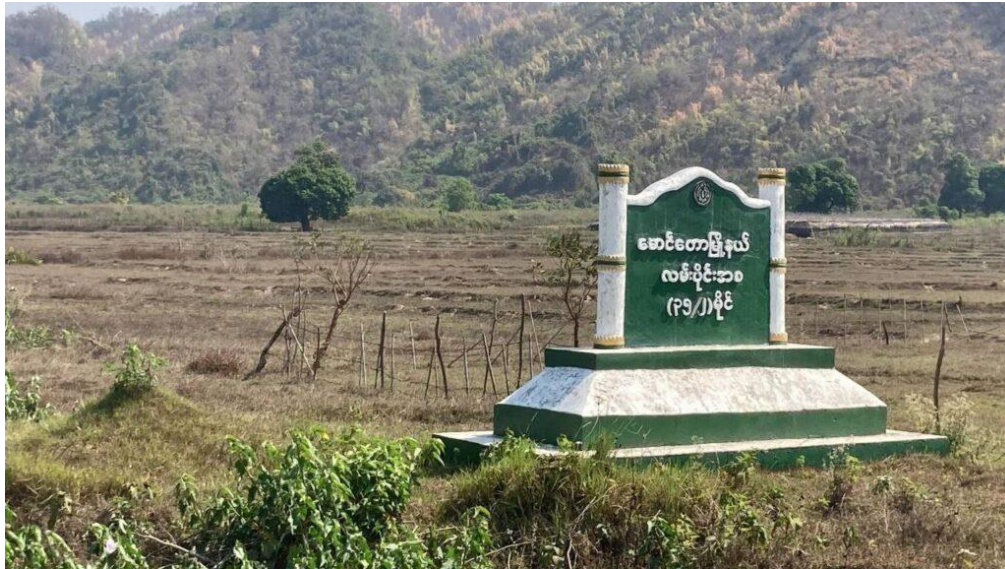


# Global Arakan Network



## Growing Extremist Activities of the Islamic Jihadist Groups in Northern Arakan

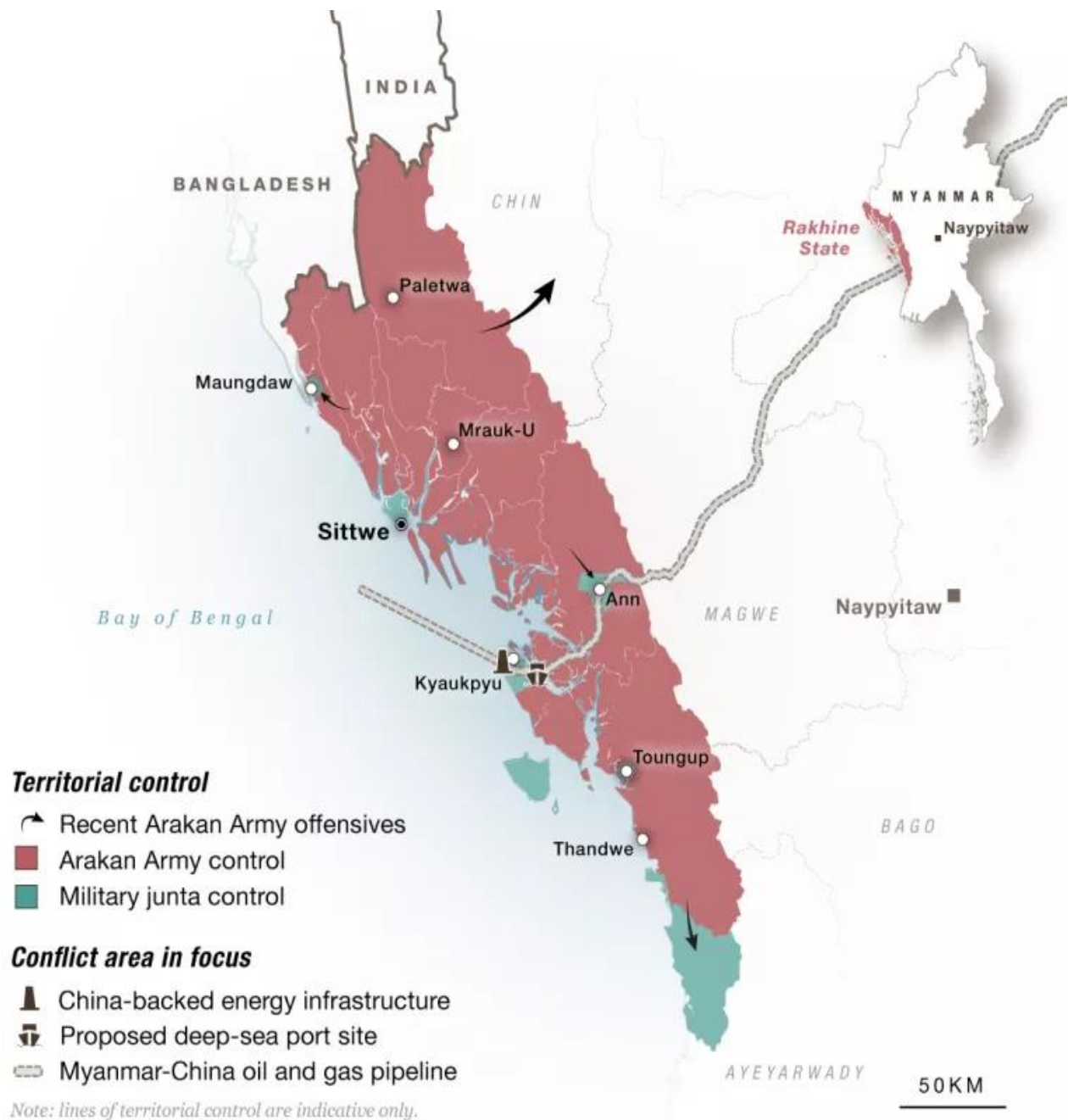
**Special Report**  
**November 25, 2024**

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## International Crisis Group's Mapping on Arakan Conflict

Date- August 2024

Source- <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/339-breaking-away-battle-myanmars-rakhine-state>

## About the GAN



The Global Arakan Network (GAN) is also a collective action of a group of Arakanese people living abroad who come together to share news and ideas about Arakan and inform each other and the wider community about the situation in the region. We gather information from reliable local news sources and provide factual accounts of the experiences of religious and ethnic communities in Arakan under the military rule of Burma. We aim to reflect the perspective and interests of our fellow Arakanese and to showcase the dreams of our people and the political vision and democratic aspirations of our leaders. (Learn more about us on the website)

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Cover Photo- *Arakan Princess Media*

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## Chapter-I

### A. Background Information

This report highlights the increasing extremist activities of Islamic groups in Northern Arakan. These groups typically include the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), Arakan Rohingya Army (ARA), and other factions operating across the Naf River and along the borderlands between Bangladesh and Arakan. Although the motivations, methods, and timelines behind the emergence of these groups vary, they share a common characteristic: an extremist Islamic ideology committed to eradicating the presence of Arakanese Buddhists and other indigenous minority groups in the area, particularly in the two northernmost townships of Maungdaw and Buthidaung.

The threat posed by extremist Islamic ideology is both historical and transnational. Networks rooted in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia, with connections to ideologically driven terrorist activities in northern Arakan, have been active for several decades. For example, in [September 2017](#), Al-Qaeda stated that Myanmar should be punished for its actions against Muslims, calling for military support and weapon provisions. Various sources indicate connections between global Jihadist organizations and extremist elements within the Muslim community in Arakan.

The borderlands between Bangladesh and Arakan comprise both water boundaries, including the Bay of Bengal, Naf River, and its tributary streams—some as narrow as 0.5 km—and mountainous areas such as the Wailar and Mayyu mountain ranges. The total length of this international border is 271 km. Another distinctive geographic feature along the border is the “zero line” or “no man’s land”—a small strip of land between the two borders, which has become a breeding ground for terrorist activities. Indeed, in January 2023, the extremist groups RSO and ARSA engaged in deadly attacks against each other to assert control over the population in this area.

The recent rise of radical Islamic forces in Bangladesh [has heightened](#) concerns regarding border security and stability along the Arakan border. In October 2017, during a protest in urban Chittagong, thousands of Jihadist Islamic hardliners led by the Hefazat group [demanded](#) that Muslims in Arakan be armed. Other significant actors include Jamaat-e-Islami (Bangladesh), Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI, also known as Bangladesh Taliban), Hizb ut-Tahrir (HTB), Hefazat-e-Islam, and Islami Andolon Bangladesh. Notably, in late August 2024, the interim government in Dhaka lifted its ban on Jamaat-e-Islami (Bangladesh), a move that has raised serious concerns about the potential for extremist Islamic ideologies to gain a stronger foothold within refugee camps and the Muslim community in Arakan.

This report explores the historical backgrounds of Islamic jihadist groups, addresses their ideologies, and details acts of terrorism, including attacks targeting civilians. It also examines the roles of various actors and the unfolding impacts of these dynamics on the region.



