destruction of civilian property, looting, and failure to provide adequate medical assistance.

Although the massacre occurred two years ago, the United League of Arakan and its armed wing, the Arakan Army, have not taken any action either to provide accountability for the atrocities or redress for the Rohingya victims or their families. In a written response to queries from Human Rights Watch, the United League of Arakan said that the Arakan Army "has strictly adhered to the international laws of war and the Geneva Conventions in the conduct of its military operations in all battles." The group also said that in Hoyyar Siri they followed "the principles of early warning, proportionality, and distinction in accordance with international humanitarian law," and "systematically conducted evacuation activities in collaboration with Muslim community leaders."

Human Rights Watch research contradicts these claims to find that the Arakan Army poses the same deadly threat to the Rohingya population as before. Moreover, it is clear that concerned governments and Myanmar's international partners have not taken sufficient measures to address the risks to the Rohingya posed by both the Myanmar junta and the Arakan Army.

Armed Conflict in Rakhine State

The Arakan Army was established in 2009 and seeks national liberation for Rakhine people. Since late 2018 it has engaged in periods of heavy fighting with the Myanmar military for control of Rakhine State.

In February 2021, Myanmar military leaders staged a coup against the government, arresting democratically elected civilian officials. Hostilities between junta forces and the Arakan Army surged starting in November 2023. As the Arakan Army rapidly expanded its control across Rakhine State, the military responded with indiscriminate attacks on civilians using helicopter gunships, artillery, and ground assaults.

In April and May 2024, both sides committed abuses against civilians as Arakan Army forces advanced in Buthidaung township. The military engaged in forced recruitment of Rohingya, including of boys, that stoked communal tensions between the Rohingya Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist communities. As the Arakan Army gained control of junta military bases in Buthidaung, its forces shelled, looted, and burned Rohingya villages.

Hoyyar Siri in Peril

The location of Hoyyar Siri along the Buthidaung-Rathedaung road near the Mayu River in Buthidaung township, positioned between two Myanmar military camps or bases—the 15th Military Operations Command (MOC-15) to the north and the 551st Light Infantry Battalion (LIB-551) to the southeast—put the Rohingya Muslim village near the fighting in May 2024.

In April 2024, as the Arakan Army advanced in Buthidaung township, forcing Rohingya to flee their homes, many of those displaced started gathering in Hoyyar Siri, believing that its location would once again keep them safe. Among them was Boshir Ahmod, a man from neighboring Keya Zinga Para village (in Burmese, Ah Twin Hnget Thay), who said Hoyyar Siri was widely known as a village that “survived when others did not,” because it was spared during previous assaults when the Myanmar military or the Buddhist Rakhine population had attacked Rohingya Muslims elsewhere in Rakhine State.

Hoyyar Siri was made up of two hamlets, Bor Para and Fatailla Para, and survivors said by the time of the massacre, most households were hosting two or three families.

In mid-April, a captain in the Myanmar military demanded that Hoyyar Siri provide 20 Rohingya “volunteers” to fight against the Arakan Army, warning that the military would burn down the village if they refused. The villagers agreed to send at least a dozen men. Several villagers said that the military wanted Rohingya recruits because of rifts within the security forces between ethnic Bamar officers and the ethnic Rakhine soldiers who were sympathetic to the Arakan Army. The military also allied with Rohingya armed groups including the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA).

The villagers feared that forced recruitment by the military, and the presence of ARSA, would put Hoyyar Siri at risk of attack. As the Arakan Army closed in, the villagers could hear explosions from heavy weapons and wondered if they should flee. But the Myanmar

military stopped them. Boshir Ahmod recalled soldiers telling the villagers, “If you die, we die,” and ordering them to seek safety in bunkers rather than leave.



Satellite imagery taken a few months before the May 2, 2024 massacre shows Hoyyar Siri, a village along the Buthidaung-Rathedaung road, comprising the two hamlets of Fatailla Para and Bor Para, and situated between two military camps: the 15th Military Operations Command (MOC-15) to the north, and the 551st Light Infantry Battalion (LIB-551) to the southeast. Image: January 17, 2024 © 2026 Vantor. Google Earth. Military camp locations © Open StreetMap contributors. Analysis and Graphics ©2026 Human Rights Watch

On the night of May 1, when fighting intensified at the MOC-15 camp, Hoyyar Siri residents feared that the LIB-551 camp, adjacent to their village, would be the next target, and that they would be caught in the fighting. The villagers that had been recruited by the junta dropped their weapons and fled.

Villagers said that the Arakan Army had told them to evacuate, while the military had ordered them to remain. They were scared that if they fled the military would kill them as traitors, but if they remained the Arakan Army would regard them as government collaborators.

Carnage in Hoyyar Siri

By dawn on May 2, after the Arakan Army had captured the MOC-15 camp, many junta soldiers started moving into Hoyyar Siri from the north, next to LIB-551. The presence of junta soldiers caused panic among the villagers. They knew that once the military had entered the village, the Arakan Army would attack, and civilians would be caught in the crossfire.

Around 7 a.m., the villagers, including those previously displaced, had started to move north towards Buthidaung town in large numbers, many carrying white flags.

When the procession reached a hill known as Toinna Mura, the villagers halted. Nor Jahan later told Human Rights Watch she felt something was wrong when everyone suddenly became quiet. Arakan Army fighters had appeared from several directions. Then, without any warning, they opened fire on the villagers. Survivors heard no announcement telling people to halt, turn back, or change direction.

The first shots caused chaos. Halim Hosson said people were screaming and running in all directions. Bullets were coming from ahead and from the sides, making it impossible to escape. Kobir Ahmed recalled that he was somewhere in the middle of the group with his wife and their three young children when the shooting started. He said he lost his entire family:

They opened fire on the villagers from a distance of only five feet [1.5 meters]. First, my son was hit by a bullet. Then my wife and baby daughter were shot, followed by my other daughter. My wife and elder daughter were hit in the chest. My son was struck by almost four bullets. My wife had fallen beside

me. After being shot, she whispered to me for nearly a minute. She realized I had not been hit. She handed me 145,000 kyat [US\$70] that she had and told me to run away. After about a minute, she stopped whispering.

To escape, some people headed back toward the village, others ran into paddy fields, and some tried to reach safety in areas such as U Hla Hpay, about one-and-half kilometers from Hoyyar Siri, but most found themselves surrounded by Arakan Army fighters. Nor Jahan said she saw bodies lying in the fields and on the road as she ran. Rashida Hatu said the Arakan Army gathered civilians in a paddy field near a mosque and shot them. “No one was spared,” she said, explaining that while severely injured, she survived by pretending to be dead.

Based on survivor accounts, Human Rights Watch identified by name over 170 villagers killed or still missing in Hoyyar Siri, including at least 90 children. The actual death toll is likely much higher.



Arakan Army fighters first opened fire on unarmed civilians fleeing Hoyyar Siri village as they walked towards Buthidaung town. Kobir Ahmed was in the middle of the group with his wife and their three young children when the shooting started. “First, my son was hit by a bullet. Then my wife and baby daughter were shot, followed by my other daughter. My wife and elder daughter were hit in the chest. My wife had fallen beside me. After being shot, she whispered to me for nearly a minute,” he told Human Rights Watch. “After about a minute, she stopped whispering.” Kobir Ahmed fled to Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh. He has been unable to return home. © 2026 John Holmes for Human Rights Watch

Rohingya activists who tracked the killings believe the number may be as high as 500. A report by an ethnic Rakhine civil society group, whose findings were endorsed by the United League of Arakan, said that only about 100 people were killed, almost all of them members of the Myanmar military apart from two civilians, two Rohingya conscripts, and two members of a Rohingya armed group. But the evidence does not bear that out.

Survivors also said that they did not see any Myanmar soldiers acting to protect villagers.

Aftermath of the Massacre

The survivors of the mass killings were initially scattered in various locations in Buthidaung township. Many who reached U Hla Hpay area were intercepted and taken into custody by Arakan Army fighters, who robbed them of their cash and jewelry.

The Arakan Army forced some survivors to relocate to a makeshift camp, Nassawr Para (known as Hnget Thay in Burmese), approximately three kilometers south from Hoyyar Siri, where they continue to reside. Residents said they lack access to adequate food or medical care, are denied freedom of movement, and are subjected to forced labor. Others managed to escape to Bangladesh and Malaysia more than a year later. Satellite images analyzed by Human Rights Watch show that Hoyyar Siri village was burned down and is uninhabitable. Two years later, survivors said, nobody has been able to go back to live in Hoyyar Siri village.

While the Arakan Army agreed that people cannot return to Hoyyar Siri because “there are many landmines and unexploded materials remaining in many parts of the village,” the group has apparently constructed some structures in the village including a possible checkpoint and cattle sheds.

Most villagers who survived the Hoyyar Siri massacre remain in Arakan Army-controlled camps in Myanmar. Those who managed to escape to Bangladesh are seeking justice. But they too remain at risk because Bangladesh authorities restrict the rights of refugees and are seeking the Rohingya’s return to Myanmar.

Because of ongoing abuses by both the Myanmar junta and the Arakan Army, conditions do not currently exist for the safe, sustainable, and dignified return of Rohingya refugees

to Rakhine State. Concerned governments should use international forums, including the United Nations Human Rights Council 62nd session scheduled for June 15 to July 10, 2026, to underscore these concerns. They should call on the Myanmar junta and Arakan Army to end abuses against civilians and facilitate humanitarian access to all communities in Rakhine State. They should support and strengthen independent investigations into serious violations in Rakhine State, and action for fair prosecutions and redress.

Methodology

This report is based primarily on interviews conducted between September 2025 and April 2026 with 31 Rohingya men, 7 women, 2 girls, and a boy. Among them, all but two of them had witnessed the Hoyyar Siri massacre on May 2, 2024.

Most interviews were conducted in person in the refugee camps in Bangladesh. Other survivors, currently relocated in the Nassawr Para camp in Rakhine State in Myanmar, or those who fled to Malaysia, were interviewed remotely. All interviews were conducted with interpreters who translated from the Rohingya language to Bangla or English. Researchers interviewed some individuals multiple times to corroborate the findings. All in-person interviews were held in private settings.

All interviewees were informed of the purpose and voluntary nature of the interviews and told they could decline to answer questions or end the interview at any time. None of the interviewees received financial compensation or other incentives for speaking with Human Rights Watch. To protect confidentiality, pseudonyms are used for all interviewees.

On April 24, 2026, Human Rights Watch emailed a letter with a summary of our preliminary findings and questions to the Arakan Army and received an emailed response from the United League of Arakan on May 4, 2026 denying all allegations and insisting that none of its members had “violated the rules of war during the battle.”¹

Human Rights Watch was unable to visit the village of Hoyyar Siri but used satellite imagery and web map services while interviewing survivors to pinpoint locations and reconstruct timelines. Locations and events were corroborated with additional evidence derived from photographs and videos shared directly by survivors or circulated online and

¹ Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

geolocated by Human Rights Watch. These were cross-referenced with satellite imagery and the review of geospatial datasets² and topographic maps.³

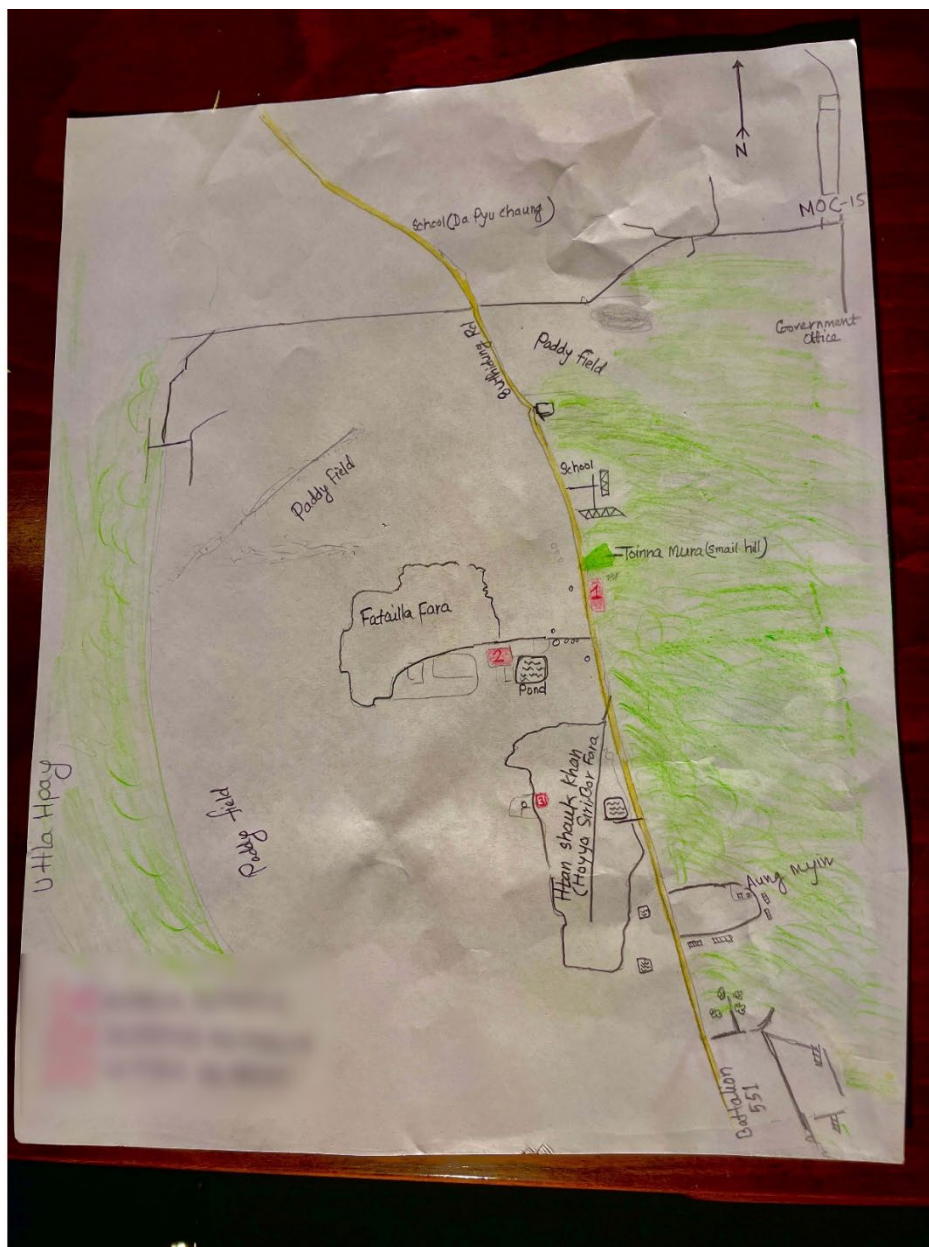
To corroborate the timeline of events prior to the massacre on May 2, 2024, Human Rights Watch also analyzed satellite imagery and thermal anomalies data. Imagery recorded after May 2 was analyzed to estimate the number of destroyed structures within Hoyyar Siri village, and to determine whether and when any new structures were built. In addition, imagery was used to identify the construction of new settlements in Myanmar for those displaced from Hoyyar Siri.

