

***Fact Sheet***

***16 Sept. 2019***

**SEXUAL VIOLENCE AS A TACTIC OF WAR**

**THE UN INDEPENDENT INTERNATIONAL FACT-FINDING MISSION ON MYANMAR**

Myanmar’s military must stop using sexual and gender-based violence to punish ethnic minorities, says the Mission’s final report to the Human Rights Council released today.

The mission found that soldiers from Myanmar’s armed forces, the Tatmadaw, routinely and systematically employed rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence in blatant violation of international law. Survivors have included women, girls, boys, men and transgender people.

The Mission said the brutal tactic was still being employed in Kachin and Shan states, and was so severe in Rakhine State, during the “clearance operations” of 2017, that it was a factor indicating the Myanmar military’s genocidal intent to destroy the Rohingya population in whole or in part. The [report on sexual violence](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/MyanmarFFM/Pages/sexualviolence.aspx) , previously released in New York on 22 August, forms part of the final report.

That report documented the use of sexual violence against men and boys and transgender people, often overlooked in reports on sexual and gender-based violence, and in the general picture of the conflicts in Myanmar.

The Mission conducted interviews with hundreds of survivors and witnesses of sexual violence in Kachin and Shan States in the north, and in Rakhine State in the west, where the military’s “clearance operations” that began on 25 August 2017 led to the forced displacement of more than 700,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh.

The Mission said in its August 2019 report only one conclusion could be drawn from the accounts it had obtained: sexual violence perpetrated by the military was “part of a deliberate, well-planned strategy to intimidate, terrorise and punish a civilian population.”

The report said that genocidal intent against the Rohingya population could be inferred through the Tatmadaw’s “widespread and systematic killing of women and girls, the systematic selection of women and girls of reproductive age for rape, attacks on pregnant women and on babies, the mutilation and other injures to their reproductive organs.” It also found the Tatmadaw physically branded some of its female victims “by bite marks on their cheeks, neck, breast and thigh.” Some of the victims were so severely injured “that they may be unable to have sexual intercourse with their husbands or conceive.”

The majority of the sexual violence reported in Rakhine, Kachin and Shan was directed at women and girls who were beaten, burned with cigarettes, slashed with knives, gang raped, raped and held as sexual slaves on military bases. The report also documents cases of rape, forced nudity and the sexual torture of men and boys.

Many of these acts amount to crimes under international law, including war crimes, crimes against humanity and acts of genocide. Yet, the Myanmar Government has failed to cease, prevent and take action against sexual and gender-based violence in the country, or hold those responsible to account, the report said.

The Mission said it felt compelled to update the findings it made in its report of September 2018, to the Human Rights Council to underscore the importance of justice for victims and the need to hold perpetrators accountable. It called on the Government of Myanmar, the Security Council and the international community to make accountability for these grave crimes an urgent priority.

**ENDS**