## B. Historical Background

Pre-colonial Arakan was diverse in its cultural landscape. Although the kingdom was ruled by Arakanese Buddhist kings, the polity tolerated various religions, including Islam and Christianity, managing peace and stability among the region's diverse identities. The significant presence of Chittagonian Muslims in Arakan began primarily after the British conquest of Arakan in 1826. The increased demand for agricultural labor in Arakan, combined with high population density and limited job opportunities in the coastal areas of Chittagong, led to a steady influx of migrants from Chittagong to Arakan.

According to official British records, the population of Chittagonian-speaking Muslims in Arakan rose from 7% in 1867-68 to 26% by 1931. The expansion of Chittagonian settlers into the central townships of modern-day Arakan is also well-documented. Shifts in power dynamics during World War II, along with rising ethno-communism among both the indigenous Arakanese and newly settled Chittagonian communities, fueled violent conflicts, resulting in deep-seated distrust and grievances. While Chittagonian Muslim settlers in central Arakan faced massacres, indigenous Arakanese and other minorities experienced ethnic cleansing in northern Arakan.

Since independence, the ethnic Bamar governments in Rangoon and Naypyidaw over the past seven decades have shown little understanding of the political realities in Arakan. Their primary objective has been to create manageable levels of tension and communal violence between the Arakanese and Chittagonians to secure their hold on power. The divisive and manipulative power plays by U Nu and U Ne Win in the 1950s and 1960s, neither of whom had substantial electoral support in Arakan, deepened distrust among the local population. The establishment of the so-called “Mayu Frontier Administration” (MFA) in 1961 further threatened the survival of Arakanese identity in northern Arakan.

On another front, rather than fostering loyalty to Arakan's sovereignty and autonomy in collaboration with the Arakanese, some Chittagonian settlers instead aligned with ethnic Bamar leadership by creating what can be seen as an “bogus identity” which is harmful to social cohesion and aimed at degrading Arakanese heritage and dividing Arakan.

The recent collaboration of contemporary Chittagonian extremist groups, such as ARSA, RSO, and ARA, with the Myanmar junta in attacks against the Arakan Army is not coincidental but rooted in longstanding historical and political agendas. Beyond their practical engagements with the junta, diaspora elements abroad actively participate in undermining relations between the ULA/AA and moderate segments of the Chittagonian Muslim community.





## a. Rohingya Solidarity Organization

Figure-1



Officially established in 1982, the RSO (Rohingya Solidarity Organization) has used radicalized religious doctrines to attract younger and more religious segments of the community. Although Ayyub Khan is reportedly the leader of the RSO, the group's public profile is largely promoted by Ko Ko Lin, its political director.

In late 2012, the RSO was reported to have connections with Al-Qaeda and the Taliban in Afghanistan. The group is also known for its strong backing from elements within

Bangladesh's security and intelligence sectors. In March 2021, the RSO announced its rearmament, with opportunistic intentions of influencing refugee camps within Bangladesh and areas along the Arakan border. Historically, the RSO has maintained close affiliations with Jamaat-e-Islami and Islami Chhatra Shibir in Chittagong and Cox's Bazaar.

Since its reemergence, the RSO has developed a notorious record of atrocities, including killings, abductions, extortion, torture, and even rape, targeting refugee populations in Bangladesh. Following its open collaboration with the Myanmar junta, the RSO became a key actor responsible for threatening non-Muslims in urban Maungdaw through acts of violence, abductions, and the use of civilians as human shields. Confidential video footage implicates the RSO as a primary perpetrator in mass atrocities and civilian killings near Maungdaw on August 5 and 6, 2024.

## b. Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army

Figure-2



Formally founded in 2016, ARSA (Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army) is widely reported as a radical Islamic extremist group with a dangerous agenda to eradicate all non-Muslim residents in northern Arakan. The group's leader, Ataullah, has frequently encouraged followers to act on this goal. Ataullah, reportedly born in Pakistan and raised in Saudi Arabia, was exposed to radical Islamic doctrines during his upbringing. Some sources claim that ARSA was founded as early as 2013, just a year after the deadly communal violence in Rakhine State in 2012.

Since it began operations, ARSA has become a terrifying force, threatening non-Muslim residents and moderate religious believers in northern Arakan. The group's brutal tactics, including beheadings, throat slitting, and dismemberment, are well-documented. One of the most prominent examples of ARSA's extremist ideology was the "Kha-Maung-Seik massacre" on August 25, 2017, in which 99 Bengali Hindus were brutally killed based on religious motivations.

ARSA is also notorious for its actions against refugees in Bangladesh, including killings, abductions, torture, assassination, rape, and extortion. The group's emergence is characterized by both its extremist religious agenda and opportunistic goals. This latter



aspect has led to frequent collaboration with the Myanmar military junta; in fact, elements within the Myanmar military reportedly facilitated ARSA's founding in 2015 to counter the Arakan Army (AA) movement in Arakan.

In mid-2022, the group kidnapped two Arakanese teachers, later releasing them for a ransom of 5 million Taka. ARSA's collaboration with the Myanmar junta became even more visible in 2024, with continued terrorist acts targeting civilians along the border region.

### c. Arakan Rohingya Army



Figure-3

The ARA (Arakan Rohingya Army) was reportedly founded by Nobi Husson, with Abdullah Kane as a secondary leader, in 2020. The group has gained notoriety for collaborating with local officials from Myanmar's Border Guard Police Force (BGPf) in drug trafficking and other cross-border criminal activities along the Bangladeshi border. Nobi Husson was arrested by Bangladeshi police in April 2018 but was later released. But he was arrested again in late 2024.

The group's criminal activities have had a destructive impact on the refugee population in Bangladesh, involving killings, abductions, torture, threats, and forced recruitment, often in conjunction with the RSO. In 2019, ARA members were recorded as the second most active group after ARSA within the refugee camps. The ARA operates more like an opportunistic gang, focused primarily on economic gain through extortion and resource extraction.

In early 2024, the group became more active by collaborating with the Myanmar junta. ARA members, along with junta soldiers, engaged in combat against the Arakan Army (AA) near the Taungpro (Letyar) areas and attempted to collect weapons and ammunition left by retreating junta forces. In mid-2024, ARA leader Nobi Husson was again arrested by Bangladeshi security forces.

### d. Other Factions

A news source from February 2023 reported that there are approximately 11 militant groups operating in the refugee camps of Bangladesh, including ARSA, RSO, and ARA. These groups also include the Munna Gang, Islami Mahaj, Putia Robber Gang, Zakir Robber Gang, Salman Shah Robber Gang, Khaleque Robber Gang, Jabu Robber Gang, among others.





## Chapter-II

### A. Ideology, Movements and Networks

The development of radical Islamic ideology has been a global phenomenon in recent decades, and it has also impacted the Muslim community in Arakan. Since the formation of the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF) in 1974, its leader, Muhammad Jafar Habib, has advocated for international Islamic support for his militant movement, which operated from the Bangladeshi side of the border.

The Rabitat al-Alam al-Islami, founded in 1962 in Saudi Arabia, began providing support to the refugee population in Bangladesh in 1978. This wealthy organization was established to promote the message of Islam and combat perceived conspiracies against it. It built a hospital and a madrassa (seminary) in Ukhia, south of Cox's Bazaar, to assist the refugee community.

#### a. RSO and Its Radical Islamic Agenda

The RSO is a more radical Islamic militant group that broke away from the RPF in 1982, led by Muhammad Yunus. With its rigid religious ideology, the RSO quickly gained support from various Muslim groups with similar beliefs. Key ideological allies included Jamaat-e-Islami (Jel) in Bangladesh and Pakistan, Gulbuddin Hekmatyar's Hizb-e-Islami (Hel) in Afghanistan, Hizb-ul-Mujahideen (HM) in Jammu and Kashmir, and Malaysia's Islamic youth organization, Angkatan Belia Islam Malaysia (ABIM).

Reports indicate that Afghan instructors were seen at some RSO camps along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border, and around 100 RSO militants were believed to be receiving training with Hizb-e-Islami Mujahideen in Afghanistan's Khost province. This network of support highlights the RSO's regional connections and the broader alignment of militant Islamic movements with shared ideological or strategic objectives across South and Southeast Asia.

Similarly, Southeast and South Asian affairs expert Vaughn (2007) reported, based on a former Indian intelligence official, that Hujl (Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami) had provided training to Burmese Rohingya Muslims. It was also claimed that Al-Qaeda recruited Rohingyas from camps in southeastern Bangladesh, deploying them to conflict zones such as Afghanistan, Kashmir, and Chechnya. A postdoctoral researcher, Alam (2008), found that Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami Bangladesh (HujlB) established a network of madrasas in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar in southeastern Bangladesh, some of which were reportedly used as sites for militant training. Additionally, HujlB is alleged to have cultivated connections with Rohingya refugees in the region.

One research source in 2019 claimed;

***“The Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), for example, is accused of having formed partnerships with Al-Qaeda and Jamaat-e-Islami among others. In addition, the interaction with the radicalized Saudi Arabia-based charity organization Rabita-al-Alam-al-Islami moved the RSO into the global stream of Islamic fundamentalism.”***



The report continued by noting that certain factions within the Rohingya community are reportedly adopting a fundamentalist ideology aligned with banned Islamist groups such as Jama'atul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) and Harkat-ul-Jihad-al-Islami (HuJI). These factions are not only ideologically aligned but are also accused of actively participating in the training of members of these groups in the use of weapons and explosives.