To help corroborate the execution sites described by witnesses, Human Rights Watch analyzed and verified 29 photographs and seven videos shared directly with researchers by survivors who were able to secretly return to the village. These were recorded months or even a year after the massacre, making it difficult to differentiate individual bodies due to the advanced state of decomposition. Independent Forensic Expert Group of the International Rehabilitation Council for Torture Victims analyzed 29 photographs and two videos showing piles of human remains as well as photographs of survivors' injuries and provided their professional assessments.

Human Rights Watch has preserved the photographs and videos referenced in the report. Where relevant, researchers have included direct links to social media posts in the relevant footnotes. Human Rights Watch chose not to include some links to online content for reasons that included potential security risks for the people depicted; to avoid sharing dehumanizing representations of people; and that might pose a security risk for the people seen in the content or the person posting it. Researchers also did not include links to some content to maintain the dignity of those shown and minimize readers' exposure to violent and distressing content.

² Village Points Rakhine State PCode v9.6 by Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU), https://geonode.themimu.info/layers/?limit=100&offset=0&title__icontains=Village%20Points%20%20Rakhine%20State%20PCode%20v9.6 (accessed on April 27, 2026).

³ Topographic map of Htan Shauk Khan village highlighted on Maungdaw and Sittwe Districts, S, Sheet No. 2092 09, produced by the Survey Department, Ministry of Agriculture & Irrigation, Union of Myanmar, 2004 (Scale 1:50,000), included in the publication "Killed them All" by Kaladan Press Network, <https://kaladanpress.org/kill-them-all/> (accessed on April 27, 2026).



Hand-drawn map of mass killing locations described by survivors of the massacre in Hoyyar Siri on May 2, 2024, after they escaped to Bangladesh and Malaysia. They pinpointed locations using online mapping services and, in some instances, captured photographs and videos that Human Rights Watch geolocated and verified. The three main sites shown in the hand-drawn map are near a small hill known as Toinna Mura; in the hamlet of Fatailla Para next to a pond; and in the western section of the Bor Para hamlet. Human Rights Watch geolocated photographs and videos showing human remains in the hamlets of Fatailla Para and Bor Para. Military equipment can be seen in the photographs among human remains at the Bor Para site. No evidence of military equipment is visible in the photographs and videos from the Fatailla Para site. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

Recommendations

To the Arakan Army and the United League of Arakan:

- Ensure that Arakan Army forces adhere fully to international humanitarian law, including by ceasing all attacks against civilians and civilian property and treating humanely everyone in custody.
- End movement restrictions on Rohingya civilians, including the arbitrary detention of Rohingya in Nassawr Para camp, and release all civilians unlawfully deprived of their liberty.
- Dismantle the Nassawr Para camp and allow residents to return voluntarily to Hoyyar Siri or to relocate freely to locations of their choosing without coercion, threat, or restriction.
- End all forms of forced labor, including unpaid work on infrastructure projects, livestock care, and other activities, and ensure that no civilians are compelled to work under threat or coercion.
- Immediately halt all child recruitment and the forced recruitment of civilians for combat-related roles.
- Allow unimpeded humanitarian access for all civilians under Arakan Army control and remove restrictions on impartial humanitarian organizations.
- End the practice of compelling individuals to make public statements or participate in videos.
- Facilitate and cooperate fully with independent investigations into alleged violations, including the Hoyyar Siri massacre site. Grant unimpeded access to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the special envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Myanmar, and other human rights experts. Transfer all evidence relating to the Hoyyar Siri massacre, including human remains, to the IIMM.

To the Myanmar military:

- Ensure the Myanmar military forces adhere fully to international humanitarian law, including by ceasing all attacks against civilians and civilian property and treating humanely everyone in custody.

- End all unlawful recruitment of Rohingya, including child recruitment and the use of all civilian forced labor in combat areas.
- Facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance to all populations.
- Facilitate and cooperate with independent investigations into alleged violations by all warring parties. Grant unimpeded access to the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), the special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, the special envoy of the UN Secretary-General on Myanmar, and other human rights experts.
- Investigate and impartially prosecute those responsible for war crimes in full accordance with international humanitarian law.

To the government of Bangladesh:

- Ensure protection for Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar, including full respect for the principle of non-refoulement.
- Provide refugees from Myanmar, including survivors of the Hoyyar Siri massacre, with access to medical care, psychosocial support, and protection services, including for survivors of trauma, gender-based violence, and prolonged detention.
- Ensure Rohingya refugees who have arrived in Bangladesh since 2024 have access to adequate food, housing, medical care, and other essential services.
- Stop any repatriation efforts to Myanmar until safe, dignified, and voluntary returns have been met.

To international donors, ASEAN, and the governments of China and India:

- Support, including financially, independent investigations into serious violations in Myanmar, including Rakhine State, by the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM), the International Criminal Court, and the UN special rapporteur on Myanmar.
- Make voluntary contributions to the Trust Fund for the IIMM to support its work.
- Press all warring parties in Myanmar, including the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, to comply with international humanitarian law.
- Increase funding for the humanitarian response in Myanmar and Bangladesh, including through cross-border efforts, and press authorities in both countries to facilitate humanitarian aid.

- Reiterate that conditions for safe, sustainable, and dignified return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar do not currently exist; urge Bangladesh not to press for repatriation and increase support to Bangladesh for hosting hundreds of thousands of refugees.
- Consider targeted measures, including sanctions where appropriate, against individuals credibly implicated in serious abuses, consistent with international law.
- Urge the UN Security Council to adopt a resolution on Myanmar instituting a global arms embargo, seek a solution to refer the situation of Myanmar to the ICC, and impose targeted sanctions on Myanmar's military leadership and military-owned companies.
- Call on China and Russia and other Security Council members to support council action, including a resolution to institute a global arms embargo on Myanmar and impose targeted sanctions on the junta's leadership and military-owned companies.
- Encourage UN member states to comply with the 2021 General Assembly resolution calling on governments to prevent the flow of arms into Myanmar. Seek another General Assembly resolution that calls for expanded restrictions on arms transfers and supports sanctions by individual governments on the Myanmar junta and military.

I. Discrimination and Violence Against Rohingya Muslims

The Rohingya have faced decades of persecution and discriminatory state policies in Myanmar, including denial of citizenship and severe restrictions on movement and access to services. Most Rohingya are based in Rakhine State, which borders Bangladesh, and are majority Muslim, while the broader Myanmar population is predominantly Buddhist.

In 2017, Myanmar security forces carried out a campaign of ethnic cleansing involving killings, rape, and arson in northern Rakhine State amounting to crimes against humanity and acts of genocide that forced more than 700,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh.⁴ The Rohingya currently remaining in Rakhine State live under a system of apartheid.⁵

On February 1, 2021, the Myanmar military leaders responsible for the 2017 attack on the Rohingya staged a coup against the government, arresting democratically elected civilian officials.⁶ Since the coup, the military junta's abuses have plunged the country into a human rights and humanitarian catastrophe.⁷

Junta security forces have committed serious abuses amounting to crimes against humanity and war crimes, killing thousands of civilians and detaining more than 30,000 political prisoners.⁸ In an apparent effort to legitimize continued military rule, the junta

⁴ "Myanmar: New Atrocities Against Rohingya," Human Rights Watch news release, August 22, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/22/myanmar-new-atrocities-against-rohingya>; Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, Human Rights Council, Thirty ninth session, 10-28 September 2018, Agenda Item 4, A/HRC/39/64, 12 September, 2018, para. 33, https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/A_HRC_39_64.pdf (accessed March 17, 2026); Eli Meixler and Abhishyant Kidangoor, "Rohingya Refugees 'Stand on the Precipice of More Tragedy' One Year After Brutal Crackdown," *Time*, August 24, 2018, <https://time.com/5374143/myanmar-rohingya-august-25-crackdown/> (accessed March 17, 2026).

⁵ "An Open Prison without End": Myanmar's Mass Detention of Rohingya in Rakhine State," Human Rights Watch news release, October 8, 2020, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/08/open-prison-without-end/myanmars-mass-detention-rohingya-rakhine-state>.

⁶ "Myanmar: Military Coup Kills Fragile Democracy: Governments Should Press for Release of Detainees, Return to Civilian Rule," Human Rights Watch news release, February 1, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/02/01/myanmar-military-coup-kills-fragile-democracy>.

⁷ "Future Bleak for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Myanmar," Human Rights Watch news release, August 20, 2023, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/20/future-bleak-rohingya-bangladesh-myanmar>.

⁸ Assistance Association for Political Prisoners (Burma), Monthly Data Dashboard since Coup, March 1, 2026, <https://aappb.org/category/monthly-data-dashboard-since-coup/> (accessed March 17, 2026).

proceeded with a sham general election held in three phases between December 2025 and January 2026.⁹ Min Aung Hlaing, commander-in-chief for 15 years, was appointed president in April.¹⁰

Ongoing Armed Conflict in Rakhine State

Since the coup, fighting between junta security forces and alliances of anti-junta groups and longtime ethnic armed groups erupted across much of the country.¹¹ On October 27, 2023, the Three Brotherhood Alliance—a coalition of the Arakan Army, Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army, and the Ta'ang National Liberation Army—launched “Operation 1027” with coordinated attacks against Myanmar military targets.¹²

Hostilities followed in Rakhine State in mid-November 2023, with renewed fighting between junta military forces and the Arakan Army. As the Arakan Army expanded its territorial control and administrative reach across large parts of Rakhine State,¹³ both forces committed serious abuses against civilians, including unlawful killings, forced recruitment, widespread arson, and the deliberate destruction of civilian property.¹⁴ Tens of thousands of people have been forcibly displaced.

⁹ “Myanmar: Junta Atrocities Surge 5 Years since Coup” Human Rights Watch joint news release, January 28, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/28/myanmar-junta-atrocities-surge-5-years-since-coup>. Myanmar’s discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law and the Election Law disenfranchises Rohingya and prevents them from running for office, even though most Rohingya families have lived in Myanmar for generations.

¹⁰ Rebecca Ratcliffe, “Myanmar Junta Chief Min Aung Hlaing Profile,” *The Guardian*, April 3, 2026, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2026/apr/03/myanmar-junta-chief-min-aung-hlaing-profile> (accessed May 4, 2026).

¹¹ Nava Thakuria, “4 years after military coup, Myanmar heads towards more chaos,” *South Asia Journal*, February 4, 2025, <https://southasiajournal.net/4-years-after-military-coup-myanmar-heads-towards-more-chaos#:~:text=The%20international%20community%20and,mostly%20by%20the%20junta%20soldiers> (accessed March 18, 2026); Shayna Bauchner, “3 Years Since Myanmar’s Coup, Stronger Global Action Is Needed,” *The Diplomat*, January 31, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/01/31/3-years-myanmars-coup-stronger-global-action-needed> (accessed March 18, 2026).

¹² Will Jackson, “Has the Three Brotherhood Alliance’s Operation 1027 turned the tide against the military junta in Myanmar’s civil war?” *ABC*, November 22, 2023, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2023-11-22/myanmar-junta-civil-war-three-brotherhood-alliance-1027/103130406> (accessed March 17, 2026).

¹³ Su Mon, “From state to nation: The Arakan Army’s ascent in post-coup Myanmar,” Armed Conflict Location & Event Data, October 31, 2025, [https://acleddata.com/actor-profile/state-nation-arakan-armys-ascent-post-coup-myanmar#:~:text=After%20its%20series%20of%20unprecedented,extent%20\(see%20map%20below\)](https://acleddata.com/actor-profile/state-nation-arakan-armys-ascent-post-coup-myanmar#:~:text=After%20its%20series%20of%20unprecedented,extent%20(see%20map%20below)) (accessed February 12, 2026).

