

## Investigators visit Rakhine attack sites



Vice President U Myint Swe, Chairman of the Rakhine State Commission and members visit Pyaug Pyaik Village, Maungtaw Township



Investigation Commission meeting with Muslims at Pyaug Paik Village, Maungtaw Township

Members of the Rakhine State Investigation Commission led by its chairman Vice President U Myint Swe arrived in Sittway yesterday morning and visited police outposts that came under surprise attack on 9 October, interviewed eyewitnesses to the early-morning ambushes and questioned villagers on the allegations of rape.

Details of the interviews and inspections could not be obtained, but the commission has been charged with launching probes into the root causes of the violent attacks that occurred on 9 October and 12 and 13 November, to investigate whether security forces acted in accordance with the law and to make suggestions that would prevent such incidents from happening again, officials said.

The first stop for the Vice President and the commission was the No. 1 Border Guard Police Command Centre in Ngakhura Village in Maungtaw, which came under fire by violent attackers at about 4:30 am on 9th October. Commission members inspected the place where the violent attacks occurred, questioned the security personnel on duty at the time and asked for details on the deaths and casualties of both sides.

The commission then proceeded to the village administration office and talked with five elders, who said they witnessed the violent attacks on that day.

Separately, a team led by commission member Dr Aung Tun Thet talked with Muslim families in Ngakhura Village, where several market stalls were set on fire on 30 October.

The commission later visited Pwintphyuchaung Village, where the majority of residents are Muslim, and spoke with residents who described in detail the firing of light weapons, clearance operations by government troops and the outbreak of fires in the village during the attacks.

The commission proceeded to Pyaungpaik Village, another predominantly Muslim community, where they talked with villagers about the clashes between government troops and violent attackers. Five government troops were killed in the village that day. Pyaungpaik is where there were several outbreaks of fire, and also where there were rape accusations of young female villagers.

Dr Daw Thet Thet Zin, the chairperson of the Myanmar Women Affairs Federation and a member of the commission, spoke with one female resident of whom she asked whether rapes of young girls had been committed and whether she had witnessed any of rape.

Yesterday evening, the chairman and the commission inspected the command centre of the No. 1 Border Guard Police Force in Kyikanpyin Village, another majority-Muslim community.

The command centre was attacked on 9th October, and fires were set to a nearby village. Several weapons were also recovered in Kyikanpyin in the days and weeks after the attacks.

The commission also visited the Kyikanpyin Border Guard Police Command Centre near Warpake Village and similarly spoke with residents about the attacks on the police command centre, the outbreak of fires in the village and the recovery of weapons looted during the attacks. Five members of the border guard were killed here.

The chairman and members of the commission also questioned responsible officials at the No. 1 Border Guard Police Command Centre in Kyikanpyin on the fighting between the violent attackers and the border guards, and the looting of arms and ammunitions that followed.

The commission will submit its suggestions by the beginning of February to the President's Office.

The commission is a separate entity from the Rakhine State Advisory Commission, which is headed by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan.

(Myanmar News Agency, 12 December 2016)