



**Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
(BROUK)**
For the rights of Rohingya

SEXUAL VIOLENCE AGAINST ROHINGYA WOMEN AND GIRLS

Emerging patterns of abuse in Arakan Army-
controlled areas of Rakhine State

May 2026



Key Findings

- Rohingya women and girls are facing escalating sexual violence in areas under Arakan Army (AA) control, including rape, gang rape, threats of sexual violence and abuse linked to detention, displacement and forced recruitment practices.
- BROUK documentation collected between May 2024 and April 2026 indicates that patterns of abuse have evolved from violence occurring primarily during conflict and displacement to increasingly coercive forms linked to forced recruitment, detention and village-level enforcement under AA control.
- Since early 2026, women and girls have been directly targeted through AA forced recruitment systems, including village quotas, named lists, arrest operations and incommunicado detention, placing them in conditions that significantly increase their exposure to sexual violence.
- Sexual violence forms part of a broader system of coercion and control affecting Rohingya communities, including arbitrary arrests, incommunicado detention, enforced disappearance, forced recruitment, movement restrictions and economic extortion.
- Severe movement restrictions, displacement, loss of livelihoods and limited humanitarian access are increasing exposure to exploitation, including trafficking. In central Rakhine State, longstanding deprivation and humanitarian restrictions are also driving survival sex among some Rohingya women.
- Underreporting remains significant due to fear of retaliation, stigma and access constraints. Documented cases represent only a partial picture of the scale and patterns of abuse.



Territorial control in Rakhine State, 2025

Since 2023, the Arakan Army (AA) has expanded its territorial control across large parts of Rakhine State amid escalating conflict and widespread civilian displacement.

The majority of incidents documented in this briefing were reported from northern Rakhine State, particularly Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships, where Rohingya communities have faced forced recruitment, detention, movement restrictions and heightened protection risks under AA authority.

Adapted from Rakhine State, Chin State, and Anyar during the Myanmar Civil War (2025), Wikimedia Commons

Executive Summary

Rohingya women and girls in areas of Rakhine State under Arakan Army (AA) control are facing escalating sexual violence that is increasingly embedded within systems of detention, forced recruitment and coercive control.

This briefing draws on information collected by BROUK between May 2024 and April 2026. Sexual violence has long been documented as a central element of persecution against the Rohingya, including during the 2017 genocide by the Burmese military. Current evidence indicates that sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls is continuing as the AA consolidates its control over Rakhine State.

Whereas earlier patterns of sexual violence committed by the AA primarily took place during conflict and displacement, since early 2026 abuses have increasingly become linked to forced recruitment, arrest operations targeting women, and incommunicado detention.

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AA authorities have increasingly targeted women and girls through recruitment quotas, named recruitment lists and detention practices. Detention in AA-controlled facilities, often without communication with families, removes community protection mechanisms and enables sexual violence and abuse to occur with impunity.

These patterns are reinforced by a broader environment of coercion. Movement restrictions, economic deprivation and limited humanitarian access are isolating communities. At the same time, worsening humanitarian conditions, including severe food insecurity, are driving exploitation. Documentation from IDP camps in central Rakhine State illustrates how longstanding deprivation and humanitarian restrictions are driving survival sex among some Rohingya women.

Displacement further increases risk. Rohingya communities are undertaking dangerous journeys, including via maritime routes, where women and girls face heightened exposure to trafficking and sexual exploitation. Underreporting remains significant, meaning available evidence reflects only a partial picture.

Taken together, these findings indicate that sexual violence is occurring as part of a broader and increasingly organised pattern of coercion and control affecting the Rohingya under AA authority, enabled by entrenched impunity. Sustained international action is required to address ongoing violations and end the conditions that allow them to continue.

Sources and Documentation

This briefing draws on first-hand information collected by BROUK from Rohingya sources in Rakhine State between May 2024 and April 2026, collated through situation updates and field documentation. The briefing forms part of BROUK's ongoing monitoring of violations affecting Rohingya communities in the context of the International Court of Justice's provisional measures order in *The Gambia v. Myanmar*.

Independent corroboration is constrained by severe access restrictions, including communications controls imposed by the Burmese military and limitations on humanitarian and independent monitoring. Documentation is concentrated in northern Rakhine State, particularly Maungdaw and Buthidaung.

Fear of retaliation, stigma and severe access constraints mean sexual violence is likely significantly underreported.

Context

Since the 2021 military coup, communities across Burma have faced an unprecedented humanitarian crisis marked by widespread displacement, targeted attacks on civilians, economic collapse and severe human rights violations.