¹⁴ “Myanmar: Arakan Army Oppresses Rohingya Muslims,” Human Rights Watch news release, July 28, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/28/myanmar-arakan-army-oppresses-rohingya-muslims#:~:text=Rohingya%20in%20Rakhine%20State%20have%20been%20caught,extrajudicial%20killings%2C%20widespread%20arson%2C%20and%20unlawful%20recruitment;Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of>

By April 2024, fighting had intensified in the predominantly Rohingya townships of Buthidaung and Maungdaw. As the Arakan Army gained control of military bases in Buthidaung township in April and May 2024, it engaged in numerous abuses against the Rohingya including destruction of property, arbitrary detention, mistreatment, and forced labor and recruitment.¹⁵

Rohingya Muslim civilians have been forced to participate in combat. In February 2024, the Myanmar military activated the 2010 People's Military Service Law, enabling conscription of Myanmar citizens. Despite having long been denied citizenship, the Rohingya became the first targets of the conscription campaign.¹⁶ In Rakhine State, ethnic Rakhine soldiers often surrendered or switched loyalties to the Arakan Army, leading to further Rohingya conscription by the military.¹⁷

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) and the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO)—Rohingya armed groups that have fought alongside the Myanmar military against the Arakan Army—have also forced civilians into combat, including through abductions of refugee men and boys in Bangladesh.¹⁸ The Arakan Army has also forcibly recruited Rohingya civilians.

human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews, A/80/490/ 25-16887, October 20, 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/490> (accessed March 17, 2026).

¹⁵ Human Rights Watch, "Myanmar- Armies Target Ethnic Rohingya, Rakhine," August 12, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/12/myanmar-armies-target-ethnic-rohingya-rakhine>.

¹⁶ "Myanmar: Military Forcibly Recruiting Rohingya," Human Rights Watch news release, April 9, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/04/10/myanmar-military-forcibly-recruiting-rohingya>.

¹⁷ Grant Peck, "Powerful Ethnic Armed Group in Western Myanmar Claims to Capture Base and Hundreds of Soldiers," *Associated Press*, May 6, 2024, <https://apnews.com/article/arakan-army-rakhine-rohingya-a54269cfbf247580e50ae8a69ba2ad3e> (accessed March 17, 2026); Ye Myo Hein, "Why Should I Kill Our Own? Junta Shaken by Rebel Advances," *The Guardian*, January 29, 2024, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2024/jan/29/myanmar-military-junta-totters-as-battalions-surrender> (accessed March 17, 2026).

¹⁸ "Myanmar: Armies Target Ethnic Rohingya, Rakhine," Human Rights Watch News release, August 12, 2024, [https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/12/myanmar-armies-target-ethnic-rohingya-rakhine#:~:text=\(Bangkok\)%20-%20Myanmar%20junta%20forces,%2C%20women%2C%20and%20older%20people;Devjyot%20Ghoshal,%20On%20Myanmar's%20frontline,%20Rohingya%20fighters%20and%20Junta%20face%20a%20common%20enemy%202024-09-06/](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/12/myanmar-armies-target-ethnic-rohingya-rakhine#:~:text=(Bangkok)%20-%20Myanmar%20junta%20forces,%2C%20women%2C%20and%20older%20people;Devjyot%20Ghoshal,%20On%20Myanmar's%20frontline,%20Rohingya%20fighters%20and%20Junta%20face%20a%20common%20enemy%202024-09-06/) (accessed March 17, 2026); Devjyot Ghoshal and Poppy McPherson, "In World's Largest Refugee Camps, Rohingya Mobilise to Fight in Myanmar," *Reuters*, November 25, 2024, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/worlds-largest-refugee-camps-rohingya-mobilise-fight-myanmar-2024-11-25/> (accessed March 18, 2026).

The conflict has further inflamed relations between the Rohingya Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist communities.¹⁹

In public statements, Twan Mrat Naing, commander-in-chief of the Arakan Army, has said the group would “protect the rights of all communities equally in the region,” but has also rejected an ethnic Rohingya identity: “By portraying themselves by another name, many dishonest Muslim community members, especially in the diaspora and elite circles, believe that they can claim [to be] an indigenous ethnic group by erasing the evidence of colonial migration.”²⁰

Refugees in Bangladesh

There are now over one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh living in overcrowded settlements, with severe restrictions on education, livelihood, and movement.²¹ The refugee camp in Cox’s Bazar is the world’s largest refugee camp. As of January 2026, over 150,000 new refugees had reached Bangladesh to escape the renewed fighting in Rakhine State.²²

Refugees face abuses both from Bangladesh security forces as well as armed groups and criminal gangs that operate in the camps.²³

International funding had been declining for several years, but suffered a serious setback when, in 2025, the US government – which previously supported more than half of the Rohingya refugee humanitarian response – slashed its funding. This has worsened the

¹⁹ Amnesty International, “Myanmar: Facebook’s Systems Promoted Violence Against Rohingya; Meta Owes Reparations,” September 29, 2022, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/09/myanmar-facebooks-systems-promoted-violence-against-rohingya-meta-owes-reparations-new-report/> (accessed April 15, 2026); Minority Rights Group International, “Online Hate Speech in Myanmar: An Evolving Threat,” December 20, 2020, <https://minorityrights.org/online-hate-speech-in-myanmar-an-evolving-threat/> (accessed April 15, 2026); United Nations, “Hate Speech and Real Harm,” <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/understanding-hate-speech/hate-speech-and-real-harm> (accessed April 15, 2026).

²⁰ Ali M. Latifi, “The Arakan Army responds to Rohingya abuse accusations in Myanmar,” May 29, 2024, <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/interview/2024/05/29/arakan-army-responds-rohingya-abuse-accusations-myanmar> (accessed March 18, 2026).

²¹ “Bangladesh Is Not My Country”: The Plight of Rohingya Refugees from Myanmar,” Human Rights Watch report, August 5, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2018/08/05/bangladesh-not-my-country/plight-rohingya-refugees-myanmar>. The Bangladesh government recognizes the Rohingya only as “Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals,” a designation that denies their refugee status.

²² “Myanmar: Junta Atrocities Surge 5 Years since Coup,” Human Rights Watch news release, January 28, 2026, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2026/01/28/myanmar-junta-atrocities-surge-5-years-since-coup>.

²³ “UN: Support Protection, Justice for Rohingya,” Human Rights Watch news release, September 29, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/29/un-support-protection-justice-for-rohingya>.

crisis by further limiting supplies including food, water, and medical assistance.²⁴ Education and protection programs have also been negatively impacted.²⁵ By late 2025, child malnutrition surged above emergency thresholds, with Islamic Relief reporting a 27 percent increase compared to the previous year.²⁶ Funding shortfalls have forced at least 11 health centers to close, while food rations have been slashed.²⁷

The Bangladesh government continues to press for the repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar, despite the absence of conditions for safe, voluntary, and dignified return.²⁸

²⁴ “Bangladesh: Foreign Aid Cuts Affect Rohingya Children’s Education,” Human Rights Watch news release, June 25, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/06/25/bangladesh-foreign-aid-cuts-affect-rohingya-childrens-education>; “Foreign Aid Cuts Hurt the Most Vulnerable in World’s Largest Refugee Camp,” *Al Jazeera*, June 27, 2025, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2025/6/27/foreign-aid-cuts-hurt-the-most-vulnerable-in-worlds-largest-refugee-camp> (accessed April 12, 2026); Daniel P. Sullivan and Lucky Karim, “Amid U.S. Aid Cuts, WFP Cuts Food Rations for Rohingya Refugees by Half,” Refugees International, March 5, 2025, <https://www.refugeesinternational.org/statements-and-news/amid-u-s-aid-cuts-wfp-cuts-food-rations-for-rohingya-refugees-by-half/> (accessed April 12, 2026); Better World Campaign, “The Impact of Foreign Assistance Cuts,” <https://betterworldcampaign.org/impact-of-foreign-assistance-cuts> (accessed April 12, 2026); Amnesty International, UN Member States must Step-Up Efforts to Protect and Meet the Urgent Humanitarian Needs of the Rohingyas at the High-level Conference, ASA 13/0345/2025, September 26, 2025, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa13/0345/2025/en/> (accessed April 12, 2026).

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Rohingya refugees suffer as global aid cuts slash essential services, Islamic Relief, August 14, 2025, <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/rohingya-refugees-suffer-global-aid-cuts-slash-essential-services> (accessed February 12, 2026).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ “UN: Support Protection, Justice for Rohingya,” Human Rights Watch news release, September 29, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/09/29/un-support-protection-justice-for-rohingya>.

II. Massacre at Hoyyar Siri

Hoyyar Siri village, known as Htan Shauk Khan in Burmese, is a Rohingya Muslim village in Buthidaung township, in northern Rakhine State, made up of two main hamlets: Bor Para and Fatailla Para.²⁹

Before the May 2, 2024 attack, according to villagers, Hoyyar Siri had a population of nearly 1,200, with houses, shops, mosques, and ponds clustered together, separated by narrow paths.³⁰ But by the time of the attack, hundreds of people displaced from surrounding areas had moved to the village. Nor Jahan said families from other villages began arriving suddenly, often at night, carrying children and small bags.³¹ Omar Ahmod said that by late April, Hoyyar Siri felt overcrowded and that houses that normally held one family were hosting two or three.³²

On May 2, 2024, the Arakan Army killed and wounded hundreds of civilians in Hoyyar Siri and later destroyed the village.³³ Survivors who returned to the village in the months after the killings, photographed or witnessed piles of human remains, which they say the Arakan Army has since removed.³⁴

²⁹ Rohingya villagers used different names and spellings for the hamlets and neighborhoods. Burmese language and Rohingya language versions of the names also differ. In this report, these references have been standardized.

³⁰ Interviews with multiple survivors, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, [August 2025 to April 2026]. See also, *Irrawaddy* newsletter, ရိုဟင်ဂျာတွေ အသတ်ခံရတယ်ဆိုတဲ့ ထန်းရှောက်ခံရသို့, September 15, 2025, <https://burma.irrawaddy.com/article/2025/09/15/405712.html> (accessed April 17, 2026). According to several interviewees, as well as international humanitarian groups, the estimated population of Htan Shauk Khan just before the massacre was between 1,200 and 1,500. In response to Human Rights Watch's letter, the United League of Arakan, however, reported a population figure of 914 based on census data from 2014, 10 years before the massacre in Hoyyar Siri, to conclude that most villagers were alive, either living in a displaced persons camp or in adjoining villages, or had relocated in Bangladesh or Malaysia.

³¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, October 1, 2025.

³² Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 11, 2025.

³³ The United League of Arakan quoted the report of the Arakan Civil Society which said that "the village was left totally destroyed due to the Myanmar Military Junta's artillery shelling and strikes."

³⁴ It is difficult to determine the actual death toll. Rohingya groups reported closed to 500 civilian deaths. "Kill Them All; The Htan Shauk Khan massacre and sexual violence by the Arakan Army in Buthidaung township," Kaladan Press Network, September 2025, <https://kaladanpress.org/kill-them-all-new-report-exposes-arakan-army-orders-of-mass-killing-in-buthidaung/> (accessed March 14, 2026). Rakhine groups have said only armed combatants died in the fighting. "The Alleged Htan Shauk Khan Massacre Incident in Buthidaung Township," Arakan Civil Society Forum, September 25, 2025, <https://www.globalarakannetwork.com/post/arakan-civil-society-forum-unveils-independent-report-debunking-misinformation-on-htan-shauk-khan-by#:~:text=This%20independent%20investigation%20report%20by,examines%20allegations%20of%20a%20massacre> (accessed March 14, 2026).

The Arakan Army has denied killing civilians at Hoyyar Siri, stating that the bodies were those of Myanmar militia soldiers and Rohingya recruits.³⁵

A Once Safe Location Becomes a Target

In late April 2024, the advancing Arakan Army began burning Rohingya villages east of Buthidaung town, close to Hoyyar Siri. Satellite imagery and thermal anomaly data analyzed by Human Rights Watch reveal that all the villages and hamlets along the Mayu River and surrounding areas, including Rongia Daung (known as Ywet Nyo Taung in Burmese), Keya Zinga Para, and U Hla Hpay, were partially or completely destroyed by fire between April 21 to April 30, 2024. Human Rights Watch had previously determined that the pattern of destruction indicated that these attacks were deliberate.³⁶

Hoyyar Siri is located between two Myanmar military bases or camps: the 15th Military Operations Command (MOC-15) to the north and the 551st Light Infantry Battalion (LIB-551) to the southeast. For years, villagers said, this proximity to the bases had offered a measure of protection, including during the 2017 attacks, because the villagers often provided labor to the military and Rohingya leaders were on good terms with military officers. Boshir Ahmod said Hoyyar Siri and adjacent areas were widely known as places that “survived when others did not.”³⁷

As a result, hundreds of Rohingya fleeing arson attacks and forced recruitment elsewhere had sheltered in Hoyyar Siri. Boshir Ahmod said that people from his village had moved to Hoyyar Siri in mid-April.³⁸

³⁵ “AA Chief General Twan Mrat Naing Invites UN Special Rapporteur to Investigate Allegations in Rakhine,” *Narinjara News*, October 23, 2025, <https://www.narinjara.com/news/detail/68f9a44c8fe3fedca4357152> (April 23, 2026). Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

³⁶ Human Rights Watch, “Overlapping Atrocities,” August 13, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/the-day-in-human-rights/2024/08/13>; Human Rights Watch, “Myanmar: Armies Target Ethnic Rohingya, Rakhine,” August 12, 2024, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/12/myanmar-armies-target-ethnic-rohingya-rakhine>.

³⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 10, 2025.

³⁸ Ibid.