Further reports suggest that these groups leverage global networks to secure financial support from sympathetic organizations, channeling these funds to strengthen their militant activities within Bangladesh. The use of international connections is raising significant concerns about the spread of militant influence within the Rohingya community and its potential impact on regional security.

The resurgence of the RSO in early 2021, after several years of dormancy, is particularly noteworthy. Credible sources indicate that the group is now supported by certain elements within the Bangladeshi security establishment. A Singapore-based research institute, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS), [has reported](#) on this development, highlighting the potential implications for regional security;

***“Mohib Ullah’s assassination and the death of the DGFI officer (by ARSA) eventually pushed Bangladesh to redirect its support towards the RSO, which has gradually increased its presence in and around the camps.”***

The application of radical Islamic practices in the warzone by the RSO became more notable when the group mobilized to block Muslims in urban Maungdaw from fleeing the town, despite the looming conflict. The RSO's key objectives at that time seemed to be using the civilian population as human shields and manipulating the media and political landscape by maximizing civilian casualties in response to the Arakan Army's (AA) offensive.

The pamphlet in Figure-4 reads:

#### Notice for the Islamic Believers

1. Maungdaw is your town.
2. Allah does not permit you to leave the town.
3. Allah commands you to protect the town.
4. Heroes are near you, ready to protect the Islamic believers.
5. All Islamic believers are urged to unite in eradicating the enemy/evil.

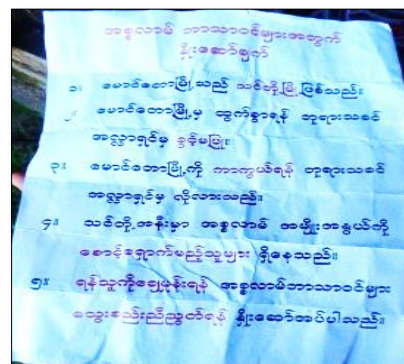


Figure-4



## b. ARSA and the Reign of Terror

The emergence of ARSA in 2016 marked another wave of radical Islamic terrorism in northern Arakan along the Bangladesh-Arakan border. The group, formerly known as ***Harakah al-Yaqin*** (Faith Movement) in Arabic, was led by Ataullah, who has strong connections to global jihadist networks in Pakistan and Saudi Arabia.

Ataullah was raised in Mecca, where he received his Islamic education. In 2012, he returned to Pakistan for physical training and later joined a jihadist campaign in Kashmir. His journey continued through Hyderabad and Kolkata in India, eventually leading him to Bangladesh. With the help of a contact, Idrish Ali, he managed to enter Myanmar in 2016.

This story highlights the complex pathways through which individuals become involved in militant activities, showing the interconnectedness of various regions in South Asia and the role of personal networks in facilitating such movements. The ARSA's radical Islamic ideology became evident after the group massacred 99 Hindu villagers on August 25, 2017. The terrorist actions against the non-Muslim Hindu villagers can be seen as a classic example of radical religious extremism, akin to the actions of ISIS in the Middle East.

At 8 AM on August 25, 2017, a group of ARSA terrorists, dressed in black and ordinary clothing, **abducted** around 69 Hindu men, women, and children from the village of Ah Nauk Kha Maung Seik in Maungdaw township. The terrorists confiscated the families' mobile phones before ordering them into the courtyard, where other Hindu villagers were also being gathered. One of the ARSA terrorists shouted:

***'You and [ethnic] Rakhine are the same, you have a different religion, you can't live here'.***

The Hindu men were then separated from the women and children. Of the 69 victims, 53 were massacred, including 20 men, 10 women, and 23 children, 14 of whom were under the age of 8. Importantly, some women were spared after agreeing to convert to Islam and marry the ARSA terrorists. Additionally, 46 Hindus from the neighboring village of Ye Bauk Kyar were also massacred on the same day, cementing the collective memory of the killing of 99 Hindus on religious grounds.

The following day, August 26, the ARSA killed 6 Hindu villagers from Myo-Thu-Gree village near Maungdaw. Apart from the Hindus, the ARSA also killed members of other ethnic and religious groups in the area, including Arakanese, Mro, and Daingnet. Since that operation based on its religiously motivated actions, the ARSA's key goal might have been to establish a 'Caliphate State' in the style of ISIS in northern Arakan, aiming to eradicate all non-Muslim groups.



Figure-5



At the 74th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) held in September 2019, Myanmar's permanent representative to the UN [stated that](#) the ARSA had radicalized local Muslim youths abroad and provided them with terrorist training. He expressed concerns about the links between the ARSA and international foreign terrorist fighters (FTFs), including Al-Qaeda, ISIL, and Tehrik-e-Taliban Pakistan (TTP). He added that the recent arrests of ARSA terrorist suspects linked to ISIL in Malaysia in May and July that year were indisputable evidence of their connections.

In August 2024, the ARSA leader [sent messages](#) to his followers in Chittagonian language through three video recordings released on Telegram. In these videos, he urged Muslim youths with radical Islamic rhetoric, emphasizing the need to sacrifice around 8,000 lives to eradicate all Arakanese Buddhists in the region. He further incited the youth to attack all non-Muslim infidels and declared a larger war against the Arakan Army (AA) and the Arakanese population.

Additionally, in another video released in late October, he threatened the lives of moderate Muslims who cooperate with the ULA/AA. He stated:

***“To the Rohingya who are fighting in the Arakan Army, you have turned away from Islam, and you are no longer among Muslims. You still have time to repent to Allah and return to Islam...”***

The radical Islamization of the ARSA leader in his political struggle is evident. He even instructed that those who assist the Arakan Army (AA) should not be buried in Muslim graveyards. He threatened;

***“To the rest of the Rohingya community: do not bury those who are killed while fighting against us with the Arakan Army in a Muslim graveyard. Instead, bury them in Sitha Khala, the non-Muslim graveyard. According to Hadith and Quran, they are considered non-believers, and their burial should reflect that.”***

Religion-based hate speech and acts of dehumanization by the ARSA leader and its members are frequent. Observers only need to imagine how radical Islamic doctrines are being instilled in its members during their militant training, given the context of their public speeches.

A local source commented on the recruitment strategy of the ARSA that *when the ARSA members come to recruit new members in the village, they usually preached the Quran to justify why some should join and fight together with them.*

Although both the RSO and ARSA are radical Islamic groups with the goal of eradicating non-Muslim believers in northern Arakan, they are also antagonistic toward one another. In early 2023, a report revealed that Ko Ko Linn of the RSO [was recorded](#) ordering the mass killing of ARSA members following the destruction of the Zero Point camp. His orders included denying funeral prayers for the slain. He instructed his followers:

***“Kill them like the way you kill mosquitoes. Kill them like the way you kill insects, drag them from the shelters and kill them by stabbing them (ARSA members)”***,

He added;

***“They don't deserve Islamic funeral prayers. They should not be given a funeral shroud. And, it would not be a sin to kill them, and those who do will be rewarded like martyrs by Allah on the Day of Resurrection.”***



The rivalry between the ARSA and RSO, alongside their extremist ideologies, underscores the profound division and violence within the region. The ARSA leader's statements in August 2024 further [illustrate](#) the dangerous sectarianism these groups foster. His accusations against the RSO members, calling them "Christians pretending as Muslims," are emblematic of the radical and intolerant mindset that these factions often promote. The threat of violence against members of rival groups and moderate Muslims emphasizes the internal violence and the growing extremism, which leaves little room for peaceful coexistence. This rhetoric also exacerbates the risks faced by the broader civilian population, particularly non-Muslim and moderate Muslim communities who are caught between these militant factions.

### c. When the Terror Rules the Refugee Camps

It is deeply disturbing that the refugee camps, which should be places of safety and support for displaced people, have become areas of control and violence by radical groups like the ARSA. The use of terror tactics, including abduction, torture, and killing, especially targeting vulnerable populations such as women and aid workers, highlights the brutal consequences of extremist ideologies infiltrating these communities. The testimonies of victims on [March 2019](#), such as the women aid workers who spoke out, are crucial in shedding light on the pervasive violence that is taking place within these camps. These actions not only disrupt humanitarian efforts but also create a climate of fear and insecurity, compounding the hardships faced by refugees;

***"I was taken to a mountaintop away from my [neighborhood] block to a makeshift mosque. I was taken by an unknown man. On the way, I was crying . . . Once we got to the mosque, I saw my husband and many other men being tortured . . . They were being kicked and punched . . . One of the men told me, 'You see how we torture the men? If you work [outside the home], we will do the same to you'"***

The control of extremist groups like ARSA over refugee camps creates a disturbing and unsafe environment, especially for women and those who criticize the group. A research paper written in 2021 [underscores](#) the alarming extent to which the camps have become breeding grounds for radicalization, where the social structure is manipulated by these groups to further their agendas. Understanding how these social structures are shaped within the camps is crucial to addressing the root causes of this extremism and providing better protection for vulnerable populations.

