



Date: July 23, 2025

### **ARNC's Rebuttal to Crisis Group Report on Unsubstantiated Allegations Against Rohingya in Bangladesh and Arakan State**

The Arakan Rohingya National Council (ARNC) strongly condemns the International Crisis Group's Asia Report No. 348, released on 18 June 2025. This report presents a deeply flawed and concocted narrative that vilifies the Rohingya community, while lending legitimacy to the abuses and atrocities committed by the Arakan Army (AA) in Arakan State.

By emphasizing concerns around "militant recruitment" and "insurgency risks," the report diverts attention from the root causes of the crisis. It fails to acknowledge that the Rohingya are a people who have been rendered de facto stateless and subjected to decades of systematic persecution, forced displacement, and genocidal violence.

Rather than engaging with this historical and political context, the ICG recycles harmful and outdated tropes that cast Rohingya peaceful efforts in a negative light. Simultaneously, it portrays the Arakan Army as a legitimate governance actor, ignoring growing evidence of its involvement in serious human rights violations. This framing not only distorts the historical record but also emboldens actors who continue to repress the Rohingya and obstructs any meaningful progress toward a just and lasting resolution.

The persecution of the Rohingya did not begin in 2017. It is rather the result of a long and deliberate history of exclusion and violence carried out by successive Burmese regimes. Since the military coup in 1962 and the adoption of the "Burmese Way to Socialism," the Rohingya have been systematically targeted. The 1982 Citizenship Law effectively stripped them of legal recognition, while state-led campaigns of forced expulsion occurred in 1978, 1991-1992, and again in 2016-2017.

Each of these campaigns was marked by widespread destruction, arbitrary arrests, sexual violence, and extrajudicial killings. These repeated patterns culminated in the 2017 genocide, during which nearly a million Rohingya were forced to flee to Bangladesh. This was not a spontaneous breakdown of order but a calculated effort by the state to permanently alter the demographics of Arakan State.

The Arakan Army is not a neutral actor nor a liberating force, as its conduct in northern Rakhine State demonstrates a clear and consistent pattern of abuse. AA has displaced entire Rohingya communities, burned their villages, and is responsible for the killing of more than

2,500 innocent Rohingya civilians. These actions closely mirror the tactics used by the Burmese military during the 2017 atrocities.

Despite its growing territorial control, the Arakan Army has not established a framework for inclusive governance. Instead, it has reproduced exclusionary structures, restricted humanitarian access, and fostered a climate of fear among Rohingya communities. The ICG report fails to address these critical realities, instead granting the AA a free pass while placing undue blame on Rohingya refugees and their fragmented leadership for the lack of peace in the region. This perfectly fits the 'victim blaming' game.

This is not merely a misreading of the situation, but a dangerous distortion that risks laying the groundwork for a renewed wave of repression, this time under a different flag.

## **1. Misrepresentation of Rohingya Armed Groups and Community Sentiment**

### **ICG Claim:**

Rohingya armed groups are coercing refugees into joining, using religious rhetoric, and recruiting thousands of fighters for an insurgency.

### **Rebuttal:**

- The Crisis Group fails to acknowledge the desperation caused by years of inaction by the international community and repeated human rights violations in Rakhine State.
- Rohingya youth are driven to mobilize not because of religious extremism, but due to the total absence of political avenues and justice for past atrocities.
- The so-called "recruitment" is exaggerated and selectively framed. The vast majority of Rohingya refugees oppose violent confrontation and prefer peaceful, voluntary return to their homeland with rights to citizenship restored.
- The ICG uses religious framing ("jihad", "non-believers") to create an impression of radicalism, which aligns dangerously with long-standing attempts to brand Rohingya as extremists, a tactic used by both the Myanmar regime and some Rakhine nationalist groups. In the meantime, ICG NEVER mentioned a word about Rakhine extremism, evidence of which can be found simply by googling.
- ARNC has conducted a thorough investigation on the ground and found no trace of such allegation. We therefore say that this is a blatant distortion of the truth to undermine the hard earned harmony achieved in the camps.



## 2. Legitimizing the Arakan Army While Downplaying Its Atrocities

### ICG Claim:

The Arakan Army (AA) is emerging as a legitimate governing force and must be engaged diplomatically.

### Rebuttal:

- The report glosses over documented war crimes by the AA against Rohingya civilians, including the torching of villages in Buthidaung in May 2024 also other places across Maungdaw, Buthidaung and Rathedaung, extrajudicial killings, forced displacements, and arbitrary arrests and other uncountable crimes.
- It wrongly portrays AA as a potential “inclusive” governance actor, despite widespread Rohingya testimonies detailing ongoing harassment and racial exclusion under AA control.
- Many Rohingya still in Rakhine report that life under the AA is not improving over the Myanmar military’s oppression rather worsening and the influx of more than 200 000 fresh Rohingya into Bangladesh is a clear evidence to this reality. Drowning of hundreds of Rohingya in the sea on their way to safety in neighbouring countries is another well-known reality to the world. These voices are largely absent from the ICG narrative because the group want to lure the world into their hypocrisy.