Forced Recruitment by the Myanmar Military

The Myanmar military began forcibly enlisting Rohingya men and boys to help them fight the Arakan Army. Rohingya armed groups, ARSA and RSO, had also joined forces with the military, helping traffic young men and boys from the refugee camps in Bangladesh to deploy in combat. This heightened tensions between the Rakhine and Rohingya, with the Arakan Army suspecting Rohingya leaders of collaborating with the military.³⁹

Villagers told Human Rights Watch that in mid-April, the Myanmar military began forcing Hoyyar Siri men to assist them in operations, threatening to burn down their village if they refused. Omar Ahmod said:

About 20 days before the Hoyyar Siri incident, a Myanmar military captain named Bo Gyi Kyaw Moe Taw⁴⁰ came to our village with Raein Moe [Rohingya village administrator]. The officer said we should provide 20 people to fight the Arakan Army. When the officer threatened to burn down the entire village, we sent around a dozen young men to the cantonment.⁴¹

Omar Ahmod said that days before the massacre, Rohingya conscripts who had seen the Arakan Army advancing and Capt. Bo Gyi Kyaw Moe Taw's death in combat, dropped their weapons.⁴² Four others confirmed that the conscripts had decided together to throw their weapons as the Arakan Army advanced upon MOC-15, and to run away fearing for their lives.⁴³

³⁹ "Myanmar Junta Deliberately Killing Its Own Surrendered Soldiers, General Says," *The Irrawaddy*, March 12, 2026, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/myanmar-junta-deliberately-killing-its-own-surrendered-soldiers-general-says.html> (accessed March 18, 2026).

⁴⁰ Bo Gyi Kyaw Moe Taw was later killed in action by the Arakan Army. Human Rights Watch interview, Cox's Bazar, Refugee Camps, December 15, 2025.

⁴¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 11, 2025. We confirmed this account in another interview on December 15, 2025. Two interviewees recalled the same incident of the Burmese military officer coming into the village looking for young Rohingya conscripts. Two said that the villagers agreed to send 12 young Rohingya as military conscripts for training. Three others said the number of conscripts from Hoyyar Siri were 7 or 8 after a military officer demanded 20 recruits. They all agreed that as the Arakan Army advanced, and particularly after Bo Gyi Kyaw Moe Taw was killed, the Hoyyar Siri conscripts dropped their weapons and fled.

⁴² Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, August 11, 2025.

⁴³ "All of the conscripts threw away weapons on either April 24 or on April 26," said a Rohingya man, Human Rights Watch interview, Cox's Bazar Rohingya Refugee Camp, Bangladesh, March 18, 2026. Three other witnesses said that conscripts had run away after surrendering their weapons. Human Rights Watch interviews with three Rohingya, Rohingya refugee camps, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, March 18, 2026.

Village in Quandary

Villagers said that the military ordered them to remain in Hoyyar Siri, to be “good citizens,” stay in their homes, and dig bunkers.⁴⁴ Boshir Ahmod said that the military had promised them protection: “The military assured us, saying, ‘If you die, we die. Do not leave us. We have weapons. The Arakan Army will never be able to take this area.’ Even one day before the massacre, the Myanmar military assured villagers that no harm would come to them and told them to hide in the bunkers if necessary.”⁴⁵

While the military was telling people to stay, some villagers said that the Arakan Army had issued warnings in the days prior, ordering them to evacuate.⁴⁶ Some villagers, however, were confused by simultaneous announcements from the Arakan Army to the Myanmar military, calling for their surrender.⁴⁷

Kefayet Ulla, a village committee member, said that the villagers were conflicted about what to do:

The Arakan Army was ordering Hoyyar Siri villagers to vacate immediately. They said villagers would be able to return after two days. Otherwise, they would be caught in crossfire. We heard these announcements, but we did not leave immediately. Where could we go? We did not see any place safer than our village. Moreover, the Arakan Army was a rebel group, and we had been ordered by the military, the government, not to leave the village. If we vacated the village, we feared the military would accuse us of siding with the Arakan Army. But we feared if we did not go the Arakan Army would treat us as traitors.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 15, 2025.

⁴⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 10, 2025.

⁴⁶ Human Rights Watch interviews with two Rohingya males, Rohingya refugee camps, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, April 10, 2026. See also Fortify Rights, “Expand Investigation to Include Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya Civilians in Rakhine State,” April 9, 2026, <https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2026-04-09/> (accessed April 14, 2026).

⁴⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, April 16, 2026. In its response to Human Rights Watch, the United League of the Arakan stated that it was not aware of the situation in which the Myanmar junta had ordered the residents of Hoyyar Siri to remain in their homes.”

⁴⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 5, 2025.

Arakan Army forces captured the MOC-15 camp in the early hours of May 2.⁴⁹ Villagers said they felt certain the LIB-551 camp and Hoyyar Siri village would be the next target. That night, Mohammad Soyod, the village administrator, called a meeting and the villagers agreed to leave in the morning. Abul Hashim, a member of the village committee, said:

We realized that the military had lost MOC-15 because we could no longer hear continuous gunfire. We knew that the Arakan Army's next target would be the LIB-551, which was located right next to our village. We agreed that we would evacuate in the morning to Buthidaung town. We decided to take the main road to avoid landmines and that we would leave together to show that we were civilians.⁵⁰

However, at dawn on May 2, before they could leave, the villagers saw junta soldiers entering the village from the north side, retreating from MOC-15. The villagers panicked, knowing that the Arakan Army would follow. "When we came out after the Fajr [dawn] prayer, we saw many soldiers – hundreds – entering our village," said Halim Hosson. "We decided to leave the village immediately, because once the military entered, we were certain the Arakan Army would come to attack them, and we would be caught in between."⁵¹

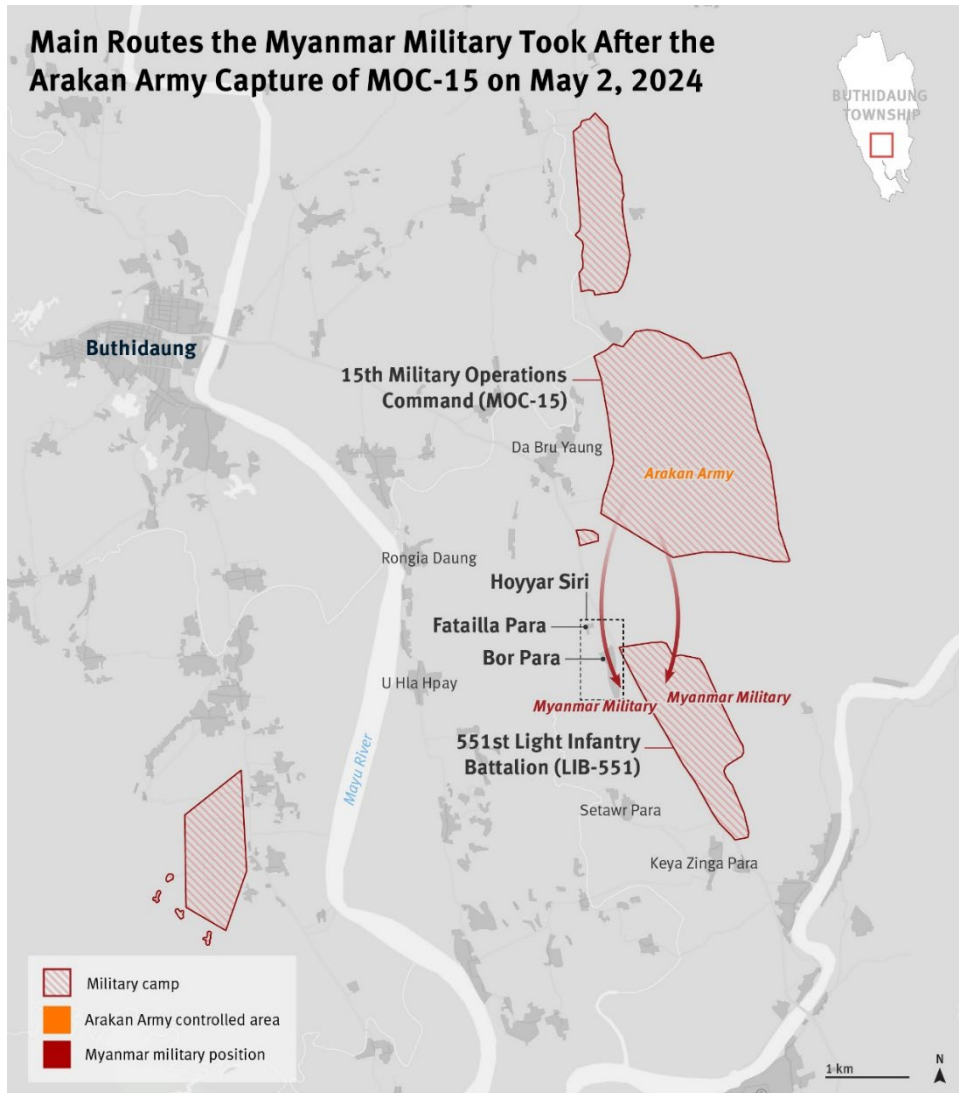
Omar Ahmod watched the soldiers move through the village: "As soon as the military entered Bor Para, all the villagers there immediately vacated the hamlet. When we saw the people of Bor Para fleeing, we also decided to leave our area."⁵²

⁴⁹ AA Info Desk (@aainfodesk), post to Telegram channel, May 5, 2024, <https://t.me/aainfodesk/869> (accessed March 26, 2026).

⁵⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, October 11, 2025.

⁵¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, December 2, 2025.

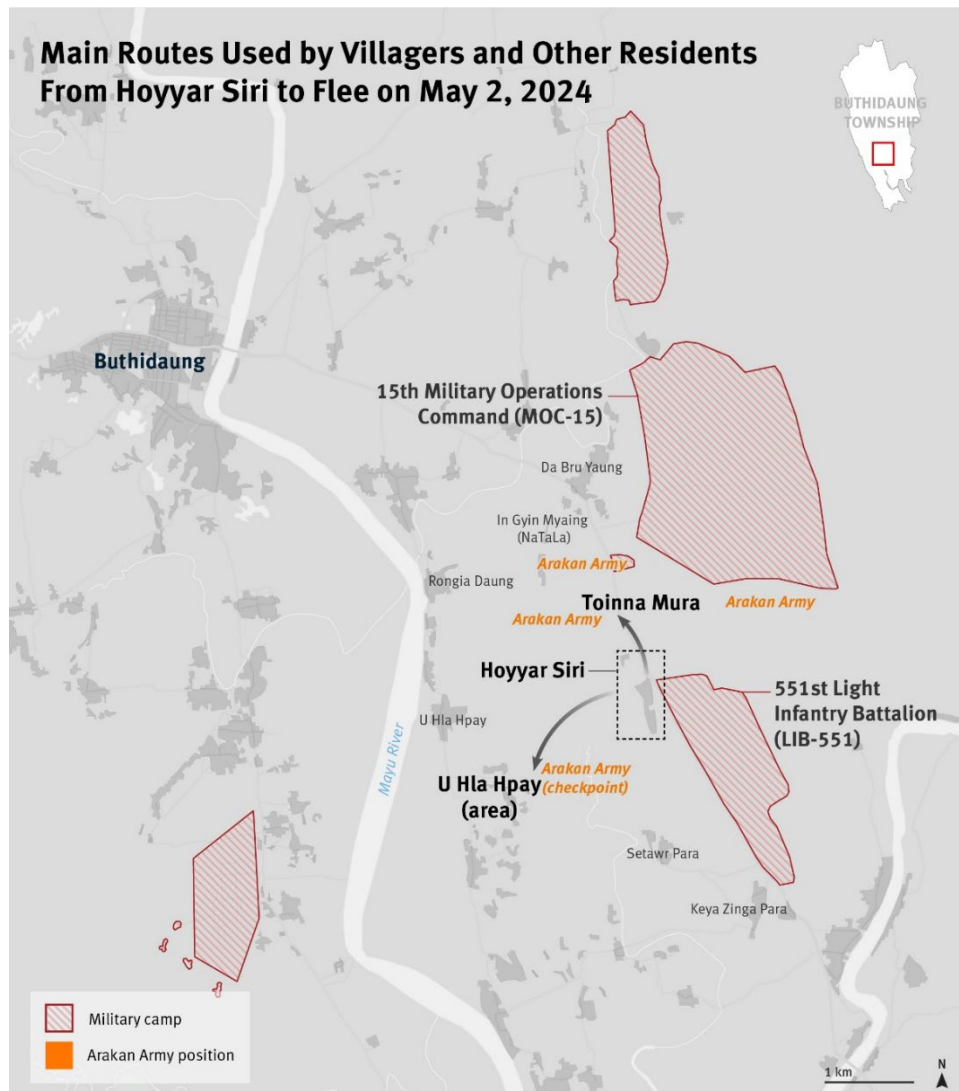
⁵² Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, December 15, 2025.



Following the Arakan Army's capture of 15th Military Operations Command (MOC-15) in the early morning of May 2, 2024, the Myanmar military forces withdrew from the camp and repositioned in Bor Para, the southern hamlet of Hoyyar Siri village and at the 551st Light Infantry Battalion (LIB-551). Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU). Military camp locations © Open StreetMap contributors. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

The May 2 Massacre

From about 7 to 8 a.m., large numbers of villagers were on the move. Several emphasized that they were unarmed. While most of the villagers headed northwest toward the town of Buthidaung, about six kilometers away. Others headed west, to U Hla Hpay area, about 1.5 kilometers away. Meanwhile, soldiers retreating from MOC-15 had gathered in the hamlet of Bor Para.



