



BULLETIN

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MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE MECHANISM

Last month, floods caused by Typhoon Yagi ripped through Myanmar leading to widespread death, damage and displacement. This natural disaster has compounded the devastation caused by multiple armed conflicts, and by war crimes and crimes against humanity that are being committed with impunity across the country. As detailed in the Mechanism's recent [Annual Report](#) and in my statement to the [Human Rights Council](#) in September, these crimes have become increasingly brutal.



Unfortunately, on an almost daily basis the Mechanism receives reports of new atrocities including aerial attacks on civilian targets, unlawful imprisonment, torture in detention centres, violent sexual and gender-based crimes, the burning of villages, beheadings and the public display of sexually mutilated bodies. Many of these crimes appear to be committed to punish and induce terror in the civilian population.

Most of the information we have collected concerns crimes committed by the Myanmar security forces. However, we are increasingly collecting credible evidence that armed groups fighting against the military are also perpetrating crimes, such as the execution of civilians suspected of being military informers or collaborators. We are investigating all perpetrators of serious international crimes, no matter their political affiliation, beliefs or ethnicity.

We recently opened new investigations in Rakhine State where fighting between the Arakan Army and the military has escalated, and there are allegations of crimes by multiple armed groups involved in the conflict. We have received shocking reports of killings, torture and rapes, and we are collecting and verifying information received and seeking to identify those persons responsible for these crimes. Civilians from all ethnicities in Rakhine have suffered, but the Rohingya population are particularly vulnerable. They have been directly targeted and tens of thousands have had to flee their homes.

The echoes of the 2016 and 2017 clearance operations against the Rohingya are impossible to ignore. In August, I released a [statement](#) commemorating seven years since the violent attacks that forced hundreds of thousands of Rohingya to flee Myanmar. I reflected that the current situation in Rakhine and elsewhere in the country is the result of decades of impunity. When crimes go unpunished, perpetrators are emboldened to commit more crimes. The Mechanism was created to fight against this impunity. In this regard, we have accelerated the volume of information and analysis we are sharing with the authorities conducting proceedings concerning crimes against the Rohingya at the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice and in Argentina.

Our fight against impunity would be impossible without courageous individuals and organizations who share information with us in the most challenging of circumstances. Internet blackouts, blocked technologies and increased surveillance deepen the security risks people take to engage with us. We are doing all we can to make their interactions with us as safe as possible, and to ensure that the risks they take are not in vain. I am optimistic that the information people share with us now will one day bring the perpetrators of these horrific crimes to justice.

Nicholas Koumjian

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE

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The frequency and intensity of crimes against humanity and war crimes committed in Myanmar continues to increase. Against this backdrop, the Mechanism is investigating new crimes as they happen, as well as collecting and analyzing evidence of earlier crimes. As highlighted in its sixth [Annual Report](#), the Mechanism has made significant progress in its investigations into crimes committed since the military takeover in February 2021, including the violent suppression of protests, unlawful imprisonment of perceived opponents of the military regime and systematic torture in detention, which includes gang rape and other sexual and gender-based crimes. The Mechanism has opened a new line of inquiry into the conflict in Rakhine State between the Myanmar security forces and the Arakan Army and is investigating crimes committed against Rohingya and Rakhine civilians.

The Mechanism still has no access to Myanmar, and securely communicating with sources on the ground remains challenging. In response, the Mechanism continues to innovate. A specialized team of open source investigators uses the latest technology to verify vast amounts of digital information, including photos, audio, video, geospatial imagery and social media posts. This evidence is cross-checked against information received from more than 1,000 sources, including over 450 accounts collected from victims and witnesses.

The Mechanism has been sharing more information than ever with authorities involved in cases concerning the Rohingya at the International Criminal Court, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and in Argentina. It has so far shared nearly 100 packages containing more than one million items of supporting information and analysis. At the ICJ, Myanmar is due to file its last written submission in December 2024 and oral hearings are expected to begin next year.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

In September 2024, the Head of the Mechanism **reported** on the Mechanism’s progress and activities at the fifty-seventh session of the UN Human Rights Council. He emphasized the need for Member State cooperation to support the Mechanism’s access to witnesses, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region. During the interactive dialogue that followed, numerous Member States and civil society organizations reaffirmed their support for the Mechanism and called for accountability for crimes committed in Myanmar.

During the fifty-seventh session, the Head of the Mechanism also participated in a panel discussion on **gender integration**, and explained how the Mechanism incorporates gender considerations into all aspects of its investigations, including its provision of psychological support to witnesses. With a holistic understanding of gender dynamics, the Mechanism can engage with survivors of sexual and gender-based crimes in a more supportive and empowering manner.

Also in September, at a side event during the seventy-ninth session of the UN General Assembly, the Head of the Mechanism spoke at a roundtable on *Paving the Way for Accountability, Truth, and Reconciliation: A Trust Fund for Victims of Atrocity Crimes in Myanmar*. He highlighted the Mechanism’s financial investigations into the dispossession of Rohingya land and property and into the financial beneficiaries of crimes committed by the Myanmar military. He suggested that the Mechanism’s findings could be used to facilitate asset freezes and monetary penalties to support reparative justice.

On 29 October, the Head of the Mechanism will address the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly to provide his annual update on the Mechanism’s progress. While in New York, he will brief Member States and other interlocutors, and seek additional support and resources to strengthen the Mechanism’s capacities.



