INDEPENDENT INVESTIGATIVE
MECHANISM FOR MYANMAR

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MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF THE MECHANISM

Earlier this month, a Rohingya man shared with me how five of his children were killed in Rakhine State. A woman spoke of her husband's abduction nine years ago and the anguish of not knowing what has happened to him. They were amongst more than 200 Rohingya that I met during my recent visit to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh – all of whom carried the trauma of losing their loved ones, homes and land. Most of those I met had arrived in Bangladesh within the past two years. Since early 2024, more than 154,000 Rohingya have crossed the border from Rakhine State, fleeing the conflict between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army.

I travelled to Bangladesh to discuss the Mechanism's work and progress with Rohingya and other displaced communities and the Bangladeshi government. The escalating violence in Rakhine State was a major concern for everyone I spoke to. I reaffirmed that the Mechanism investigates perpetrators of serious international crimes regardless of their ethnicity, religion or political affiliation. I also stressed that, although no justice process is currently addressing the recent crimes in Myanmar, the Mechanism is collecting and preserving evidence now so that it can support authorities in investigating and prosecuting those responsible when the opportunity arises.

Understandably, many Rohingya are closely following the case before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning Myanmar's alleged failure to comply with its obligations to prevent and punish genocide against the Rohingya in 2016 and 2017. Many expressed hope that the Court's decision, expected in the coming months, would help pave the way for their return home. But a legal decision alone cannot make that return possible. Until the violence in Rakhine State ends, Rohingya cannot return safely. Nor are the Rohingya the only community at risk: civilians from all ethnic groups in Rakhine State face the threat of attack. Just a few weeks ago, an airstrike near a market in Kyauktaw killed more than 50 people and injured dozens more, including many women and children.

Such attacks are not confined to Rakhine State. As detailed in our recent **Annual Report**, the Myanmar military is increasingly relying on air power to target homes, schools, medical facilities, religious buildings and camps for internally displaced persons across the country.

These are challenging times for international criminal justice. It is more important than ever for the international community to take a stand against war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide. Many brave individuals share their testimonies with the Mechanism, driven by the hope that their contributions will help bring those responsible to justice.

The decision pending at the ICJ is only one avenue for accountability. We remain committed to collecting and preserving evidence to support national and international authorities willing and able to pursue justice for these crimes.

Nicholas Koumjian

INSTITUTIONAL UPDATE

The situation in Myanmar has continued to deteriorate. As detailed in the Mechanism's eighth **Annual Report**, its investigations show a pattern of deliberate aerial attacks on civilians. The Mechanism has progressed in identifying some of the units involved in these attacked and the airbases from which they operate.

The Mechanism has also advanced its investigations into torture and sexual violence in military-run detention facilities and has identified a number of the commanders and interrogators involved. In Rakhine State, it is investigating allegations of crimes committed by different armed groups amid the intensifying conflict, alongside its investigations into earlier crimes against the Rohingya.

The Mechanism continues to provide evidence and analysis to support accountability efforts before the International Criminal Court and Federal Court in Argentina, and other national jurisdictions conducting preliminary investigations or scoping exercises. Between 2021 and December 2025, the Mechanism also **provided evidence and analysis** for proceedings before the International Court of Justice concerning the case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar. This included nine analytical reports, 40 witness statements, two screening notes relating to military defectors and an affidavit from the Head of the Mechanism. The Court is now deliberating on whether Myanmar violated its obligations to prevent and punish genocide against the Rohingya in 2016 and 2017.

OUR WORK IN NUMBERS

As of 26 October 2026

28 million+
Items of information and evidence collected

5 million+
Photos and videos uploaded for analysis

1,600+
Sources who provided information

AERIAL ATTACKS AGAINST CIVILIANS

The Mechanism's investigations have extensively documented aerial attacks carried out by the Myanmar military across Myanmar, affecting villages, schools, religious and cultural buildings, camps for internally displaced persons and medical facilities. Many of the sites were in areas where there were no apparent military targets.