Human Rights Watch documented and mapped the main routes taken by Hoyyar Siri villagers and other residents fleeing from the Bor Para and Fatailla Para hamlets following the capture of 15th Military Operations Command (MOC-15) by Arakan Army. While some residents moved north in an attempt to reach Buthidaung town, others headed toward the U Hla Hpay area, where groups were reportedly intercepted by the Arakan Army. Meanwhile Myanmar junta soldiers were taking positions in Hoyyar Siri and LIB-551. Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU). Military camp locations © Open StreetMap contributors. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

As villagers fled, Arakan Army fighters appeared from the east, west, and north. In multiple locations, the fighters surrounded fleeing villagers and shot at them. The Myanmar military did not intervene to assist the civilians. Witnesses all said that there was no active fighting at the locations where civilians were shot. Boshir Ahmod said: “When the shooting started, the Arakan Army was in front and on the sides, and the military was behind us. Civilians were trapped between them. There was no fighting between the two forces.”⁵³

The first killings occurred in Toinna Mura, on the road to Buthidaung town. Others were gathered and shot around a mosque in Fatailla Para. Several were killed while running through the paddy fields between the hamlets and U Hla Hpay.

Rohingya witnesses said that the Arakan Army also killed some soldiers after they were captured, particularly ethnic Bamar officers. “Some people said they saw military personnel being beaten and executed in front of them,” said Abul Hashim, a Rohingya man who later escaped to Bangladesh.⁵⁴ Kobir Ahmed said that the Arakan Army even asked some villagers to disarm a military soldier who they had found standing alone:

The Arakan Army said we had to either kill that soldier or hand over his guns to them. So, six or seven people went to that soldier and took the guns he had, two in total. They handed the guns over to the Arakan Army. Then three Arakan Army fighters went to the soldier and shot him dead. He was a Bamar, not a Rohingya recruit.⁵⁵

Indiscriminate Shooting at Toinna Mura

Villagers said that the first group that came under attack was led by the village administrator and they were waving white cloths as they headed north along the highway. Arakan Army fighters ambushed them once they reached a small hill known as Toinna Mura.

Abul Hashim said that he saw an Arakan Army commander talking on a walkie-talkie for several minutes. As soon as he finished, he fired six or seven rounds with his revolver, and

⁵³ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 10, 2025.

⁵⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, October 11, 2025.

⁵⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 13, 2025.

immediately other Arakan Army fighters began shooting at the villagers.⁵⁶ Kobir Ahmed said he was walking in the group with his wife and three children when the fighters opened fire.⁵⁷

Halim Hosson said that Arakan Army fighters began approaching and firing at civilians from three sides:

When the villagers at the front reached a point near Toinna Mura, they stopped moving forward. I was a little in the back. We all stopped too. At that moment, we saw the Arakan Army coming out from the In Gyin Myaing (Na TaLa) on the west side and firing indiscriminately. People began to scream and run back towards the village. I saw members of my own family fall, including my mother, two brothers, and my 11-year-old.⁵⁸

Witnesses said that they believed hundreds were killed or injured by gunfire at Toinna Mura. Kala Mia, a resident of a nearby village who had permission to travel in the area to visit his son, stopped in Hoyyar Siri four months after the massacre, and said he saw piles of human remains. “I went to the Toinna Mura foothills in August 2024. I saw so many skeletons.”⁵⁹

Omar Ahmod said he went back to Hoyyar Siri several times starting in July 2024. He said that during his first visit, he found bodies piled up near Toinna Mura: “It seemed that many dead bodies had been gathered together. Most of the bones and skulls looked like burned timber, and clothes were scattered all around the pile. Only bones and skulls remained, which had turned black. There was an unbearable smell of rotting dead bodies.”⁶⁰

Unlawful Killing around Fatailla Para

After the shooting started, the villagers realized that they could no longer walk north on the main road. They started running back toward Hoyyar Siri on the road or through paddy

⁵⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, October 11, 2025.

⁵⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 13, 2025. Human Rights Watch has names of those killed on file.

⁵⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 2, 2025. Human Rights Watch has names of these relatives on file.

⁵⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 17, 2025.

⁶⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 15, 2025.

fields. Villagers who saw people returning also scattered. But the Arakan Army fighters had spread across the area including in Fatailla Para. They started firing on those still in the village, and others who were running back from Toinna Mura.

Mohammod Roshid, who had run west and hid, said he saw Arakan Army fighters chasing down and killing villagers as they fled toward Fatailla Para from Toinna Mura. “Some were slaughtered with machetes, while many others were gunned down,” he said.⁶¹

Omar Ahmod said he first ran with his family towards Fatailla Para to escape the attack at Toinna Murra. But when they saw Arakan Army fighters in the hamlet, they started running through paddy fields toward Bor Para. He saw scores of people running behind him being apprehended by Arakan Army fighters and then shot. He said:

When we reached near the mosque, we saw many Arakan Army fighters approaching and firing at us. We ran even faster. By Allah’s mercy, none of us were hit, and we reached Bor Para safely. There were many more Rohingya who were also running behind us, mostly women, children, and older people. Many were caught by the Arakan Army and shot.⁶²

Abdu Razzak also saw the Arakan Army shooting at fleeing villagers. “We were running south, to Bor Para, through Fatailla Para,” he said. “The Arakan Army began shooting at us indiscriminately. Many villagers were killed or injured.”⁶³

⁶¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 19, 2025.

⁶² Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, August 11, 2025.

⁶³ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 26, 2025.



Photograph of Fatailla Para hamlet in Hoyyar Siri village, with the mosque visible on the right. The image was taken by a villager a few months before the May 2, 2024 massacre. © 2024 Private

Abdu Rahman was among those shot while running through the paddy fields of Fatailla Para:

I was in the paddy field near the entrance of Fatailla Para with my wife, one of my daughters, and two grandsons when I was shot three times by Arakan Army fighters. Fortunately, the bullets did not hit my chest or head, although I lost a lot of blood from my wounds. We crawled to a haystack in the paddy field and used it as a shield from the constant gunfire.⁶⁴

Abdu Rahman, who said he was suffering from pain because of gunshot wounds, died on October 1, 2025, about two weeks after Human Rights Watch interviewed him.

Forensic experts analyzed the photographs of Abdu Rahman's injuries taken by a Human Rights Watch researcher during an interview. They concluded that the scar on his thigh was highly consistent with a gunshot wound, while the lesions on the neck and upper posterior chest were non-specific and could be consistent with either a gunshot wound or an injury caused by a sharp object. They further noted that the characteristics of the scars suggest that the medical treatment environment following the incident was very limited.

⁶⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, September 14, 2025.



Photographs showing Abdu Rahman's injuries taken in a Rohingya refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in September 2025. Forensic experts analyzed the photographs and concluded that the scar on his thigh is highly consistent with a gunshot wound, while the lesions on the neck and upper posterior chest are non-specific and could be consistent with either a gunshot wound or an injury caused by a sharp object. They further noted that the characteristics of the scars suggest that the medical care he received following the incident was very limited. © 2025 Human Rights Watch

Mass Killing Beside Fatailla Para Mosque

Witnesses told Human Rights Watch that Arakan Army fighters chased scores of villagers in Fatailla Para into a paddy field beside a mosque. Umme Kumsum, a villager, said that she and some others had managed to hide behind some haystacks. From there they saw Arakan Army fighters forcing villagers to gather near the mosque, where they killed them all. She said, “There were screams and cries. This happened at around 8:30 a.m. We could hear the villagers desperately begging for their lives. But the Arakan Army showed no mercy.”⁶⁵

Abdu Rahman, who had earlier been shot and injured, was hiding in the haystacks. He said, “I saw that the Arakan Army had gathered people they found in Fatailla Para in a paddy field near the mosque and forced them to sit and bow their heads. Then they started shooting. Some were shot while they were lying on the ground.”⁶⁶



As the villagers scattered, some running back towards the village, they found that it was surrounded by the Arakan Army, which gathered one group of civilians and summarily executed them.

“As we were running toward U Hla Hpay through the paddy field, villagers who were some distance behind us were intercepted by a group of Arakan Army, gathered together, and killed near the mosque in Fatailla Para. Rashida Hatu, a woman survivor, was also among these villagers. However, she was able to escape the killing by hiding among the piles of villagers’ dead bodies.” © 2026 John Holmes for Human Rights Watch

⁶⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 8, 2025. Human Rights Watch has on file the names of some of those killed.

⁶⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 14, 2025.

Rashida Hatu was in the paddy field. She said:

They gathered us in the paddy field near the mosque. We still thought we might be released, but within minutes they opened fire at us randomly, without saying anything. All the villagers were gunned down. No one was spared. My husband was hit by a bullet. When the Arakan Army saw he was still alive, they came closer, firing at him several more times. Then he died. I was hit by four bullets. I pretended to be dead and lay among the bodies for almost 30 minutes. At one point, an Arakan Army member struck the barrel of his gun against my head, but I did not move.⁶⁷

Months later, one of the survivors, Omar Ahmod, went back to the field where the villagers were killed.⁶⁸ In the video he shared and that Human Rights Watch verified, Omar Ahmod walks through the ruins of houses patched with burn marks. Continuing east, he stops and points his phone at a puddle. As he zooms in, human remains become visible in shallow water. Human Rights Watch geolocated the human remains to the paddy field next to where the mosque in Fatailla Para once stood. Forensic experts consulted by Human Rights Watch who analyzed the video concluded that six skulls can be seen in the water, one of which shows evidence of a gunshot wound.

Omar Ahmod also accompanied Rashida Hatu to the area, near a toilet, where many people, including her children, had been killed by the Arakan Army. He filmed a video



Photograph showing Rashida Hatu's injuries taken in Cox's Bazar Rohingya refugee camp, Bangladesh in April 2026. Forensic experts analyzed four photographs showing her injuries and confirmed the scars on her arm may be consistent with gunshot wounds. They further noted that the characteristics of the scars suggest that the medical care following the incident was very limited. © 2025 Human Rights Watch

⁶⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, September 10, 2025.

⁶⁸ Video on file with Human Rights Watch.

showing a decomposing body in a toilet and human remains around the structure.⁶⁹ He shared the location with Human Rights Watch, but researchers were unable to independently confirm where it was filmed due to the absence of key landmarks or geographical features in the video.

Rashida Hatu described finding the remains of her daughter and older son who were shot while looking for a bunker.⁷⁰ “I went to the place where my children were shot dead,” she said. “I lost consciousness when I saw their remains. Their clothes were still intact.”⁷¹

In response to the visual evidence that shows human remains among civilian clothing in the paddy field near the mosque in Fattaila Para, including skulls with apparent gunshot wounds, the United League of Arakan stated: “we have not seen the photos.” Some of these photos were widely circulated online. The group referred only to a different site in Bor Fara where human remains were found among military equipment, a site that Human Rights Watch is acknowledging in this report.⁷²

Destruction of Civilian Property

Several witnesses said that alongside the killings, Arakan Army fighters also set fire to the village.

Kefayet Ulla, the village committee member, said that while crossing the paddy fields he “saw all of Fatailla Para engulfed in flames, with constant gunfire, and parts of Bor Para also burning.”⁷³ Umme Kumsum said that several homes, including two large houses near hers in Bor Para, “were burned down by the Arakan Army.”⁷⁴

Kobir Ahmed, who escaped into the hills after coming under fire in Toinna Mura, said he saw Hoyyar Siri burning. “Once I reached the peak, I saw Fatailla Para and parts of Bor Para

⁶⁹ Video on file with Human Rights Watch.

⁷⁰ Human Rights Watch has their names on file.

⁷¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 10, 2025.

⁷² Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

⁷³ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 5, 2025.

⁷⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 8, 2025.

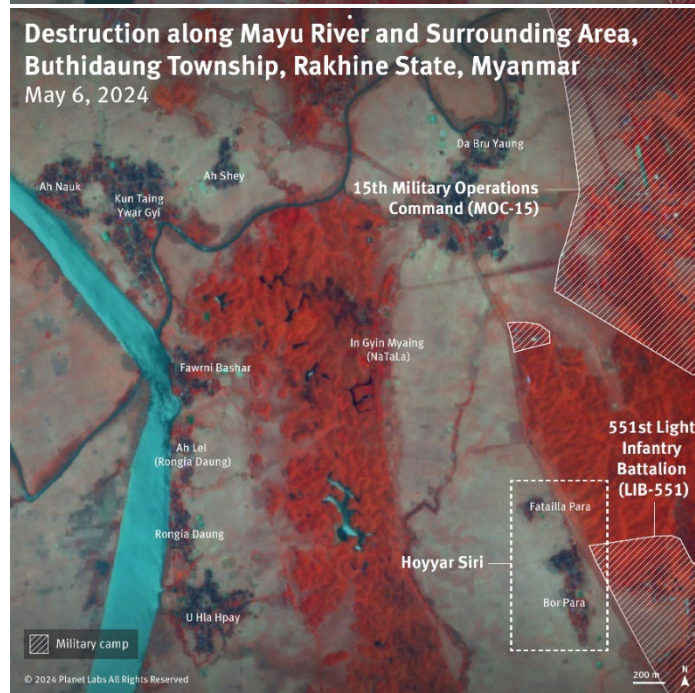
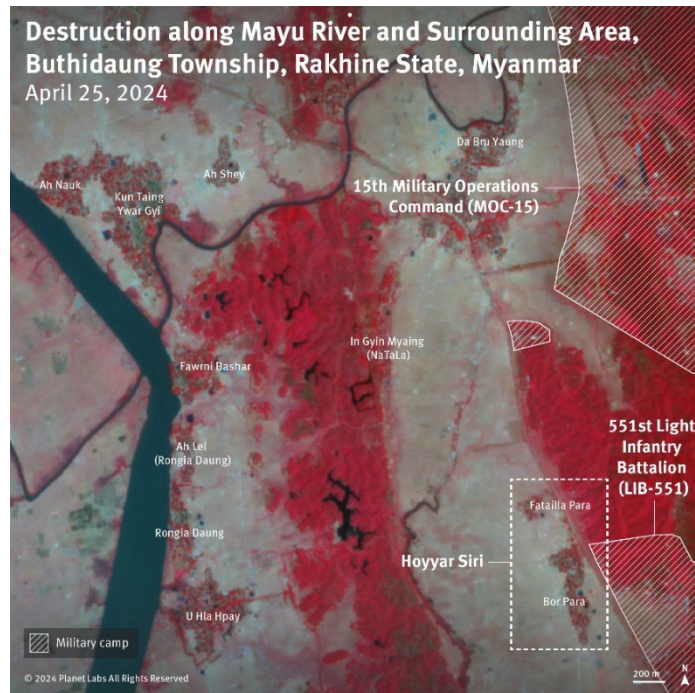
burning.”⁷⁵ Zaw Kawriya, one of the displaced who had sheltered in Hoyyar Siri, also witnessed the arson from a distance:

I had climbed a tall tree near the edge of the village to see where the shooting was coming from. From there, I saw large numbers of people being shot on the northern side of the village in the fields. I also saw the Arakan Army setting fire to the houses. I could hear the bamboo and wood cracking as the fire spread.⁷⁶

Analysis of low-resolution satellite imagery conducted by Human Rights Watch indicates that destruction in Bor Para hamlet occurred after 10 a.m. on May 2. In imagery captured at 10:07 a.m., cloud cover almost entirely obscures Fatailla Para and partially obscures Bor Para; however, the visible northern portion of Bor Para appears intact at that time. Imagery captured the following day shows Bor Para partially burned, while Fatailla Para remained obscured by cloud cover. Due to persistent cloud cover in subsequent imagery, the full extent of the damage is not visible until May 6. On this date, an image shows both hamlets nearly burned down.