The report also uncovered other surprising factors that contribute to the fertile ground for religious radicalization in the camp environments. These include hundreds of mosques and madrasahs filling the camps, where most students—young orphans aged four to six, who have lost their families in Myanmar—are emotionally abandoned, isolated, and angry. These vulnerable children, immersed in strict religious teachings, are prime targets for militant recruitment, with radicalization starting even before age 15.

Led by Moulvi (religious teachers), these madrasahs focus solely on the Quran and Hadith, leaving students easily influenced by radical ideas. Many madrasahs are centrally located in the



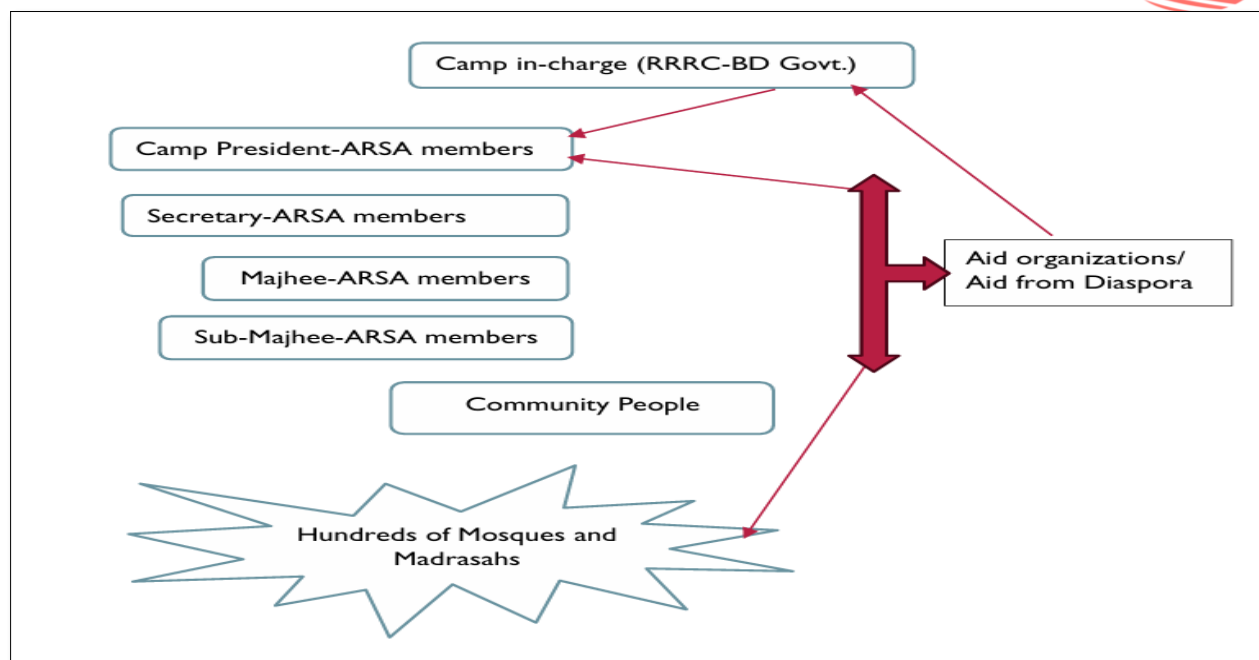


Figure-6

camps, making the students intimidating to approach alone, even during the day. Besides, as shown in Figure 6, aid organizations or diaspora contributions were indirectly distributed to ARSA members through the operations of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner's Office (RRRC).

In September 2023, [a field report](#) by Deutsche Welle (DW) mentioned that the ARSA enforced Sharia Law in the camps, despite officials from the Dhaka government categorically denying the presence of the ARSA there. One ARSA member said that they have the right to arrest and punish women if they dress "incorrectly," and several refugees in the camps were killed for speaking against the ARSA's activities, including extortion and abduction. Indeed, the key victims of these radical Islamic groups are the refugee populations themselves.



Figure-7

As the latest development in this dangerous situation, during a public rally with thousands of participants on August 25, 2024, in the refugee camps of Bangladesh, the speaker and his followers angrily shouted:

***“Currently, in Arakan, the Arakan Army has occupied every inch of land. Similar to the Myanmar military, the Army is also oppressing the Rohingya people. Therefore, our enemy is the Arakan Army.”***





## Chapter-III

### A. How Myanmar Military Colludes with the Islamic Terror Groups

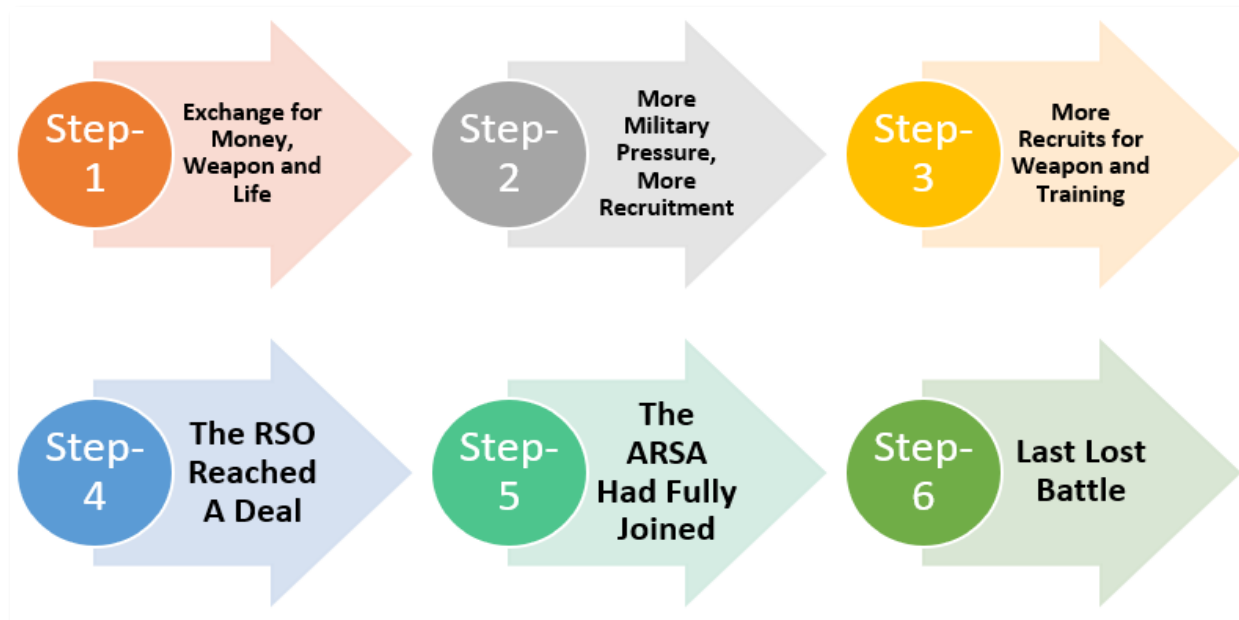


Figure-8

The increasing terror activities of the ARSA against the refugee population in Bangladesh and growing hostile relations with Bangladesh's security agencies paved the way for the resurgence of the RSO. In January 2023, a nearly month-long fight between the two radical Islamic groups, ARSA and RSO, reportedly backed by Armed Police Battalion (APBn) and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB), **resulted** in the supremacy of the RSO over the 'No Man's Land' along the border with Arakan. Subsequently, while leaving some footprints in the refugee camps, the ARSA was forced to cross into Arakan, particularly in the northern Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships, where the group attempted to restart its extremist activities.

The reign of terror on the refugee population became even more terrifying when these radical Islamic groups decided to collaborate and help their "once-old enemy," the brutal Myanmar military junta, in attacking the Arakan Army. It is not a shared identity or ideology but rather a common interest or threat that drives the collaboration between the Myanmar military and these Islamic groups. A marriage of convenience emerged when Myanmar military officials in Maungdaw and Buthidaung areas joined hands with these extremist groups—RSO, ARSA, and ARA—to hinder the offensive of the AA.

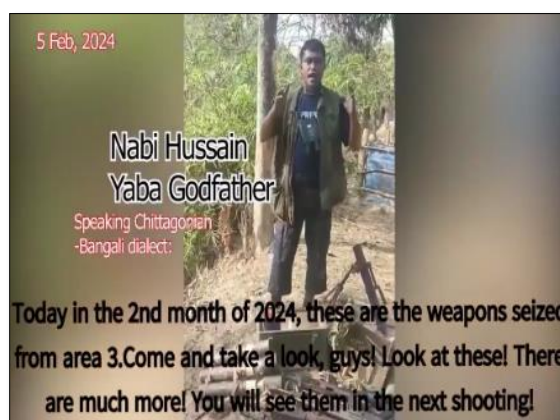


Figure-9



## Step-1: Exchange for Money, Weapon and Life

Figure-10



Clear evidence of the ARA joining the Myanmar junta surfaced earlier. On February 4, 2024, when the Arakan Army (AA) attacked the junta's positions at 'Taungpro (Letwae/Letyar)' near the Bangladesh border, members of the ARA cooperated with Myanmar soldiers in attacking the AA. A press release from the AA mentioned that ARA leader Nobi Hussian was tasked with purchasing weapons and ammunition from Myanmar's Border Guard Police

(BGP) for 10 million Taka. In exchange, he was expected to assist Myanmar BGPs in entering or escaping into Bangladesh. Nobi Hussian subsequently received a shipment of weapons and ammunition from the BGPfFs via a truck, which entered from inside Bangladesh. (See Figure 9 and 10)

## Step-2: More Military Pressure, More Recruitment

When the Arakan Army (AA) resumed its offensive attacks against the Myanmar junta in November 2023, the radical Islamic groups—RSO, ARSA, and ARA—seized the opportunity to gain profits amidst the conflict between the two warring factions. This time, however, they were now more than wanted by the Myanmar junta. In fact, as the AA launched its attacks on Rathedaung in late 2023, the Myanmar junta found itself desperate to halt the AA's advance toward the neighboring towns of Buthidaung and Maungdaw.