Alongside conventional aircraft, the Myanmar military has increasingly used paramotors, gyrocopters and unmanned aerial vehicles (drones). In several incidents under investigation in Sagaing Region, paramotor pilots reportedly switched off their engines as they approached their targets, allowing them to glide without warning and leaving civilians with little time to seek shelter. The Mechanism is also examining "double-tap" strikes, in which a second aerial attack follows an initial strike. Such attacks can hit first responders, including medical personnel and others assisting the wounded, and civilians attempting to flee.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL AND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

At the sixty-third session of the Human Rights Council in September 2026, the Head of the Mechanism **presented** the eighth Annual Report. During the interactive dialogue, numerous Member States and civil society organizations **affirmed** their support for the Mechanism.

On 27 October 2026, the Head of the Mechanism will brief the Third Committee of the General Assembly on the Mechanism's progress over the past year. During his visit to New York, he will also engage with Member States and other stakeholders to seek continued support and the resources needed to strengthen the Mechanism's capacities.

METHODOLOGY: WITNESS INTERVIEWS

Interview statements from people who directly experienced or witnessed a crime are valuable sources of information and are crucial to building criminal cases to hold perpetrators of serious international crimes accountable. Detailed in-person interviews that result in signed witness statements are the most likely to be admissible in any court or tribunal.

The Mechanism's witness interviews are conducted by teams of experienced investigators, lawyers and language specialists, bringing together the expertise needed for each interview. Some team members may speak one or more Myanmar languages, with an interpreter providing additional support when needed.

Depending on the subject of the interview, the team may include specialists in sexual and gender-based crimes, crimes against and affecting children, military or financial matters, or specific geographic and thematic areas. The Mechanism discusses the composition of the interview team with each witness and takes their preferences into account. This is particularly important when interviewing survivors and witnesses of sexual and gender-based crimes, who may prefer to be interviewed by team members of a particular gender.

Before an interview, the Mechanism assesses the safety, security and well-being of the witness, and puts measures in place to help protect them during and after the interview process. This can include support aimed at reducing the trauma of sharing difficult experiences.

BANGLADESH VISIT IN PICTURES

With senior officials: Nicholas Koumjian, Head of the Mechanism, met with Foreign Secretary H.E. Mr. Asad Alam Siam and other officials in Dhaka.

With communities: Koumjian met with more than 200 people from Rohingya and other communities in the camps in Cox's Bazar.

With academics: Koumjian met with students and faculty at the University of Dhaka's Centre for Genocide Studies.

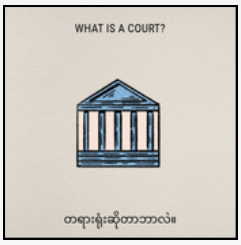
With journalists: Koumjian's **interview** on the Voice of Palong in Cox's Bazar.

OUTREACH

MULTILINGUAL EXPLAINERS

Who is a witness, and what is a witness statement? What if a witness does not know or remember something? How does the Mechanism use the information people share?

A **new series** of short animations in the Rohingya language answers these questions and explains what witnesses can expect when speaking with the Mechanism. These 10 mobile-friendly videos are available to download and share. Two-page explainers describing how the Mechanism's interview process works are also available in **English** and **Burmese**.



CALL FOR INFORMATION

Following a deadly airstrike near a market in Kyauktaw Township in Rakhine State in September, the Mechanism **urged** witnesses and others with direct knowledge of this or other attacks to securely share evidence with it.

> IIMM calls for information on deadly **airstrike** near a market in Rakhine State

REACHING ONLINE AUDIENCES

As public interest in the Mechanism's work continues to grow, its **Facebook** and **LinkedIn** pages have reached new milestones.

FOLLOWERS

81,000+

2,900+

MEDIA

20 August 2026: Nicholas Koumjian, Head of the Mechanism, featured in an **Al Jazeera** documentary on the Rohingya crisis, discussing serious international crimes against the Rohingya and other groups in Rakhine State, and the Mechanism's work to support accountability.

28 August 2026: Koumjian spoke to **DVB English News** about patterns of deliberate aerial attacks on civilians, arbitrary detention, torture and sexual violence by the Myanmar military, as detailed in the Mechanism's **Annual Report**.

INTERVIEW: GET TO KNOW THE SGBC WORKING GROUP

WHAT DOES THE SEXUAL AND GENDER-BASED CRIMES WORKING GROUP DO?

