

Statement issued by Investigation Commission on Rakhine State

Further revelations have been made in the ongoing work of the Investigation Commission on Rakhine State, specifically on Kyetyoepyin Village, the site of alleged rapes and murders of Muslim villagers as reported by The Guardian newspaper, where residents told the commission on Tuesday that they have never heard of the woman who told the British newspaper that government soldiers raped her and her two daughters before shooting to death her children and her husband before burning their house down.

In Saturday's online and print editions of The Guardian, a Muslim woman named Noor Ayesha is profiled and quoted as saying mass atrocities occurred in mid-October in her village. Noor Ayesha claims a group of 20 soldiers came to her home in Kyetyoepyin in mid-October, killed her husband and seven of her children, raped her and set fire to her home. Noor Ayesha told The Guardian that two of her daughters were raped by soldiers before they were killed.

Noor Ayesha is now in Bangladesh, The Guardian reports. The article has also appeared in the online and print editions of the South China Morning Post, a large-circulation newspaper based in Hong Kong.

The Myanmar government has consistently denied the allegations. The latest revelations were learnt from a statement released yesterday by the commission. The statement in its entirety is as follows:

1. The Investigation Commission on Rakhine State led by Vice-President U Myint Swe, formed to investigate violent armed attacks which took place in Maungdaw region, Rakhine State on October 9, November 12 & 13 in 2016, visited sites of armed attacks to perform duties conferred upon it under notification 89/2016 of the President's Office dated 1st December 2016, to make inspections of places of conflicts and investigations of persons concerned in the region during December 11-13 2016.

2. Having inspected the Ngakhura Border Guard Police Outpost's regional branch, which was violently attacked on October 9, commission members met with the Ngakhura village administrator and elders of local residents who profess Buddhism, Hinduism and

Islam, asking about their living conditions. During the meeting they disclosed that, "The incidents were caused by violent attackers. Those were not concerned with us. The whole village depends upon the bazaar, which is always crowded with buyers and sellers. It is a meeting place of the villagers. Under the current situations, the bazaar cannot be reopened, causing the stoppage of commodity flows. Thus, our village and nearby ones are finding it difficult for our living."

After hearing their comments, the chairman of the Investigation Commission consulted with the Chief Minister of Rakhine State to ensure the guarantee of their basic rights and an improvement in their living conditions.

3. In answer to our assurances in meeting with them that we hope they had humanitarian aid provided by international organizations, they replied that they have had humanitarian aid, and they wanted more assistance if possible.

4. Those who are suspected of involvement in the armed attacks are being arrested for investigation. Those who were not involved in the attacks have been released. It has been learnt that there have been 48 freed so far. In meeting with them, they requested that their family members who were arrested also be released if they were found to be innocent. The commission members consulted with the Rakhine State Cabinet and Myanmar Police Force to make prompt investigations.

5. While the commission members were conducting investigations in the Maungtaw region, a news article appeared in The Guardian and the South China Morning Post website dated 11th December 2016 which read, in part: "A woman, one Noor Ayesha, fled Kyetyoepyin village in Maungtaw, Rakhine State with her daughter named Dilnawaz Begum. Her two daughters were raped and they were killed together with her husband. Though she was also raped, she managed to escape. During the raid of the government into the village of Kyetyoepyin, other women were raped too. There were killings in the village."

In regard to this news article, commission members went to the village of Kyetyoepyin on December 12, taking time to enquire men and women of different age groups about the event of one Noor Ayesha as described in The Guardian website and

newspaper. They replied that no incidents of this kind occurred in their village, as described by Noor Ayesha, whom they said they had never seen.

When we interrogated the responsible military officials performing their duties in the region, they also replied that there were no similar cases in the region, asserting that they performed their duties in accord with military rules within the framework of legal procedures.

6. During the investigation from December 11 to 13 December, commission members learnt that authorities were carrying out investigations in accord with the prescribed laws to take action against terrorists, and there were no more armed attacks or arson attacks found during area clearance operations after 22 November. Thus, worries among the local populace lessened and there appeared signs of peace and stability in the region. In some villages, schools were reopened while some villages requested to reopen schools and return of teachers to their schools.

The chairman of the investigation commission consulted with the Chief Minister of Rakhine State to open schools as the region regained peace and stability.

7. Moreover, it is described that the commission managed not only to perform the work of investigation into the violent attacks, but also consulted with authorities to improve the living conditions, business, education, health, and peace and stability of local residents of the area.—Investigation Commission (GNLM, December 15, 2016)