Figure-11

A captured major from the Myanmar military, Hlaing Win Tun, (See Figure-11) confessed in June 2024 that this situation prompted Myanmar junta officials to forcibly recruit, train, and arm around 750 Muslims in Buthidaung township, offering them the chance to collaborate with the ARSA and ARA. As the AA took control of Rathedaung on March 17, 2024, the collaboration between the Myanmar junta and these extremist groups grew more intense, and the junta increasingly tolerated their terror activities against the civilians. A confidential video (See Figure-12) from March 28 revealed that the 352nd Light Infantry Battalion (LIB-352) had trained a group of Muslim youths in the school building at Tat Min Chaung, Buthidaung.



### Step-3: More Recruits for Weapon and Training

Local sources on March 19, 2024, reported that around 100 members of ARSA and ARA, along with their leaders, crossed the Mayyu mountain range, heading to No. (5) Myo-Thu-Gree, a Border Guard Police (BGP) post. The purpose of their trip was to reinforce the Myanmar junta, joining the 400 members who had already arrived, bringing the total to 500. The political deal made during this meeting stipulated that the two groups would send more recruits from refugee camps in Bangladesh into the hands of the Myanmar junta. In return, ARSA and ARA would gain the right to rule Maungdaw township, with each group controlling half.



Figure-12

The meeting was attended by key figures, including Ataullah, Mustafar, and Kharlike from ARSA, along with Kabatular (Abdu Halim), Rafik, Amir, and two others. While it was unclear who represented the Myanmar junta, Brigadier General Thurein Tun, the commander of the Military Operation Command-15 in Buthidaung, was likely one of the participants.

This information was [corroborated](#) by a Bangladeshi media report. A report on April 7, 2024, confirmed the details of this political deal and the collaboration between the Myanmar junta and these extremist groups:

***“In a recent development, Myanmar's military is reportedly leveraging former members of the ARSA and the ARA to bolster its forces in the ongoing conflict against the Arakan Army (AA) in Arakan State. Notably, Abdu Halim, a former ARSA operative, along with more than 40 individuals, has already joined a military battalion in Buthidaung. Additionally, around 200 members led by Ayoub, associated with the ARA faction, are preparing to enter Myanmar within the next few days.”***

This report confirmed that **Abdu Halim, Rafik, and Amir**, who joined the meeting in No. (5) Myo-Thu-Gree, were the key individuals responsible for forcibly recruiting Muslim youths from the refugee camps. These individuals played a central role in facilitating the recruitment of new recruits for the ARSA and ARA groups, which were then sent to collaborate with the Myanmar military junta. Their involvement underscores the coordinated effort between these extremist groups and the Myanmar junta to strengthen their positions and control in the region, particularly in Maungdaw township.

### Step-4: The RSO Reached A Deal

The involvement of the RSO with the Myanmar junta became undeniable during the battle in Maungdaw in 2024. The collaboration between the two groups appears to have been initiated under the guise of religious propaganda. On May 12 and 13, a high-level RSO delegation from Bangladesh [visited](#) Maungdaw, where they met with Myanmar military officials. During this meeting, the RSO agreed to cooperate militarily with the junta, which included a demand to





reopen the 'Myoma Mosque,' which had been closed since 2012. The visit was **reportedly** welcomed by some Bangladeshi media as a positive step for the Muslim community in Arakan.

The forced recruitment of refugee youths by the RSO reportedly began in early May. A report on May 6, 2024, **stated that** Ko Ko Lin, a key figure in the RSO, visited the refugee camps and instructed camp administrators (camp Majhi) to provide 5-10 youths from each camp for recruitment into the group. This marked a clear escalation in the group's activities, further solidifying their collaboration with the Myanmar junta.



Figure-13

The key victims of the opportunistic alliances between radical Islamic groups and the Myanmar junta are the refugee populations in Bangladesh and local Muslim residents in Maungdaw and Buthidaung. In May 2024, the International Institute for Strategic Studies (IISS) **estimated** that as many as 5,000 Muslim militants could be collaborating with the junta, recruited through both coercion and inducements from the refugee camps and within Arakan.



Figure-14

The forced recruitment of Muslim youths in the refugee camps has been arbitrary and concerning. On May 17, 2024, a local source **reported** that families were deeply worried about the involvement of camp authorities and security forces in this process. Journalists investigating the matter **uncovered the methods** behind this

recruitment. It appears that the recruitment process is being carried out with the active participation of camp officials and local security forces, raising serious concerns about the exploitation and manipulation of vulnerable refugees for militant purposes.

***“The RSO were directly handing people over to junta forces. Recruits going to Myanmar are overseen by Bangladesh’s DGFI and NSI until they cross the border. If the crossing is via the Naff River, then the Bangladesh Coastguard will also count them in. This applies to those joining the Myanmar military directly or joining RSO forces.”***



### Step-5: The ARSA Had Fully Joined

The ARSA leader, on May 20, 2024, [mobilized](#) his followers to attack the Arakan Army (AA), framing them as the sole enemy. In a video message that appeared to be filmed against the backdrop of a military building, potentially linked to the Myanmar military's operations in Maungdaw and Buthidaung, the ARSA leader made this call to arms. Some observers on social media speculated that the video was recorded from the Myanmar military's 'Myo-Thu-Gree' or No-5 Border Guard Police base near Maungdaw.



Figure-15

The key components of the deal between the ARSA, other extremist groups, and the Myanmar junta involve these groups providing new recruits from the Muslim community to assist the junta in attacking the AA and bolstering Myanmar military positions. In return, Myanmar military officials may be willing to consider some form of power-sharing with these Islamic groups in the region. In the released video clips, several Muslim militants [claimed](#), "The Burmese military has given us the northern Arakan areas," indicating a possible agreement for the extremists to take control of these regions with the junta's backing.

### Step-6: Last Lost Battle

When the armed conflicts intensified near Maungdaw town, the RSO, which had mainly been cooperating with the junta in urban areas, controlled the gates and frequently threatened non-Muslim residents, such as Arakanese, Hindus, Mro, and others. During the intensifying conflicts, Ko Ko Lin of the RSO said on his social media account that "Maungdaw is now under our control." In September 2024, he [admitted](#) to collaborating with the junta, stating that the junta did not attack them and they did not attack the junta.

During the battle in Maungdaw, the RSO and ARA, due to their alliance, mainly resided in urban Maungdaw, whereas the ARSA forces were stationed on the outskirts of the town. When the battles for Buthidaung and Maungdaw were over, with the victory of the AA, those who were forcibly recruited or voluntarily joined were either killed, injured, captured by the AA, or escaped into refugee camps inside Bangladesh or Sittwe and Yangon under the facilitation of the junta authorities. However, one thing is very clear: the continuing and increasing suffering and misery for Muslim civilians due to the terrorist actions of the radical Islamic groups and state terrorism.



## B. Acts of Atrocities in Arakan

Since the collaboration of the RSO, ARSA, and ARA with the Myanmar military junta and their increasing presence in Buthidaung and Maungdaw townships, the atrocities and crimes committed by these groups have been mounting. These heinous acts include [killings](#), torture, injuries, [kidnappings](#), [rapes](#), and abductions, among other violations. There are also likely many unreported incidents, and in some cases, these groups have shifted the responsibility for their crimes onto the ULA/AA.

According to reports, within just one year of the current armed conflict in Arakan, at least 74 civilians have been killed, injured, or arrested by these extremist groups. The victims come from various backgrounds, especially non-Muslim Hindus, Arakanese, Daingnet (Chakma), Khami, Mro, and others.

| NO | Township   | Killed |        |       | Injured |        |       | Arrested |        |       |
|----|------------|--------|--------|-------|---------|--------|-------|----------|--------|-------|
|    |            | Male   | Female | Total | Male    | Female | Total | Male     | Female | Total |
| 1  | Buthidaung | 11     | 0      | 11    | 0       | 0      | 0     | 0        | 0      | 0     |
| 2  | Maungdaw   | 9      | 2      | 11    | 6       | 0      | 6     | 44       | 2      | 46    |
|    | Total      |        |        | 22    |         |        | 6     |          |        | 46    |
|    |            | 72     |        |       |         |        |       |          |        |       |

These individuals were killed, injured, or arrested not during armed clashes nor they are politically active. They were deliberately targeted simply because they did not support the armed activities of these extremist groups, shared similar religious beliefs with the Arakanese like Hinduism and Buddhism, or were Arakanese Buddhists.