There are approximately 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Burma following the 2017 genocide, the majority in northern Rakhine State. Since conflict escalated in 2023, the AA has taken control of large parts of the state, where civilians have faced conflict, displacement and severe humanitarian restrictions.¹

Rohingya communities, however, continue to face additional identity-based restrictions, coercive practices and heightened protection risks linked to their longstanding persecution and denial of citizenship, alongside abuses imposed by both the Burmese military and the AA.

Other human rights organisations, including Amnesty International, Fortify Rights and Human Rights Watch, have also documented serious abuses affecting Rohingya communities in Rakhine State under AA control, including arbitrary detention, forced displacement and unlawful killings.²

Increasing numbers of Rohingya have fled violence, forced recruitment, persecution and worsening humanitarian conditions, crossing into Bangladesh or undertaking dangerous maritime journeys across the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea. According to UNHCR, more than 150,000 Rohingya fled into Bangladesh between late 2023 and 2025, while nearly 900 Rohingya refugees were reported dead or missing at sea in 2025, making it the deadliest year on record for Rohingya maritime crossings.³

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Sexual violence within a broader pattern of coercion and control

Sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls has long been documented as a central element of targeted persecution. UN investigations found that rape and sexual violence were systematically used by the Burmese military during the 2017 genocide.⁴ Evidence of widespread sexual violence by the military presented before the International Court of Justice was also used to demonstrate genocidal intent.⁵

Rohingya communities continue to face widespread abuses by the Arakan Army (AA), including forced recruitment, arbitrary detention, enforced disappearance and displacement. BROUK's documentation shows that these abuses are continuing across multiple contexts in areas under AA authority.

As the AA consolidates and formalises its authority in areas under its control, the context and patterns of sexual violence are evolving and becoming embedded within organised systems and practices targeting Rohingya communities.

The escalation and evolution of sexual violence under AA administration

Whereas earlier patterns of sexual violence primarily took place during conflict and displacement, since early 2026 abuses have increasingly occurred within more controlled and organised settings linked to forced recruitment, including arrest operations targeting women and incommunicado detention.

Mass rape by AA soldiers during displacement and flight

During the escalation of violence and mass displacement in Maungdaw Township in 2024, Rohingya women fleeing attacks were subjected to incidents of gang rape by AA soldiers. In one documented case, a 22-year-old Rohingya woman was gang-raped by seven AA soldiers while fleeing violence with her husband. During the assault, she was beaten and her husband was later murdered.⁶

In another case, a young Rohingya woman fleeing attacks in Hari Fara became separated from her family while trying to escape and was later found after being brutally raped by multiple AA soldiers.⁶ These attacks took place as Rohingya communities were scattered, displaced and left without protection during flight from violence.

Recruitment raids, detention and targeting of Rohingya women

Since early 2026, AA authorities have increasingly

targeted women and girls in Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships through recruitment operations, village raids and detention practices. Villages have been ordered to provide recruits, including women, and families have hidden daughters or attempted to flee to avoid arrest.

Women have been taken from homes and transported to AA camps without contact with relatives, in conditions amounting to incommunicado detention and enforced disappearance, enabling sexual violence and abuse to occur with impunity. In one incident in Buthidaung in January 2026, around 15 Rohingya women were arrested during night raids and some were later released only after ransom payments. One woman released from detention bore clear signs of physical abuse and sexual violence but feared speaking openly about what had happened to her.⁷

Detention, intimidation and the threat of sexual violence

Detention conditions for Rohingya women and girls have become a source of acute insecurity across northern Rakhine State, particularly in the context of recruitment raids and arrests targeting women and girls. In one documented case, a 15-year-old Rohingya girl died after jumping from a moving vehicle while being transported to an AA camp following the arrest of women from her village.⁸

Sexual violence has also been occurring within homes and communities across northern Rakhine State. In February 2026, two AA members entered a Rohingya home in northern Maungdaw Township, tied up both

husband and wife, and raped the woman inside her home before leaving her badly injured.⁹ The attack reinforced concerns among Rohingya communities that women and girls remain unsafe even within their own homes.

The recurrence of these abuses across different townships points to increasingly organised patterns of intimidation, arbitrary detention and sexual violence affecting Rohingya women and girls in northern Rakhine State. Sexual violence, and the threat of sexual violence, are being used as tools of intimidation and control within broader systems of recruitment, detention and enforced deprivation.