⁷⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 13, 2025.

⁷⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, October 11, 2025.



Infrared satellite image comparison between April 25 and May 6, 2024, showing the near-total destruction of the two hamlets, Fatailla Para and Bor Para, in Hoyyar Siri village. Additionally, villages along the Mayu River, in Buthidaung township also appear burned, including U Hla Hpay and Rongia Daung. In contrast, villages reported to be occupied by Arakan Army, such as In Gyi Myaing (NaTaLa), do not show signs of damage. In infrared imagery, vegetation appears in red, while burned areas appear in darker colors. Image © 2024 Planet Labs All Rights Reserved. Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU). Military camp locations © Open StreetMap contributors. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

In response to Human Rights Watch’s question about the destruction of the entire village of Hoyyar Siri, the United League of Arakan attributed the destruction to intense fighting, including shelling from Myanmar military bases in Buthidaung and elsewhere, airstrikes by military junta fighter jets, and crossfire.⁷⁷ However, Human Rights Watch satellite analysis and accounts from individuals who were able to return multiple times to Hoyyar Siri indicate that additional destruction occurred after the Arakan Army had taken control of the village.

Fifteen days after the massacre, a Rohingya man returned to Hoyyar Siri with a group of villagers to retrieve their belongings and entered his house in Bor Para. He said, “I searched for boxes of clothes in the house. There was nothing left except some documents that I took. Nearly all of Hoyyar Siri had been reduced to ashes. I saw only 20 to 25 houses in the south of Bor Para remain untouched.”⁷⁸

A satellite image taken in early June 2024, two weeks after his visit, shows fewer than a dozen structures remaining in Hoyyar Siri, including two of the village’s mosques in Bor Fara and several other scattered buildings.

⁷⁷ Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

⁷⁸ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, October 11, 2025.



Satellite imagery from June 4, 2024, following the massacre at Hoyyar Siri, shows fewer than a dozen buildings remaining in the village, with most of the structures destroyed after the Arakan Army took control. Scores of men, women and children were killed by the Arakan Army on May 2, 2024, in the paddy field near the destroyed mosque in Fatailla Para. Image: June 4, 2024 © 2024 Planet Labs All Rights Reserved. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

Satellite imagery from September 8, 2025, approximately a year and a half after the massacre, shows only one mosque in Bor Para still standing.⁷⁹ Three additional structures have been constructed that appear to be part of an Arakan Army checkpoint.⁸⁰ Villagers said that these include sheds for stolen cattle and livestock.⁸¹

⁷⁹ Human Rights Watch satellite imagery analysis identified at least 170 structures (including households, mosques, and schools) that were destroyed in Hoyyar Siri, although the number may be underestimated, as some structures may not have been visible due to tree cover.

⁸⁰ The United League of Arakan stated in response to a letter sent by Human Rights Watch that residents from Hoyyar Siri “were unable to go back to their homes due to security and livelihood reasons,” adding that “there are many landmines and unexploded materials remaining in many parts of the village.” Satellite imagery from September 2025 shows that while three new structures have been built up, presumably Arakan Army control points, there is no reconstruction of the village.

⁸¹ Human Rights Watch interview with Hoyyar Siri resident who recently fled from Nassawr Para. He said he was taken by the Arakan Army from Nassawr Para to tend to cattle in Hoyyar Siri. Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, April 23, 2026.

**Hoyyar Siri Village, Buthidaung Township,
Rakhine State, Myanmar**
September 8, 2025



Satellite imagery from September 8, 2025, shows the widespread destruction of the two hamlets in Hoyyar Siri over time. Vegetation has regrown over areas that were previously burned, reclaiming much of the village. While none of the former residents have been able to return to their homes, three new structures appear in Bor Para hamlet, likely part of the Arakan Army checkpoint. Villagers said that these include sheds for stolen cattle and livestock. Image: September 8, 2025 © 2025 Planet Labs All Rights Reserved. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

III. After the Massacre

In statement posted to Telegram on May 5, 2024, the Arakan Army reported that it had taken control of the MOC-15 and LIB-551 camps and the surrounding area.⁸² Following the massacre at Hoyyar Siri, the Arakan Army took civilians into custody and mistreated them, eventually moved many to a newly built and heavily monitored makeshift camp three kilometers south from Hoyyar Siri, and arranged coercively scripted and filmed media visits meant to convince viewers that no massacre had occurred.

Former residents of the Nassawr Para camp told Human Rights Watch that they have been under constant surveillance, living conditions and access to health care are poor, and they are subjected to forced labor.

Over 100 survivors of the Hoyyar Siri massacre, including some from the camp, had escaped to Bangladesh as of April 2026, and some had made their way to Malaysia.⁸³ They live in a state of extreme poverty, burdened by debt they incurred to pay for safe passage and the trauma of seeing their relatives and neighbors killed.

Apprehended during Flight

Survivors said that almost all the villagers who managed to escape the Hoyyar Siri massacre were taken into custody by the Arakan Army, which controlled the surrounding areas. They said they were stripped of their gold jewelry and any cash they had managed to take with them. Majeda Banu said that she was captured along with at least 200 others while fleeing towards the U Hla Hpay area, and everyone was robbed:

They took us to the forest. There, they grabbed every valuable we had, including our mobile phones, jewelry, and money. They even tore our blouses and undergarments, searching for valuables inside our garments. My uncle was beaten on his head when he tried to stop some Arakan Army

⁸² AA Info Desk (@aainfodesk), post to Telegram channel, May 5, 2024, <https://t.me/aainfodesk/869> (accessed March 26, 2026).

⁸³ Human Rights Watch interviews with Rohingya survivors of the Hoyyar Siri massacre, in person in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, and by telephone with Rohingya refugees in Malaysia, September 2025–April 2026.

fighters from snatching a gold chain from his wife’s neck. They kept us there almost three hours.⁸⁴

Abdu Rahman recalled the hostile language used by the fighters: “Soon after we had fled from the mass killings, a group of Arakan Army caught us. They were cursing us and shouting, ‘We will fuck your mother, you filthy *kalar* [slur for Rohingya Muslims]. They kicked and punched us and beat us with their guns.”⁸⁵

In the foothills of U Hla Hpay, Arakan Army fighters questioned villagers about their ties to the military. The Arakan Army arrested three men, including Kefayet Ulla, who said that they suspected him because he was a member of the village committee. Kefayet Ulla said the other two men were a Rohingya from Setawr Para village (known as Pyar Pin Yin in Burmese) and an ethnic Bamar, who was likely a soldier pretending to be a civilian. Kefayet Ulla said:

The Arakan Army fighters tied us with ropes and beat us severely. Then they took the three of us to another place, stacking us on top of one another inside a bunker. They continued to beat us. Soon, our group of detainees grew to almost 35. They blindfolded us and put us in a boat and moved us to a school. I



Photograph showing Kefayet Ulla’s injuries taken by a Human Rights Watch researcher in Bangladesh in December 2025. Forensic experts analyzed four photographs showing his injuries and confirmed the scars on his arms show irregular shape and healing consistently with his wrists and hands being in handcuffs for a prolonged period and a possible infection after the injury, which is consistent with his account. © 2025 Human Rights Watch

⁸⁴ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, November 13, 2025.

⁸⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 14, 2025.

heard one of the Arakan Army people say, “We had better kill all ‘kalar,’ or else we will not succeed in our movement of liberation.”⁸⁶

Kefayet Ulla said that the Arakan Army executed the Bamar man. The Rohingya men were detained, beaten, and tortured, including with electric shocks, and later forced to work building roads and breaking stones. Kefayet Ulla managed to escape after nearly four months.⁸⁷

Forensic experts analyzed the photographs of Kefayet Ulla’s injuries taken by a Human Rights Watch researcher during his interview in December 2025 and confirmed the scars on his arms show irregular shape and healing consistent with his wrists and hands being in handcuffs for a prolonged period and a possible infection after the injury.

In response to Human Rights Watch’s questions about the detention and ill-treatment of men suspected of having ties to the junta military, the United League of Arakan said, “the Arakan Army has never subjected suspects to severe beatings or shocks.” The group also rejected allegations of forced labor but said “there may be collaborative community activities in many villages involving all communities.”⁸⁸

Abduction of Women and Girls

Several villagers said that the Arakan Army abducted Rohingya women and girls during the massacre at Hoyyar Siri. Rashida Hatu said that she saw Arakan Army fighters drag 13 women away into the mountains.⁸⁹ None of them have returned. Nor Jahan also saw the women being taken and recognized her nieces from their clothing.⁹⁰

Kefayet Ulla said that he saw many women and girls held by the Arakan Army in Say Taung while he was in detention: “We saw a group of Rohingya girls and women. I saw them from

⁸⁶ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 5, 2025.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

⁸⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 10, 2025.

⁹⁰ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, October 1, 2025.

a distance, working outside, while we were doing forced labor in the area. I was certain that all of them were Rohingya.”⁹¹

The United League of Arakan “categorically rejected” allegations of abduction but said there were “some relocation activities intended to move people to safer locations conducted in collaboration between ULA authorities and Muslim community leaders.”⁹²

Forced False Testimonies to Support Arakan Army Denials

Some of the Rohingya who had secretly returned to Hoyyar Siri after the massacre shared photos on social media of piles of human remains. This prompted the Arakan Army to deny the allegations of civilian killings, claiming that the bodies were those of junta soldiers, Rohingya conscripts, and ARSA members.⁹³ “We have evidence that they [the Rohingya] were in a rush to show a pile of bones to match their narrative, so they took a quick picture of the bones without noticing the military helmets and boots hanging on them,” said Arakan Army chief Twan Mrat Naing.⁹⁴

In August 2025, the Arakan Army organized a controlled media visit to Hoyyar Siri village to show that they had not killed any civilians. Before the media visit, the Arakan Army summoned a group of survivors to their camp to coach them. Kobir Ahmed, who was later taken to Hoyyar Siri to be presented to the media, said that Arakan Army members forced them to rehearse their false testimony. “They threatened us, warning that if we said anything against the Arakan Army during the interview, we would be killed,” he said. “We had no choice and everyone did exactly as we were instructed.”⁹⁵

⁹¹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 5, 2025.

⁹² Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

⁹³ “Arakan Army Denies Rohingya Massacre,” *The Irrawaddy*, August 2025, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/ethnic-issues/arakan-army-denies-rohingya-massacre.html>; Arakan Rohingya National Council (ARNC), Facebook post, <https://www.facebook.com/theARNCorg/posts/pfbidobYjuzGBEZBKekTCGzvBYRdEf24ApEd4f76pC9cH8dL2ahyYTijBemAFzJhGxjXrrl> (accessed April 27, 2026).

⁹⁴ “AA Chief Defends Rakhine Rebels Against Charges of Genocide,” *The Irrawaddy*, September 25, 2025, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/aa-chief-defends-rakhine-rebels-against-charges-of-genocide-2.html> (accessed April 7, 2026).

⁹⁵ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, September 13, 2025.

Human Rights Watch analyzed news reports published following the controlled media visit.⁹⁶ The geolocated footage shows journalists—and individuals described as Hoyyar Siri residents—walking through Bor Para to a site containing human remains west of the hamlet. Armed Arakan Army fighters are also present at the site. Journalists interview several people who deny that the Arakan Army killed civilians, asserting that the human remains are those of military personnel. A number of them say the Arakan Army helped villagers escape after the military entered the village and called out to them using loudspeakers. Among those interviewed was Mohammad Roshid. “Everything I said in the interview was what they forced me to say,” he said. “The subtitles reflect what I was instructed to say.”⁹⁷

The videos show a man retrieving military equipment, uniforms, and human remains from a puddle. At least three skulls are visible among the remains. Most of the uniforms appear to be Myanmar military uniforms and are scattered in multiple areas of the site. One of them features a blue pixelated camouflage pattern, which is consistent with uniforms worn by the Myanmar’s Border Guard Police. Human Rights Watch was unable to determine whether the military uniforms were planted at a later time or if they belonged to those killed.