To uncover the Islamic terrorist ideology and motivations behind these actions, it is crucial to assess some prominent incidents in which civilians were killed or massacred, starting from January 2024.

It has been reported that ARSA is the primary perpetrator of these crimes and atrocities. This report has collected several other severe crimes committed by ARSA, which can be seen in **Appendix-I**.

Notable incidents include:

- 1) The killing of seven Khumi IDPs on July 18, 2024, in Buthidaung,
- 2) The rape of one Hindu woman on July 26, 2024, in Maungdaw and
- 3) The killing of five Rakhine civilians and injuring another on July 31, 2024 in Buthidaung.





| Date          | Background Information   | Proofs  |
|---------------|--|---|
| July 18, 2024 | On July 18, 2024, at 11:00 a.m., a group of seven Khami individuals residing in the Gandhari IDP camps in Ward (4), Buthidaung Township, Rakhine State, went out to collect bamboo shoots. While none of them returned to their homes by the next day, the Arakan Army Security forces and villagers from Gandhari camps found dead bodies of seven IDPs on July 19 and 20 respectively.   |    |
| July 26, 2024 | Her name is Anushka (pseudonym) and lives in Aung Bala IDP camp in Maungdaw. She was forcibly raped by the two ARSA members during the blockage in urban Maungdaw at around 10:00 a.m., on July 26, 2024. She was arrested and forcibly raped when she went out to find after her husband was arrested by the ARSA members. She later escaped from the detention by giving bribe to gatekeepers.   |  <p>Interview with a 35 years old Hindu woman from Maungdaw, Aungbala relief camp, who was abducted and raped by two members of ARSA on July 26, 2024.</p> |
| July 31, 2024 | Seven IDPs from Buthidaung went to Kyein-Chaung village-market, Maungdaw to buy food and commodities on July 31, 2024. On their way to the destination at 4 p.m., their car was attacked by the ARSA and five died and another two critically injured. Among the deceased, one was schoolteacher and others were civilians. ARSA later released video of their terrorist actions on X platform by claiming that they successfully killed AA members. |   |

Unlike ARSA, the RSO does not seem to maintain strongholds in the rural and mountainous regions of Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships. However, since its resurgence in the refugee camps of Bangladesh and along the Arakan border, its extremist activities have escalated dramatically. Their operations have become more pronounced following their agreement with the junta authorities.

For example, during the conflict in Maungdaw on [July 25, 2024](#), RSO militants launched a significant threat against non-Muslim communities, particularly targeting Rakhine and Hindu civilians in downtown Maungdaw. The accompanying translation of the video emphasizes the grave nature of the threats faced by these communities.

**"...Muslims are allowed through. Mogh<sup>1</sup> are detained."**

<sup>1</sup> **"Mogh"** being a pejorative term for **Rakhine or Arakanese** people.



Figure-I 6



On July 22, at approximately 4 PM, alarming reports revealed that indiscriminate gunfire from the RSO forced around 150 Rakhine civilians in downtown Maungdaw to seek sanctuary within a monastery compound. The very next day, on July 23, RSO militants issued threats and forcibly closed a marketplace near the town's football field, which had been a vital source of food, vegetables, and other essentials for both Rakhine and Hindu civilians. Meanwhile, RSO militants allowed other marketplaces that exclusively serve Muslim residents to remain operational. In a further display of hostility, about ten RSO militants enforced a ban prohibiting Muslims from selling goods to Rakhine and Hindu locals in urban Maungdaw.

However, after their retreat from Maungdaw due to a battle loss, the RSO members regrouped in Bangladesh and continued frequent attacks not just against the AA but also against civilian targets. The key terrorist haven inside Bangladesh for the RSO militants is the 'Island of Jaliadwip', a 1.1 square kilometer island in the Naff River. (See Figure-17)

The presence of RSO militants on the Bangladesh side has become a critical threat, not only to AA security operations but also to cross-border humanitarian activities and civilians from all backgrounds who depend on the livelihoods provided by the Naff River. On September 1, 2024,

local sources **reported** that a group of RSO militants ambushed and killed four AA soldiers before retreating into the Bangladeshi side. On November 3, another incident **occurred** when RSO militants, who had been residing on Jaliadwip Island in Bangladesh, suddenly launched an attack on AA security positions, resulting in the death of one AA soldier and injuries to six others. Three days later, another incident took place where one AA soldier was killed, and the RSO militants retreated back into Bangladesh.

Figure-17



The aggressive activities of the RSO extended beyond their political objectives. On October 1, 2024, local sources reported that the RSO attacked a boat carrying humanitarian items, including medicines, to Arakan on the Naff River. In addition to the attack, the RSO sent a threatening email to the head of the international non-governmental organization, warning that they were prepared for such actions and threatening the lives of the personnel involved.

On October 31, U Nyi Nyi from Ywet Nyotaw Village **was attacked** with knives by the RSO while returning to the village after delivering shrimp with three Muslim workers from Ashitjar Village. The incident occurred around 6 PM near the Mayu River, where the RSO group arrived in a boat, shot at U Nyi Nyi's engine, causing it to stop, and seized the goods from the boat.

As time passed, the RSO's presence within Bangladesh became increasingly entrenched, posing a serious threat not only to the security operations of the AA but also to the safety and survival of the local population. One of the key factors contributing to the RSO's growing foothold along the Naff River is the apparent acceptance of Bangladeshi security agencies, such as the BGB and DGFI, which have allowed the group to operate with impunity.



Figure-17



## Chapter-IV

### A. The 'Divide and Rule' Policy of the Myanmar Military

Myanmar Military and its apparatus, such as the Border Guard Police (BGP), are the principal actors responsible for the crimes and atrocities committed by Islamic terrorist groups like RSO, ARSA, and ARA. Established in 2014 for border control, patrolling, and law enforcement in Buthidaung, Maungdaw, and Rathedaung townships in northern Arakan, the BGP has also become a close and secret ally to these terrorist groups. Among them, the ARA drug gang stands out for its involvement in drug trafficking and profit-sharing with BGP officials. In this way, the BGP has facilitated the survival and presence of these groups along the border.

Nationally, the Myanmar military has a long history of using a 'divide and rule' strategy among political, ethnic, and religious groups to suppress opposition. Credible sources within the Muslim community suggest that ARSA was an indirect result of the Myanmar military's divide-and-rule approach aimed at countering the rise of the AA in the Arakanese community. As the AA gained momentum in 2015, military officials, including the Vice Minister of Home Affairs under the U Thein Sein administration, and Muslim MPs from the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), planned to create an armed faction within the Muslim community to check the AA's presence in Arakan.

Subsequently, under the National League for Democracy (NLD) administration, ARSA emerged as a radical Islamic group with a religious agenda, leading to the violence of August 2017. However, it was the Myanmar military's shifting policy that breathed new life into these groups. When AA offensives loomed in early 2023, the military once again adopted this approach.

The military's broader motivations for collaborating with Islamic terror groups appear to be threefold: first, they believe it could incite further communal violence in central and northern Arakan, potentially reducing military pressure from the AA. Second, arming Muslim youths and collaborating with these groups could strengthen their defense against the AA, exhausting its resources. Finally, the military's stance suggests that if they had to vacate these areas, they would prefer the AA to face ongoing instability and security challenges from these terror groups.

Among these radical groups, ARA had the most military collaboration with the BGP, notably on February 4, 2024, during the Taungpro (Letwae/Letyar) battles. These engagements prompted the Myanmar military to take more proactive measures to hinder AA's offensives. Military Operation Command-15 (MOC-15) in Buthidaung, led by Brigadier General Thurein Tun, was primarily responsible for these tasks. During [his meetings](#) with the Muslim community from February 9-16, 2024, he stated:

***“You, Muslims, are troubled by the Arakanese, and you should be armed. Nothing will happen to your village if the conflicts break out, but Arakanese villages will be burnt down. So, we will give arms to you, cooperate with us!”***



Figure-18





In late February 2024, the Myanmar junta spokesperson, General Zaw Min Tun, [denied claims](#) of his army forcibly recruiting new Muslim members. However, on April 4, 2024, he shifted his stance, stating that the recruitment of Muslim youths was solely for self-defense at the Muslim community's request and that the recruits would not be sent to the front lines. This claim was proven false when the AA fully captured Rathedaung on March 17 and discovered hundreds of bodies of Muslim recruits on the battlefield.

The loss of Rathedaung signaled the Myanmar military's vulnerability in the remaining towns of Maungdaw and Buthidaung. This fear drove the junta to form alliances with radical Islamic groups. ARSA had already conducted joint military operations with the Myanmar military. On April 15, 2024, during an AA-ARSA clash in Buthidaung township, the Myanmar military provided artillery and air support. A Muslim villager [reported](#):

***'The Myanmar military, in collaboration with ARSA, fought against the AA. Two AA soldiers were injured, and six were killed from the other side. The military shelled a boat, resulting in the deaths of 25 Rohingya civilians.'***

The RSO joined the collaboration later. On March 31, 2024, the RSO [appeared](#) in a video news release by Jumuna TV in Bangladesh, claiming to fight against the Myanmar military alongside the Three Brotherhood Alliance (3BTAs), including the Arakan Army, following the '1027 Operation.' However, a month and a half later, on May 12-13, 2024, the RSO [reversed course](#) and struck a deal with the Myanmar military.