Deprivation, exploitation and impunity

Rohingya communities under AA control face widening restrictions, arbitrary arrests, forced labour demands, economic extortion and displacement. These conditions isolate communities, restrict access to livelihoods and further undermine access to protection.

In displacement camps in central Rakhine State, longstanding restrictions imposed by the Burmese military, combined with severe deprivation and humanitarian collapse, are forcing some Rohingya women into survival sex to obtain food and basic necessities. Women from female-headed households and widows have reportedly engaged in sex work purely for survival amid severe hunger and humanitarian restrictions.¹⁰

Displacement and onward movement further expose women and girls to trafficking and sexual exploitation. Increasing numbers of Rohingya are fleeing through dangerous maritime routes and trafficking networks to escape violence, forced recruitment and severe economic collapse.¹¹

This environment allows sexual violence to continue with little risk of accountability.

There is no publicly available information indicating that the AA has conducted credible investigations into allegations of sexual violence or taken action against perpetrators. Restrictions on movement, communication and access to justice continue to prevent accountability and enable ongoing abuse.



Sexual violence, and the threat of sexual violence, are being used as tools of intimidation and control.

Conclusion

The pattern of sexual violence documented in this briefing reflects serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including Common Article 3 of the Geneva Conventions and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), and potentially amounting to atrocity crimes under the Rome Statute, including crimes against humanity and war crimes under Articles 7 and 8. These abuses take place in a context where Rohingya communities remain systematically denied protection and access to justice. The continuation of these violations under AA control, alongside longstanding abuses by the Burmese military, underscores the failure of existing international mechanisms to prevent harm to Rohingya communities.

The concerns documented in this briefing are consistent with broader findings by UN mechanisms, including the UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, who has highlighted the persistence of grave human rights violations, impunity and accountability failures affecting Rohingya and other communities across Burma, including abuses committed by the Arakan Army.¹²

These findings place clear responsibility on the international community to act. Failure to respond risks further entrenching patterns of abuse and impunity. Coordinated and sustained international action is required to address ongoing violations, ensure accountability for atrocity crimes and serious human rights violations, and protect Rohingya communities from further harm.

Policy Recommendations

Trigger UN Security Council action on violations

The UK, as penholder on Burma, should convene a UN Security Council meeting to address violations of the International Court of Justice's provisional measures, international humanitarian law and ongoing abuses in Rakhine State. Council members should address ongoing breaches of Security Council resolutions relating to conflict-related sexual violence, protection of civilians, and protection risks facing women and children, including UNSCR 1325, 1820, 1888, 1960 and 1296.

Ensure humanitarian access to Rakhine State

States and humanitarian actors should facilitate humanitarian access into Rakhine State, including cross-border delivery, and use diplomatic engagement to ensure life-saving aid reaches Rohingya communities.

Increase humanitarian funding for Rohingya communities

Donors should prioritise protection of Rohingya refugees and crisis-affected communities by restoring and increasing humanitarian funding for responses in both Burma and refugee camps in Bangladesh.

Apply targeted measures against perpetrators of abuses

States should implement coordinated targeted measures, including sanctions against the Arakan Army and the Burmese military, alongside restrictions on arms transfers, aviation fuel and other revenue streams linked to serious human rights abuses.

Strengthen accountability for atrocity crimes

States should advance accountability for atrocity crimes through support for proceedings at the International Court of Justice, engagement on International Criminal Court pathways and backing universal jurisdiction cases covering crimes committed by both the Burmese military and the Arakan Army, including through enforcement of arrest warrants and implementation of future judicial decisions.

Publicly condemn sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls

States should clearly condemn sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls and explicitly name abuses committed by the Arakan Army alongside those of the Burmese military.

Expand ICC accountability to include Arakan Army crimes

States Parties to the International Criminal Court (ICC) should support the inclusion of crimes committed by the Arakan Army, including sexual and gender-based violence, within the scope of the Court's investigation on Burma.

Strengthen monitoring and documentation through Rohingya-led organisations

States and donors should increase support to Rohingya-led organisations to strengthen monitoring, documentation and survivor-centred responses to sexual violence in Rakhine State.

Press the Arakan Army to end abuses and ensure non-discrimination

International actors, the National Unity Government (NUG) and the Steering Committee for the Emergence of a Federal Democratic Union (SCEF) should press Arakan Army leadership to end sexual violence, arbitrary detention and forced recruitment and ensure protection and non-discriminatory treatment of Rohingya communities.



Coordinated and sustained international action is required to address ongoing violations, ensure accountability for atrocity crimes and serious human rights violations, and protect Rohingya communities from further harm.

Endnotes and Sources

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