Human Rights Watch verified three additional photographs taken with an Infinix Smart 7 phone on March 28, 2025, at 6:29 a.m. according to the image timestamp and geolocated to the same site. Photographs show military equipment such as vests, helmets, and boots alongside human remains at the site; at least five skulls are visible among the remains.

Thirteen photographs with a timestamp of approximately 10 minutes later and taken with the same phone model and verified by Human Rights Watch show another site. The photographs show human remains scattered across the ground along with civilian clothing. At least nine skulls can be identified among the remains and two show evidence of gunshot wounds. Human Rights Watch geolocated the photographs to the paddy field near the mosque in Fatailla Para.

⁹⁶ One Nations News, post to Facebook, August 23, 2025; Myanmarcombatfootage, post to Reddit, August 24, 2025; “ဘူးသီးတောင်မြို့နယ် ထန်းရွှေကန်ခံရသူတွေကိုကွင်းဆင်းသတင်းယူခဲ့တာ ဖြစ်ပါတယ်။ #ထန်းရွှေကန်ခံ” August 24, 2025, video clip, Youtube.

⁹⁷ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 19, 2025.

During the media visit, the Arakan Army also produced Col. Kaung Myat, Myanmar deputy military operation commander of MOC-15, who they are holding as prisoner. Human Rights Watch reviewed the video interview in which Kaung Myat asserts that there were no villagers in Hoyyar Siri when the fighting started. He states that over 100 soldiers and Rohingya “militia” military trainees were killed and the remains found belong to them, denying any civilian deaths.⁹⁸

After the massacre at Hoyyar Siri, the Arakan Army overran the LIB-551 camp.⁹⁹ On May 6, the Arakan Army posted a video on their official Telegram channel reportedly showing Myanmar military soldiers and their families, who had surrendered.¹⁰⁰ Human Rights Watch analyzed this video. It contains several clips edited together, and follows scores of people, mostly men, some of them injured and others barefoot walking north on the highway towards MOC-15, accompanied by Arakan Army fighters. The final segment of the video shows at least 700 people, some 500 of whom are men, sitting in MOC-15, divided into six groups facing a flagpole with the Arakan Army flag. Four of the six groups appear to consist of women and children, suggesting that the Myanmar military had permitted civilians to remain in the barracks despite the ongoing hostilities.

An investigation published in September 2025 by a coalition of ethnic Rakhine civil society groups stated that the clashes took place in May 2024, leading to around 100 casualties of soldiers, Rohingya conscripts, and ARSA fighters, and two civilian deaths. The report states that the village was destroyed by artillery shelling and junta airstrikes.¹⁰¹ Rohingya groups have published reports that say at least 500 civilians were killed, and that the Arakan Army burned the village.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ *Arakan Bay News*, “Interview with Col. Myat in Hoyyar Siri Village During Media Visit,” YouTube video, August 20, 2025.

⁹⁹ AA Info Desk (@aainfodesk), post to Telegram channel, May 5, 2024, <https://t.me/aainfodesk/869> (accessed March 26, 2026).

¹⁰⁰ AA Info Desk (@aainfodesk), post to Telegram channel, May 6, 2024.

¹⁰¹ Arakan Civil Society Forum, “The Alleged Htan Shauk Khan Massacre Incident in Buthidaung Township,” September 25, 2025, <https://www.globalarakannetwork.com/post/arakan-civil-society-forum-unveils-independent-report-debunking-misinformation-on-htan-shauk-khan-by#:~:text=This%20independent%20investigation%20report%20by,examines%20allegations%20of%20a%20massacre> (accessed March 14, 2026).

¹⁰² Kaladan Press Network, “Kill Them All; The Htan Shauk Khan massacre and sexual violence by the Arakan Army in Buthidaung township,” September 2025, <https://kaladanpress.org/kill-them-all-new-report-exposes-arakan-army-orders-of-mass-killing-in-buthidaung/> (accessed March 14, 2026); Rohingya Human Rights Initiative, “The Siege of the Arakan,” March 30, 2026, <https://www.rohingya.org/myanmar/report-summary:-the-seige-of-arakan-looking-inside-arakan-army-s-genocide-tactics-against-rohingyas.html> (accessed April 30, 2026).

Life after the Massacre

Villagers who managed to escape the massacre and reach the U Hla Hpay area later scattered across various locations in Buthidaung township. Many sought shelter in nearby villages such as Kin Taung (known as Kyar Nyo Pyin in Burmese) or Sein Taung (known as Thein Taung in Burmese).

In February 2025, the Arakan Army ordered all Hoyyar Siri residents to relocate to a makeshift camp in Nassawr Para (known in Burmese as Hnget Thay), promising housing plots. According to Human Rights Watch's satellite imagery analysis, between 80 to 90 structures were completed at this site in October 2025, occupying a total area of more than three hectares.

"We built a new village nearby, and their former village head and their previous religious leaders are still there," Arakan Army chief Twan Mrat Naing said in September 2025. He said the village was intended for former Hoyyar Siri residents.¹⁰³

However, villagers said that the Hoyyar Siri village administrator, Mohammad Soyod, had been killed along with his entire family including his wife, two sons, a daughter, and three brothers on May 2. He had been leading the villagers when the Arakan Army began killing civilians at Toinna Mura hill.¹⁰⁴

Current and former camp residents said that as of December 2025, the camp contained 693 people.¹⁰⁵ The United League of Arakan reported a population of 661.¹⁰⁶ Arafat Ahmod a Rohingya man living in Nassawr Para camp in Buthidaung, said that it was effectively a detention camp because it is constantly guarded by 10 to 15 Arakan Army guards, and no resident is allowed to leave without permission.¹⁰⁷ Khaled Husson, who escaped from the

¹⁰³ "AA Chief Defends Rakhine Rebels Against Charges of Genocide," *The Irrawaddy*, September 25, 2025, <https://www.irrawaddy.com/in-person/interview/aa-chief-defends-rakhine-rebels-against-charges-of-genocide-2.html> (accessed April 6, 2026).

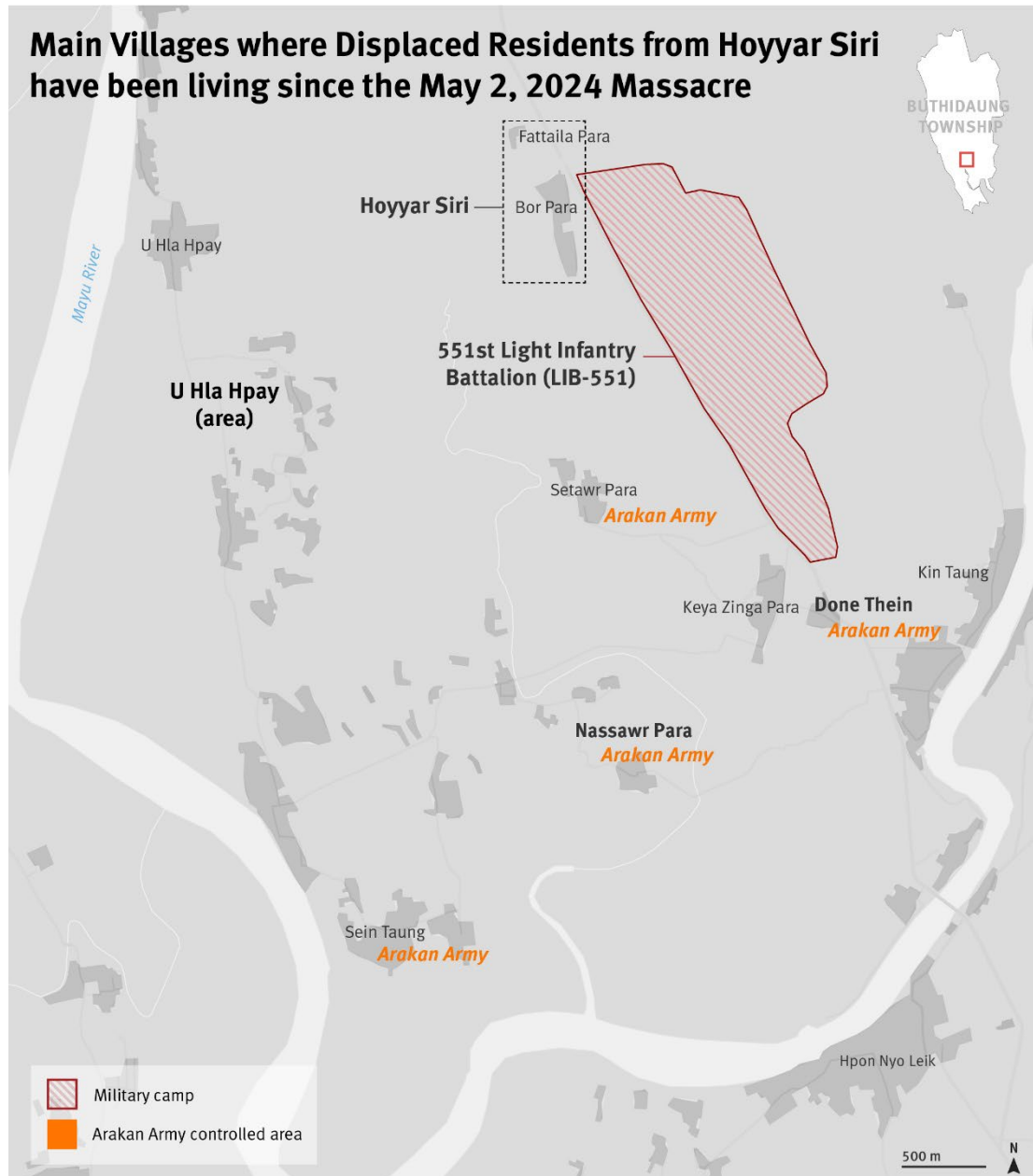
¹⁰⁴ Names on file with Human Rights Watch.

¹⁰⁵ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rakhine state, January 13, 2026.

¹⁰⁶ Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch.

¹⁰⁷ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rakhine state, December 7, 2025.

camp in March 2026, said that Arakan Army guards routinely warn residents against leaving and exposing the massacre at Hoyyar Siri.¹⁰⁸



Human Rights Watch mapped the main villages where Hoyyar Siri residents relocated after they fled the May 2, 2024 massacre. While some residents managed to reach Bangladesh and Malaysia around a year later, others remain displaced, most of them in Nassawr Para, an Arakan Army-controlled camp. Two years on, Hoyyar Siri remains uninhabited. Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU). Military camp locations © Open StreetMap contributors. Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch

¹⁰⁸ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rakhine state, January 15, 2026.



Satellite imagery from February 25, 2026, shows at least 125 structures at a makeshift camp controlled by the Arakan Army near the village of Nassawr Para, where mostly residents from Hoyyar Siri as well as a few residents from other villages have been ordered to relocate since February 2025. Image © 2026 Planet Labs All Rights Reserved. Village data © Myanmar Information Management UNIT (MIMU) Analysis and Graphics © 2026 Human Rights Watch.

Mohammad Roshid, who fled to Bangladesh from the Nassawr Para camp, said that he and other residents were forced to work on construction projects without any compensation.¹⁰⁹ Tofa Ali said, “Every week, four or five of us are taken by turn to cattle ranches to care for livestock looted by the Arakan Army.”¹¹⁰

In telephone interviews, camp residents said that there was a severe shortage of food and water.¹¹¹ Many described illnesses and said that while the Arakan Army provided some

¹⁰⁹ Human Rights Watch interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, December 19, 2025.

¹¹⁰ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rakhine State, January 16, 2026.

¹¹¹ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rakhine State, November 25, 2025.

basic medicines, there were no medical facilities, trained medical personnel, or supplies. Halema Hatu, 60, said in a November 2025 telephone interview that she was unwell and suffered from food shortages. Her family later said that she died on January 19, 2026, without having received medical treatment.¹¹²

Communication with the outside world remains severely restricted. Some camp residents were previously able to secretly use mobile phones, but such contact has become increasingly difficult due to intensified surveillance.¹¹³ Kefayet Ulla for instance, learned of his mother's death only 15 days after she passed away because no one could reach him. He described Nassawr Para camp as "not a prison, but a death trap."¹¹⁴

In response to Human Rights Watch's questions about the conditions in Nassawr Para, the United League of Arakan said that they "take full responsibility for the wellbeing" of the residents and they, in collaboration with local community leaders, strive to "provide food, water, health care, sanitation, and other necessities." The letter also states that residents "are neither held under guard nor forced to provide labor. They are free to go wherever they wish, depending on the security situation."¹¹⁵

¹¹² Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, January 20, 2026.

¹¹³ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rakhine State, January 7, 2026.

¹¹⁴ Human Rights Watch telephone interview, Rohingya refugee camp, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, January 20, 2026.

¹¹⁵ Response to questions from Human Rights Watch on the Htan Shauk Khan issue, email from the United League of Arakan, May 4, 2026. On file with Human Rights Watch. The group shared photographs from Nassawr Para showing the provision of food and aid to internally displaced persons or the construction of a pond carried out jointly with local residents. Human Rights Watch reviewed and analyzed the photos and confirmed those taken outdoors are from Nassawr Para camp. The letter also said that the humanitarian wing of the group "is planning a tangible and comprehensive project for all IDPs so that they can return to their homes if and when they wish" to which "international stakeholders are invited to contribute."

Violations of International Law

The conflict between the Myanmar military junta and the Arakan Army is considered to be a non-international armed conflict under international humanitarian law, also known as the laws of war.