The Myanmar military agreed to provide weapons, ammunition, technical support, and financial aid in exchange for manpower, local networks, and information from these radical Islamic groups. Although the Myanmar military never officially acknowledged any agreement, it appears that officials reached a verbal arrangement with these groups: ARSA, RSO, and ARA. Under this arrangement, these groups were permitted to engage in criminal and illegal trafficking activities with impunity in northern Arakan, while the Myanmar military leveraged them to counter the AA's offensives and promote communal tensions as part of a 'divide and rule' strategy among the region's diverse communities.

## B. How Bangladesh Has Involved

Bangladesh's role in containing the spread of terror activities by radical Islamic groups is critical, involving information sharing, discouraging illegal activities, and joint border security cooperation. Since Bangladesh's independence in 1971, the border area with Myanmar has been marked by tension, standoffs, violence, and insecurity. Bilateral relations have primarily focused on the refugee crisis, illegal cross-border crimes, terrorism, and smuggling along the Naff River, rather than security, trade, and socioeconomic cooperation.

The 2017 refugee crisis further destabilized the border areas. Crimes, armed gang violence, and drug smuggling among the refugee community are increasingly concerning. Notably, radical Islamic groups have significant influence in the camps, with ARSA even referred to as the "night government." Since 2021, the resurgence of the RSO, reportedly backed by Bangladeshi security agencies, has escalated insecurity. These policies [are at odds](#) with a November 2017 agreement



between Bangladesh and Myanmar, under which Bangladesh committed to not hosting terrorists, insurgents, or supporting arms smuggling or human trafficking within its borders.

The close ties between Bangladeshi security forces, such as DGFI and BGB, and radical Islamic groups are no longer a secret. Bangladesh's policy toward these groups can be seen as 'known toleration,' with some security policymakers viewing these groups as useful for advancing strategic objectives. For example, a 2023 research report [indicated](#):

**“Bangladesh’s support—both tacit and overt—for Rohingya armed actors has facilitated the rise of militant groups at the expense of moderate, non-violent Rohingya leadership.”**

Initially, Dhaka tolerated ARSA's presence in the camps, hoping it would support political objectives like repatriation. However, as ARSA began acting counter to its interests, Bangladesh shifted support to the RSO in early 2024 to counter ARSA. Yet, ARSA's leader recently expressed gratitude to Bangladesh for hosting his people. Meanwhile, the RSO, now the de facto authority in the camps, has [gained high-level](#) access to Bangladeshi officials, such as in a May 12, 2024 meeting that included former and current foreign ministers and members of the Standing Committee on Foreign Relations. (See Figure-I9)



Figure-I9

In a further sign of collaboration, on May 15, 2024, a Bangladeshi news [report praised](#) the RSO for negotiating to reopen 'Myoma Mosque' with the Myanmar military. The report, presented in 'standard Bengali language,' aimed to portray the RSO as a defender of Muslim rights in Arakan. However, this shift highlights inconsistencies in Bangladesh's policy. For instance, in early 2023, the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Defense described the RSO as a criminal gang; within a year, they are now seen as government collaborators.

This policy shift raises questions about [the involvement of security](#) agencies like DGFI and BGB in the forced recruitment of refugee youths by the RSO and ARA, as these groups' recruitment efforts could not occur without government complicity. Alarming, some agencies appear to facilitate the transport of recruits by RSO and ARA for Myanmar junta forces in Arakan. During heavy fighting in Maungdaw, Bangladesh reportedly applied indirect pressure on the AA.

This short-sighted policy may stem from a belief that collaboration between Islamic groups and the junta could weaken the AA in northern Arakan and ease the refugee crisis. However, the outcome has been the opposite, with Bangladesh losing leverage and facing increased terrorist activity from RSO against the AA. Dhaka policymakers might think that RSO can be used as leverage in repatriation negotiations with the ULA/AA, but this strategy could backfire.

Continued RSO attacks from the Bangladeshi border risk escalating tensions between Dhaka and the ULA leadership. Although the Dhaka government may theoretically seek peace and stability along its border with Arakan, supporting the RSO and other armed factions against the AA risks creating further instability, jeopardizing the prospects for refugee repatriation in the foreseeable future.



## C. Growing Threat to Regional Peace and Stability

Several studies and observations have already warned that the refugee crisis along the Bangladesh-Arakan border could have regional implications. This issue primarily stems from the strained bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar, especially since the August 2017 violence. The crisis is increasingly being addressed through international legal mechanisms, such as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC).

More concerning are the ideological connections forming between global Jihadist groups, extremist religious groups in Bangladesh, and radical Islamic factions along the Arakan border. A highly destructive situation could arise if an opportunistic group exploits these fragile conditions. For decades, calls for Islamic jihad action by regional and transnational groups, including Hefazat-e-Islam, Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB), Ansar al Islam (AAI), Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS), Neo-Jamaat-ul-Mujahideen Bangladesh (NJMB), and Hizb ut-Tahrir (HT), have surfaced.



Figure-20

| Name                                       | Background  | Activities   |
|--|---|--|
| Hefazat-e-Islam in Bangladesh              | Hefazat-e-Islam founded in 2010 is a far-right conservative Islamic group consisted of hardline religious teachers and students. The group has built several Madrasahs in refugee camps and is suspected of having links with Taliban and Jammaat e Islami.   | Organized a protest in <a href="#">September 2017</a> in Dhaka<br><br>“We will launch a long march towards Myanmar if its army and their associates do not stop torturing the Rohingya Muslims,”<br>“We will be compelled to launch jihad against Myanmar.”                                |
| Al Qaeda in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS) | AQIS was established to promote al-Qa’ida’s ideology and objectives in South Asia, sharing al-Qa’ida’s goals: to prepare Muslims for military jihad against their adversaries, liberate Muslim lands under non-Muslim control, and revive the Islamic caliphate. In a 2014 announcement, al-Zawahiri named Burma (Myanmar), Bangladesh, and India’s regions of Assam, Gujarat, and Kashmir as areas targeted for AQIS operations. | In <a href="#">June 2017</a> , the group clearly laid out its three objectives in Myanmar:<br><br>(i) ‘Helping and defending’ Muslims in Myanmar; (ii) ‘Avenging’ the oppression of Myanmar Muslims by the military; and (ii) “Retaking” the Islamic Arakan from the ‘occupying’ military. |





|  |   |  |
|--|---|--|
| Jamatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (JMB)       | Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) is a Bangladeshi Sunni extremist group founded in 1998, aiming to replace democracy, liberalism, socialism, and secularism with an Islamic state in Bangladesh. JMB's ideology closely aligns with al-Qa'ida's global jihadist ideals, and the group has previously claimed responsibility for an attack through an online forum associated with al-Qa'ida in the Indian Subcontinent (AQIS). | Endorsed the activities of the AQIS.   |
| Anser al Islam (AAI)                     | It is a pan-Islamist militant organization founded in 2013 in Bangladesh, linked to numerous terrorist activities, including attacks and the murders of atheist bloggers between 2013 and 2015. The group is connected to Islami Chhatra Shibir, the student wing of the Bangladesh Jamaat-e-Islami party.  | Endorsed the activities of the AQIS.   |
| Neo- Jamatul Mujahidin Bangladesh (NJMB) | Neo-Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh (Neo-JMB) first emerged in 2014, formed by Bangladesh-based extremists formerly aligned with al-Qa'ida (AQ) who shifted their support to the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). This group included many members of the Sunni extremist organization Jama'at Mujahideen Bangladesh, who were drawn to the ISIL-aligned group led by Shaykh Ibrahim al-Hanif.                          | In <a href="#">September 2015</a> , IS' Furat Media published an article titled 'Bangladesh and the Declaration of the Caliphate';<br><br>calling for armed jihad in Myanmar, with operations originating from Bangladesh. IS has also used its online publication, *Dabiq*, to announce its intention to establish a base in Bangladesh to launch retaliatory attacks against Myanmar in response to the treatment of Rohingya Muslims. |
| Hizb ut Tahrir (HT)                      | Hizb ut-Tahrir is an international pan-Islamist and fundamentalist organization with a national branch in Bangladesh. It is affiliated with its global counterpart, Hizb ut-Tahrir, as well as the regional branch, Hizb ut-Tahrir Central Asia.  | The group has covertly distributed leaflets in Cox's Bazar, declaring that the only path to liberating Muslims in Myanmar is through establishing and expanding Arakan (Rakhine State) as a caliphate.   |

In [early 2020](#), a *Times of India* report indicated that Indian agencies had issued a warning to the country's armed forces and border guards, alleging that Pakistan's Inter-Services Intelligence (ISI) was involved in training 40 Rohingya individuals in Cox's Bazar. According to the report, Jamaat-ul Mujahideen Bangladesh (JMB) facilitated the training, with an estimated 10 million taka (\$117,000, €107,000) funded through channels in Saudi Arabia and Malaysia. With the [recent rise](#) of radical Islamic factions in Bangladesh, even a small spark could ignite an uncontrollable and dangerous situation—one that poses a highly alarming risk.