1,000

Information collected from over 1,000 sources

450

450 accounts collected from victims and witnesses

100

Nearly 100 packages of information and analysis shared

As of October 2024

REPRODUCTIVE VIOLENCE

The Mechanism prioritizes investigating sexual and gender-based crimes, including reproductive violence which is a significant but often overlooked type of gender-based crime. Reproductive violence refers to any acts or omissions that cause harm by interfering with reproductive autonomy – a person’s power to make or carry out decisions about reproduction. It can also refer to violence directed at people because of their actual or perceived reproductive capacity. Reproductive violence includes forced pregnancy, forced abortion, sterilization, attacks on reproductive healthcare facilities and acts or omission aimed at preventing births. These acts can constitute war crimes, crimes against humanity or genocide, and can affect people of all ages and gender identities.

The Mechanism’s investigators are collecting evidence of these under-reported and under-documented crimes in Myanmar to capture the full scope of harm, such as when survivors of rape were forced to undergo unsafe abortions or when pregnant women suffered miscarriages in detention due to conflict-related violence or a lack of adequate food or healthcare. Since reproductive violence often occurs alongside other crimes, investigators need to ask the right questions to ensure that these crimes are fully uncovered and incorporated into the investigations.

In its investigations into the 2016 and 2017 clearance operations against the Rohingya, the Mechanism has documented incidents of rape, gang rape, mutilation and serious injuries to reproductive organs which have led to pregnancies and births or have impacted the victim’s ability to have children in the future. The Mechanism is also investigating reports of reproductive crimes committed since the military coup, including attacks on reproductive healthcare facilities and reproductive health consequences of detention and torture.

COOPERATION

The Mechanism continues to call on Member States that wish to end the spiraling violence and ensure accountability for the atrocities committed in Myanmar to cooperate with its efforts to pursue justice for these crimes. To date, the Mechanism’s proactive engagement with States and other stakeholders has contributed to the negotiation and conclusion of 36 cooperation arrangements, 14 of which are with Member States in Asia, Europe, Oceania and North America. These arrangements have allowed the Mechanism to collect 95 detailed and signed witness interview statements and millions of evidentiary items in various countries. Expanding cooperation with States remains a high priority for the Mechanism, especially those in the Asia-Pacific region where much of the evidence and many of the witnesses are located.

In 2023, the United Nations faced its worst financial shortfall in years due to a number of Member States not paying their full dues in a timely manner. As a result, the Mechanism received significantly less funding than the budget that Member States approved for 2024. The Mechanism therefore continues to actively seek, and would greatly welcome, voluntary contributions from Member States for discrete projects and highly specialized expertise.

OUTREACH

The Mechanism uses various channels to provide updates on its progress and to explain its mandate, including its [website](#), [Facebook Page](#) and participation in [media interviews and events](#).

NEW OUTREACH MATERIALS

Sexual and gender-based crimes

What are sexual and gender-based crimes? How does the Mechanism investigate these crimes? [Download](#) a new graphic novel that provides simple, non-technical answers to these questions in English and Burmese. This is part of the Mechanism's [series](#) of graphic novels that simply and visually explain how the Mechanism works.



Q&A in Rohingya

In a new video series in the Rohingya language, the Head of the Mechanism answers five questions about the Mechanism. [Download](#) and share these short mobile-friendly videos.

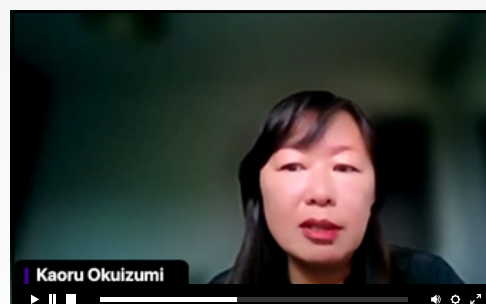


EVENTS

Marking seven years since the clearance operations against the Rohingya, the Head and Deputy Head of the Mechanism participated in commemoration events and highlighted the Mechanism's role in ending the cycle of impunity that continues to embolden perpetrators of crimes against the Rohingya.



Nicholas Koumjian at a Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK event on 26 August.



Kaoru Okuizumi at a Women's Peace Network event on 25 August.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS THE MECHANISM INVESTIGATING WHERE WEAPONS COME FROM?

As part of its investigations into the most serious international crimes committed in Myanmar, the Mechanism conducts a detailed analysis of the types and models of weapons used, how they were used, and where they came from. International law bans certain weapons and prohibits the use of force when the expected harm to civilians or their property is greater than the expected military advantage.

The Mechanism also analyzes the weapon inventories and capabilities of armed actors to verify or challenge claims that they make about their actions. Its financial investigations team also traces the source of the weapons. Individuals who supply weapons, knowing they could be used to commit international crimes, could also be held responsible for enabling those crimes.

By thoroughly examining weapons and their origins, the Mechanism can build comprehensive cases against individuals responsible for atrocities in Myanmar. This multifaceted approach allows the Mechanism to establish links between weapons, perpetrators and specific criminal acts.

HOW IS GENDER INTEGRATED INTO THE MECHANISM'S INVESTIGATIONS?

The Mechanism has collected substantial evidence of sexual and gender-based crimes (SGBC) committed across Myanmar, including rape, forced nudity, violence to sexual body parts and the targeting of someone because of their sex or gender identity. As in other countries, these crimes are under-reported and under-documented and are therefore a challenge to prosecute. In response, the Mechanism has prioritized the investigation of any incidents involving SGBC.

The Mechanism has recruited investigators, analysts and lawyers with specialized expertise in SGBC. It has also mainstreamed gender into its investigations so that SGBC and the gender dimensions of crimes are always considered. Myanmar is a patriarchal country, and this permeates every aspect of life. By integrating a gender lens into its investigations, the Mechanism has more insight into how gender impacts the way survivors experience harm and what drives the perpetrators to commit these crimes.

The Mechanism also makes significant efforts to engage with diverse women's groups, women leaders and LGBTQI groups to ensure that their perspectives are integrated into its working methodologies and investigations, and to give them a voice in the accountability process.