Applicable International Humanitarian Law

Applicable law includes article 3 common to the four Geneva Conventions of 1949 and customary international humanitarian law. Common Article 3 provides minimum standards for the treatment of all persons not taking part in the hostilities, including civilians in custody and captured and incapacitated combatants. Prohibitions include murder, torture and other cruel treatment, the taking of hostages, and humiliating and degrading treatment. The wounded and sick are to be collected and cared for.¹¹⁶

Customary international humanitarian law sets out further fundamental protections. These address the conduct of hostilities—the means and methods of warfare—by all sides. Foremost are the principles of “civilian immunity” and “distinction”—the requirements that civilians may never be the deliberate target of attacks and that parties to a conflict must distinguish at all times between combatants and civilians, and between military objectives and civilian objects.¹¹⁷ Parties to the conflict are required to take all feasible precautions to minimize harm to civilians and civilian objects.¹¹⁸ They are prohibited from carrying out attacks that fail to discriminate between combatants and civilians, or would cause disproportionate harm to the civilian population.¹¹⁹

Warring parties must take all feasible precautions to protect the civilian population under their control against the effects of attacks.¹²⁰ They must avoid, to the extent feasible, locating military objectives within or near densely populated areas, and must remove, to the extent feasible, civilians under their control from the vicinity of military objectives.¹²¹

¹¹⁶ Geneva Conventions of 1949, article 3.

¹¹⁷ International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Customary International Humanitarian Law (IHL), (2005) rules 1-6.

¹¹⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, rules 15-21.

¹¹⁹ ICRC, Customary IHL, rules 11-14.

¹²⁰ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 22.

¹²¹ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 23.

The use of “human shields” is prohibited – purposefully using the presence of civilians to render military forces or areas immune from attack.¹²² Also prohibited is forced recruitment, a form of abusive forced labor in which armed forces or an armed group recruit individuals without their consent using coercion, abduction, or threat of punishment.¹²³ However, the failure of one side to abide by the law never justifies abuses by the other side.

War Crimes

Serious violations of international humanitarian law committed with criminal intent—that is, deliberately or recklessly—are war crimes. War crimes, listed in the “grave breaches” provisions of the Geneva Conventions and as customary law in the International Criminal Court statute and other sources, include a wide array of offenses for which individuals may be held criminally liable.¹²⁴ Among them are deliberate, indiscriminate, and disproportionate attacks harming civilians; willful killing; torture; sexual violence; using human shields; and arbitrary detention, among others.¹²⁵

Individuals also may be held criminally liable for attempting to commit a war crime, as well as assisting in, facilitating, aiding, or abetting a war crime.¹²⁶ Commanders and civilian leaders may be prosecuted for war crimes as a matter of command responsibility when they knew or should have known about the commission of war crimes and took insufficient measures to prevent them or punish those responsible.¹²⁷

Ensuring justice for serious violations is, in the first instance, the responsibility of the country whose nationals are implicated in the violations. Governments have an obligation to investigate serious violations that implicate their officials or other people under their jurisdiction. The government must ensure that military or domestic courts or other institutions impartially investigate whether serious violations occurred, identifying and prosecuting the individuals responsible for those violations in accordance with international fair trial standards, and imposing punishments on individuals found guilty that are commensurate

¹²² ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 97.

¹²³ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 95.

¹²⁴ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 156.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ ICRC, Customary IHL, rules 151-152.

¹²⁷ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 153.

with their deeds.¹²⁸

While non-state armed groups do not have the same legal obligation to prosecute violators of the laws of war within their ranks, they are nonetheless responsible for ensuring compliance with the laws of war and have a responsibility when they do conduct trials to do so in accordance with international fair trial standards.¹²⁹

Responsibility for Laws-of-War Violations and War Crimes in Hoyyar Siri

For decades the armed forces of Myanmar have been implicated in serious violations of international humanitarian law during Myanmar's many civil armed conflicts. These grave abuses have continued under the armed forces beholden to the military junta that took power in a coup in February 2021.¹³⁰

Since then, during fighting against ethnic armed groups and anti-junta forces, the junta military has frequently engaged in indiscriminate shelling and aerial bombing, causing considerable civilian casualties and the destruction of civilian objects in towns and villages. With respect to Rakhine State, the military has committed numerous atrocities against the Rohingya population both before and since the 2017 campaign of ethnic cleansing, which included crimes against humanity and acts of genocide.

Since November 2023, as the Arakan Army has expanded its territorial control and administrative reach across large parts of Rakhine State, its forces and the military committed serious abuses against civilians, including unlawful killings, arbitrary detention and mistreatment, forced recruitment, widespread arson, looting and the deliberate destruction of civilian property.¹³¹ The massacre of civilians in Hoyyar Siri on May 2, 2024 occurred amidst

¹²⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 158.

¹²⁹ See Common Article 3 to the Geneva Conventions, art. 3(1)(d). ICRC, Commentary on First Geneva Convention (2016), article 3, paras. 689-95.

¹³⁰ UN Human Rights Council, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews, UN Doc. A/79/550, October 25, 2024, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/country-reports/a79550-report-special-rapporteur-situation-human-rights-myanmar-thomas-h> (accessed March 16, 2026); Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, Report of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, UN Doc. A/HRC/60/18, July 14, 2025, <https://iimm.un.org/sites/default/files/2025/08/IIMM%20Annual%20Report%202025%20EN.pdf> (accessed March 16, 2026).

¹³¹ "Myanmar: Arakan Army Oppresses Rohingya Muslims," Human Rights Watch news release, July 28, 2025, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/28/myanmar-arakan-army-oppresses-rohingya>.

violations of the laws of war by both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army.

The Myanmar military failed to take all feasible precautions to protect civilians by establishing military bases in the vicinity of the village of Hoyyar Siri. When it became evident that the bases likely would be attacked, the military took no apparent measures to relocate or otherwise seek to protect the civilian population. If these actions put civilians at unnecessary risk, they would be laws-of-war violations. Any investigation of the military's actions should also seek to determine if the military deliberately sought to use civilians to shield their forces from attack, which would amount to the war crime of human shielding.

The Arakan Army's deliberate attack on and deliberate shooting of civilians in Hoyyar Siri were clear violations of the laws of war. Executing persons in custody, whether civilians or captured combatants, was also a violation. Abul Hashim, a survivor of the attack, captured the deliberate nature of the killing of civilians: "We hung white flags at the front of the procession to show that we were peaceful civilians evacuating to safety. It was not a battle. They were just shooting at people who were trying to run away."¹³²

War crimes committed included deliberate attacks on civilians, murder, unlawful detention, torture and other ill-treatment, arson and other destruction of civilian property, and looting. In addition to the fighters who directly committed the crimes, Arakan Army commanders are also likely to be criminally liable for ordering or assisting unlawful attacks on civilians and civilian properties. Their leaders should be investigated for criminal liability as a matter of command responsibility.

Since the May 2, 2024 massacre, the Arakan Army has continued to commit serious abuses against the Rohingya survivors of the attack, some of which amount to war crimes. Preventing Rohingya from returning to the village of Hoyyar Siri and failing to respect their property rights violates international humanitarian law.¹³³ The forced relocation and effective detention of the remaining villagers at Nassawr Para camp violates Common Article 3 and customary

muslims#:~:text=Rohingya%20in%20Rakhine%20State%20have%20been%20caught,extrajudicial%20killings%2C%20wid
espread%20arson%2C%20and%20unlawful%20recruitment; Promotion and protection of human rights: human rights
situations and reports of special rapporteurs and representatives, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of
human rights in Myanmar, Thomas H. Andrews, A/80/490/ 25-16887, October 20, 2025, <https://docs.un.org/en/A/80/490>
(accessed March 17, 2026).

¹³² Human Rights Watch interview, Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, October 11, 2025.

¹³³ ICRC, Customary IHL, rules 132-133.

international law, notably the prohibition against forced displacement¹³⁴; the prohibition of arbitrary deprivation of liberty¹³⁵ as a form of violence, cruel treatment, and outrages upon personal dignity¹³⁶; detention under inhumane conditions¹³⁷; and acts amounting to collective punishment.¹³⁸ Arakan Army personnel responsible for ordering the displacement into the Nassawr Para camp, committing inhumane treatment in the camp, and committing outrages upon personal dignity, can all be liable for war crimes.¹³⁹

Myanmar's junta has a responsibility to investigate and fairly prosecute war crimes by their own forces and by opposition armed groups on their territory. Any such judicial procedures must be conducted in accordance with international fair trial standards – something Myanmar has for many years failed to do.

Myanmar is not a member of the International Criminal Court (ICC). The ICC can only exercise its jurisdiction over crimes committed by nationals of, or on the territory of a member country, unless the UN Security Council refers the situation to the court, or if the relevant nonmember country accepts the court's jurisdiction. However, in 2019 the ICC prosecutor opened an investigation into alleged grave crimes against the Rohingya that were committed, at least in part, in Bangladesh or other ICC member countries. In November 2024, the ICC prosecutor requested an arrest warrant for Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, then commander-in-chief of Myanmar's military and now the country's president, for crimes against humanity of deportation and persecution of the Rohingya in 2017.¹⁴⁰ A Security Council referral of the situation in Myanmar to the ICC would broaden the scope of the court's investigation.

In January 2026, the International Court of Justice heard the merits of the case brought by Gambia against Myanmar under the Genocide Convention. A judgment in the case is expected by the end of 2026.¹⁴¹

¹³⁴ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 129.

¹³⁵ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 99.

¹³⁶ Common article 3.

¹³⁷ Common article 3.

¹³⁸ ICRC, Customary IHL, rule 103.

¹³⁹ See Rome Statute, arts. 8(2)(e)(viii), (c)(i), and (c)(ii).

¹⁴⁰ ICC/Bangladesh Myanmar Arrest Warrant, United Nations, November 27, 2024, <https://media.un.org/avlibrary/en/asset/d331/d3315748> (accessed February 12, 2026).

¹⁴¹ "UN World Court begins landmark hearings on Rohingya genocide case against Myanmar," United Nations, January 12, 2026, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2026/01/1166746> (accessed February 12, 2026).

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This report was edited by Meenakshi Ganguly, deputy director of the Asia Division. Bryony Lau, deputy director of the Asia Division; Shayna Bauchner, researcher in the Asia Division; Sam Dubberley, director of the Technology, Rights, and Investigations Division provided specialist reviews. It was also reviewed by Richard Weir, senior advisor in the Crisis, Conflict, and Arms Division, Nadia Hardman, senior researcher in the Refugee and Migrant Rights Division; Sahar Fetrat, researcher in the Women's Rights Division; Bill Van Esveld, associate director in the Children's Rights Division; Maria Elena Vignoli, senior counsel in the International Justice Program; and Lucy McKernan, Geneva deputy director, Claudio Francavilla, associate EU director, Kate Weine, senior coordinator, Widad Franco, UN advocate, and Louis Charbonneau, UN director in the Advocacy Department. Robbie Newton, senior coordinator in the Asia division, provided editing and production assistance for the report.

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“Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere”

Arakan Army Massacre of Rohingya Muslims in Hoyyar Siri, Myanmar

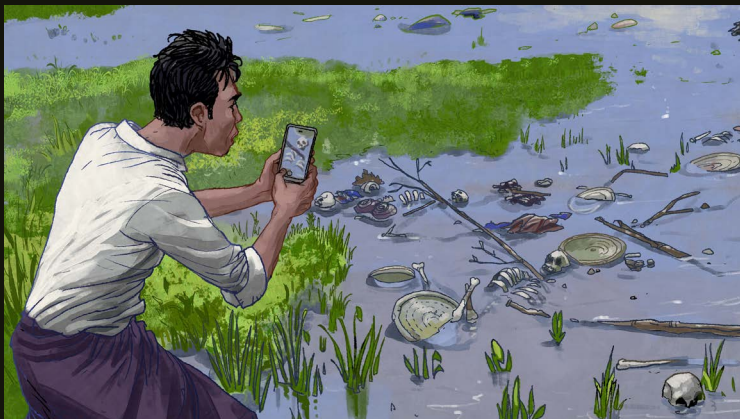
On May 2, 2024, the Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group, killed or injured hundreds of Rohingya men, women, and children in Hoyyar Siri village (Htan Shauk Khan in Burmese), in Buthidaung township, in Myanmar’s Rakhine State. The civilians were attempting to flee fighting between the advancing Arakan Army and Myanmar military forces at nearby army camps.

“Skeletons and Skulls Scattered Everywhere” finds that Arakan Army fighters repeatedly fired on unarmed villagers and later looted and burned the village. The report is based on interviews with 41 witnesses, most of whom had managed to flee to Bangladesh during the year after the massacre. Their accounts were corroborated through satellite imagery, as well as photographs and videos that Human Rights Watch verified. Human Rights Watch identified by name over 170 villagers killed or missing, including at least 90 children, though the actual toll is likely much higher.

The Arakan Army’s deliberate shooting of civilians and destruction of civilian property were grave violations of the laws of war that amount to war crimes. While the Arakan Army has denied the mass killings and other atrocities, survivors said that the armed group coerced villagers to provide false video testimony exonerating the force. The Arakan Army has since prevented survivors from returning to their village and has effectively detained them in a nearby camp.

The Myanmar military may also have violated the laws of war by not taking adequate measures to protect Hoyyar Siri villagers from harm.

During their armed conflict in recent years, both the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military have committed serious abuses against Rohingya civilians. The report calls on concerned governments to press both sides to end abuses and hold those responsible to account.



Omar Ahmod risked his safety to return to Hoyyar Siri a few months after the massacre, located the sites where he had seen civilians gunned down, and took videos and photographs of human remains. These images were analyzed by forensics experts who, in some cases, identified gunshot injuries to the skulls of victims.

“There, I saw heaps of skeletons and skulls scattered everywhere, clothes still intact though the flesh had decayed. Some bodies were in water-filled ditches, others on dry ground. I remembered exactly where these people had been gathered,” Omar Ahmod told Human Rights Watch.

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