## 3. Blaming Bangladesh and Security Agencies

### ICG Claim:

Bangladeshi security agencies are covertly supporting Rohingya armed groups, thus endangering diplomatic engagement with the AA.

### Rebuttal:

- Bangladesh is bearing a disproportionate burden of hosting over a million refugees with little to no international support and declining humanitarian funding.
- The Crisis Group’s insinuation of a “hidden agenda” by Bangladesh undermines the country’s consistent call for voluntary return and stability in Arakan.
- Rather than blaming Bangladesh, more focus should be on international failure to hold the Myanmar junta and AA accountable or support a political settlement.

#### 4. The False Dichotomy: Rohingya vs. Arakan Army

**ICG Claim:**

Rohingya insurgency would derail prospects of repatriation and ruin relations between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims.

**Rebuttal:**

- This claim implies Rohingya must choose between submission or exile. It ignores the fundamental issue: Rohingya were violently expelled, and their repatriation is obstructed by both the Myanmar regime and now increasingly the AA.
- There is already deep intercommunal division stemming from 2012 and 2017 massacres. Without justice and truth-telling, peace is impossible not because of Rohingya resistance, but because of unaddressed structural violence.
- The AA has not offered any roadmap for inclusive, dignified return and return of property to Rohingya refugees. Reconciliation requires concrete rights, not only rhetoric.

#### 5. Dismissing Civilian Rohingya Leadership and Fabricating Consent

**ICG Claim:**

The camps are dominated by armed groups; civilian leaders are absent or co-opted.

**Rebuttal:**

- Civilian leaders have been systematically undermined or even assassinated not by Rohingya communities, but often as a result of failure of the international community and UN agencies to ensure their safety.
- Despite this, Rohingya civil society remains active and committed to peaceful solutions, but they are sidelined in most diplomatic processes, including in this report. ARNC aims to change this pattern.

#### 6. Delegitimizing the Rohingya Cause Through “Extremist” Labels

**ICG Claim:**

The Rohingya are at risk of being viewed as enemies of the Myanmar public by fighting the Arakan Army.

**Rebuttal:**

- This claim implies Rohingya must stay silent even when under attack, in order to win favor from Myanmar’s ethnic majority.

- The same logic was used to justify inaction after the 2017 genocide when Rohingya were told not to antagonize the state or military.
- Holding the Rohingya responsible for their own marginalization is both unethical and politically manipulation.

## 7. Aid Cuts and External Failures Are Left Unaccountable

### ICG Claim:

Dwindling aid is increasing desperation, but donors must tread carefully to avoid enabling armed groups.

### Rebuttal:

- The report fails to indicate the root causes of aid cuts: the global North's shifting priorities, political fatigue, and shrinking humanitarian space.
- Armed groups thrive not because of donor engagement but because of donor absence, refugee hopelessness, and the failure of political accountability mechanisms. However, Rohingyas are peace loving people and prefer peaceful and amicable solution.

## 8. Recommendations Tilt Toward Containment, Not Solutions

### ICG's Recommendations:

Limit Rohingya influence in camps, avoid armed mobilization, engage Arakan Army, encourage cross-border trade.

### Rebuttal:

- These measures aim more at **pacification** than **justice**. They prioritize regional diplomacy over restoring Rohingya rights, dignity, and citizenship.
- Instead, the international community should:
  - a. Demand immediate accountability for crimes by the Arakan Army and Myanmar military.
  - b. Support inclusive Rohingya representation in political processes.
  - c. Recognize the root cause: the denial of Rohingya identity, rights, and land.
  - d. Restore humanitarian aid without conditions that pressure refugees into silence or submission.



## Conclusion and ARNC's Demand

The International Crisis Group report does not reflect the reality of the Rohingya people's lives. The group manipulates and distorts reality in accordance with misinformation fed by the hostile elements and spies of the AA and Burmese military. We are also doubtful of whether ICG itself has exaggerated the matter to prevent the return of Rohingya to their ancestral land and sabotage the opportunity of peaceful coexistence. ICG have not provided any tangible evidence to substantiate its claims. Today we are living in the 21st century and people cannot be fooled by mere statements made with ulterior motives. ICG is playing the card of false regional fears while downplaying structural injustice towards Rohingya people. They should instead call for decolonization, restoring dignity, and ensuring safe, voluntary, and dignified return to their motherland with international oversight.

***ARNC strongly demand ICG to immediately withdraw its false and fictional report named "The Danger of Rohingya Insurgency" and rectify wrongdoing.***

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