## Chapter-V

### A. What Need to Be Done

Global politics today is largely driven by news of great power competition rather than terrorism from radical groups. The events of the 9/11 attacks are now a distant memory, no longer central to the foreign policy of the United States or other Western powers.

However, religious extremism and acts of terrorism persist. The resurgence of armed conflicts and regional tensions in West Asia (Middle East) between Israel and factions backed by Iran brings a renewed atmosphere of religious fervor and extremist ideology. Although international relations are mostly conducted between sovereign states, the impact of cultural, civilizational, and religious motivations should not be underestimated.

Arakan, located at the crossroads of South and Southeast Asia, is vulnerable to cultural and religious assertions, often framed in terms like 'Islamization,' 'Arabianization,' and 'Bengalinization.' Often, Western value promotion on human rights and democracy indirectly fuels these motivations.

While Arakan has historically accommodated diverse ethnic identities and religious beliefs, it cannot risk harboring religious extremism or terrorism. Global jihadist groups such as ISIS and Al-Qaeda have shown interest in influencing Arakan's Muslim community, and groups like ARSA and RSO, in combination with hardline religious and political elements in countries like Bangladesh and Pakistan, could exploit and radicalize frustrated youths in Bangladesh's refugee camps. If this occurs, non-Muslim groups and moderate Muslims in the region would likely be among the victims.

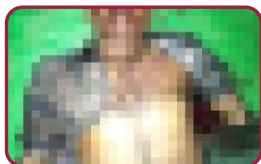
To prevent this, international and regional actors should seize the opportunity presented by the changing military and political landscape in Arakan. The military success along with inclusive governance and increasing social cohesion led the ULA/AA movement should be recognized as a positive development. Stakeholders should engage with ULA leadership to ensure peace and stability, protect foreign investments, promote social cohesion and inclusive governance, and support the deradicalization of refugee youths who could play a role in Arakan's future.

Bangladesh should be encouraged to reconsider its support for militant groups within its borders or refugee camps and instead focus on sustainable solutions to the refugee crisis. The rise of radical Islamic elements in Bangladesh requires careful monitoring and control. Additionally, regional powers like India and China should engage in countering religious extremism and terrorism to safeguard security and protect their foreign investments. India, in particular—with its sizable Muslim population and recurring issues with religious extremism and violence—should be especially concerned about the shifting dynamics in Arakan and the broader region.



## Appendix-I (Atrocities Committed by the ARSA)

### January-8, 2024



ARSA killed three innocent villagers and injured another three.

The deceased are identified as Amira Kain, 30; Aminor Lu, 18; and Mamauk Ju Bai, 15, from Tapma Chaung (Muslim) village, Buthidaung Township. It was reported that Abu Ka Long, 52; Nor Ha Kain, 23; and Salama Khan, 40, were injured by gunfire.

### February-8, 2024



ARSA killed one innocent civilian.

The victim of the shooting was Maung Ba, 28, the son of U Ka La Myar, from the Dhapai Sayar group, Dhapai Sayar village, in Buthidaung Township.

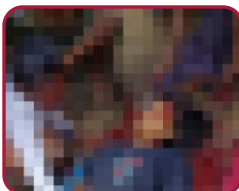
### March-7, 2024



ARSA killed two innocent civilians.

According to local sources, 28-year-old Ko Maung Bu from Taungpro (Letwa) Town and 30-year-old Ma Thuza from Nantha Taung village were captured and killed by the ARSA group on the Thae Chaung road while returning to Taungpro Town in a vehicle transporting goods from Zee Pin Chaung.

### March-15, 2024



ARSA robbed and kidnapped villagers.

In the early hours, the ARSA terrorist group entered Tharsi (Muslim) village, located within the Mingalar Gyi area of Maungdaw Township, where they carried out armed robberies and took seven Muslim youths as hostages. The victims are reported to be Mamuth Boh Hant, 15; Mamuth Warit, 18; Ibrahim, 20; Mamuth Ririt, 20; Nur Kamal, 21; Holly Ullah, 23; and Mohuraman, 22, from Tharsi (Muslim) village in Maungdaw Township.

### April-4, 2024



ARSA brutally killed one civilian.

The deceased has been identified as Ismail, also known as Soe Naing, aged 35, the son of U Nur Roslin, from Sein Nhyin Byar Muslim ward, Buthidaung.

### April-11, 2024



ARSA killed one villager.

The deceased has been identified as Aje Turaman, a 30-year-old from Kan Gree Prin village, Buthidaung township.



#### **April-15, 2024**

- ARSA killed one villager.
- The victim is Naru, age 64, from Pyin Hla Kuna village, Buthidaung township.



#### **April-27, 2024**

- ARSA abducted two civilians.
- It has been reported that two local men from Maungdaw were abducted by the ARSA militant group. The abductees are Win Htun (Rakhine) and Taw Paung (Hindu) from Ward 4, Maungdaw



#### **May-27, 2024**

- ARSA killed one innocent civilian.
- U Maung Tha Htun, a 39-year-old man and son of U Mae Daung from Khayemyaing Village, Maungdaw Township in northern Rakhine State, was shot and killed by the ARSA Muslim armed group.



#### **June-21, 2024**

- ARSA fired at the civilians travelling in Maungdaw.
- It has been reported that the ARSA extremist group fired shots indiscriminately at civilians passing near Kyain Chaung Village in northern Maungdaw Township around 8 p.m. on June 21.



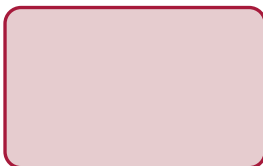
#### **July-2, 2024**

- ARSA abducted one Rakhine civilian.
- The victim is Myint Zaw Oo, a school teacher was abducted by the ARSA members on the way to Kanyintaw market, Maungdaw at 8 a.m. on July 2.



#### **July-18, 2024**

- ARSA killed seven innocent Khumi villagers.
- The victims were from the Gandari IDP camp in Ward-4, Buthidaung town. They went out to gather bamboo shoots for their livelihood on July 18 and were found dead on July 19 and 20.



#### **July-20, 2024**

- ARSA killed three innocent cattle traders. The individuals abducted and killed by the ARSA group were Kyan Thein Maung, age 33, and Naing Soe Win, age 30, from Min Kyi Village, as well as Maung San Tha, age 35, from Ta Rein village in Muangdaw.
- At the same day, ARSA abducted another two villagers namely Pan Sein Maung, age 47 and Zaw Twan Won, age 38 from Pyar Thar village, Maungdaw.



**July-20, 2024**

ARSA killed one innocent Hindus IDP and abducted others. Dar Gulu, age 28, son of Khin Maung Chay, who lived in the Kanyintan IDP camp in Maungdaw, was killed by six armed members of the ARSA group. During the incident, ARSA also abducted the victim's brother and other individuals in the area, who remain uncontacted as of today.



**July 26, 2024**

Two ARSA members raped an innocent Hindus woman. A 35-year-old Hindu woman residing at the Aung Bala relief camp in Maungdaw was reportedly subjected to an unlawful abduction by a combined force of the military junta and ARSA on July 26 around 10 a.m., during which she was also sexually assaulted by two members of the ARSA group.



**July-31, 2024**

ARSA killed 5 innocent civilians and injured another two.

The deceased were Ko Zaw Zaw Min (aka Shwe Thet Ko), age 35; Ko Aung Myat San, age 25; Ko Aung Myo San, age 25; U Kyaw Min, age 55; and Daw Sein Hla (a teacher), age 55, all from Ward 4, Buthidaung Township.

It has been reported that the two injured individuals are in critical condition. They are Maung Myo Thant Shine, age 27, and Maung Maung Chay, age 44.



**September-30, 2024**

ARSA abducted and killed four Mro ethnic villagers. The missing individuals include U Sam Wawn, age 45, son of U Set Khaung from Kaing Gyi (Myo) Village, along with his two sons: Maung Lin Gyi, age 15, and Maung A Mhan, age 13. Additionally, Maung Di Ko, age 14, son of U Yan Naik, is also among the missing.



**October-6, 2024**

ARSA killed two innocent civilians and critically injured another three.

The deceased individual is Daw San San Oo, age 38, the daughter of U Soe Thein from Aung Mingalar Village in Maungdaw Township, who suffered a fatal head injury and U Soe Naing, age 27, the son of U Dohn Soe from Aung Mingalar Village. The injured individuals include Ma Htay, age 21 (left head injury). Additionally, U Htun Win Hlain, age 45, the son of U Htun Sein from Thayar Kaung Village (left leg gunshot wound), and U Nyi Chay, age 42, the son of U Maung Chit Sein from Aung Mingalar Village (left leg gunshot wound) is also among the injured. It has been reported that the remaining two individuals did not sustain any injuries.



**October-7, 2024**

ARSA beheaded and buried two innocent villagers.

The individuals who were beheaded and buried are U San Shwe Maung, age 67, the son of U Pho Myat Sein and Daw Hla Wah Phyu, and U Maung Myo Aung, age 65, the son of U Maung Tha Pwint and Daw Sein Myo Nyaw, both residing in Ward (2), Buthidaung Township, in Shwe Thit Village.





## Mapping Atrocities Committed by the ARSA and other Radical Islamic Groups