Investigating sexual and gender-based crimes (SGBC) is a priority for the Mechanism. The Working Group brings together colleagues with different areas of expertise to ensure that SGBC are considered at every stage of the Mechanism's work, strengthening **how we investigate and analyse these crimes**.

The Working Group ensures that our investigators look at all crimes from a gender perspective. This helps us understand how men, women, boys, girls and people of diverse genders and sexual orientations may be targeted and affected differently, and helps ensure that crimes are not overlooked.

For example, when investigating an airstrike on a marketplace, the Working Group might encourage investigators to look at how the attack affected women and men differently, including whether women were particularly affected because they were more likely to be at the marketplace buying food and other essentials for their households.

WHAT ARE SOME OF THE CHALLENGES INVOLVED IN INVESTIGATING SGBC?

SGBC is often underreported. Survivors and witnesses may be afraid to speak about what happened because of stigma, fear of retaliation or concerns about how it could affect them, their families and their communities.

For survivors, speaking about their experiences of SBGC can be extremely painful and is likely to bring up difficult emotions, so this work requires particular care and sensitivity. We take a survivor-centred, trauma-informed approach, prioritizing survivors' security, safety and well-being throughout the investigative process.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN SPEAKING TO SURVIVORS OF SGBC?

We recognize that we are asking people to speak about deeply personal experiences. Survivors' safety and choice come first. We explain how the information they share with us may be used, so people can make an informed decision about whether to speak to us. We discuss confidentiality and the steps we take to protect their information, and we consider their physical and psychological well-being before, during and after an interview. Our personnel are trained to recognize when someone may need additional support, and we would not proceed if the security or psychosocial risks of speaking with someone are too high.

We also adapt our approach to each person, taking into account their culture, language, age, gender, identity and preferences about interviewers or interpreters. Our aim is to always listen carefully, treat people with dignity and avoid asking them to recount painful experiences unnecessarily.

WHY DOES THIS WORK MATTER?

There are widely-held misperceptions that SGBC only involves rape or only affects women and girls. In reality, it can include sexual and other forms of gendered harm – sexual torture and forced nudity for example – affecting people of all genders and sexual orientations. It also can include reproductive violence such as serious injuries to reproductive organs that impact a person's ability to have children.

For us, this is the work we have been committed to for years. We have seen how easily these crimes can go unreported or overlooked. In Myanmar, the scale and brutality of these crimes make it all the more important to ensure that people's experiences are heard and reflected in our evidence and analysis. We hope this work can contribute to the justice that survivors and affected communities deserve.

IMPLEMENTING THE 2025-2027 STRATEGIC PLAN

The Mechanism is continuing to implement its 2025-2027 Strategic Plan, which sets out three goals: 1) ensure that its evidence and analysis support justice and accountability efforts for Myanmar; 2) strengthen engagement with witnesses, civil society organizations, Member States, UN entities and other stakeholders; and 3) maintain a resilient and adaptable Mechanism.

The Mechanism estimates that it will require US$1.9 million in voluntary contributions in 2027 to strengthen its capacity and respond to emerging needs. While the UN regular budget funds the Mechanism's core operations, voluntary contributions provide additional capacity for specialized, resource-intensive activities that are essential to implementing its mandate.

US$1.9 million

estimated voluntary contributions required in 2027

OUR CHALLENGES

The Mechanism operates in a dynamic, challenging and unpredictable environment that presents growing demands on its investigations and resources.

CONTINUED ESCALATION OF CONFLICT

The continued intensification of the conflict across Myanmar has increased the number of serious international crimes requiring investigation.

SECURITY AND POLITICAL RISKS

Risks affect personnel, witnesses and others who engage with or support the Mechanism.

RESOURCES AND EXPERTISE

The Mechanism has lost 20 per cent of its personnel since early 2026 and must use its limited resources strategically while retaining the specialized expertise needed for complex investigations.

COOPERATION

The Mechanism continues to receive no cooperation from Myanmar. Cooperation from other Member States is therefore essential to accessing evidence and witnesses within their territories.

DONOR SUPPORT

Voluntary contributions support four priority areas, helping the Mechanism sustain its investigative capacity and strengthen engagement with witnesses and civil society.

❶ **Evidence in Myanmar languages:** Reviewing and analysing large volumes of evidentiary material in Myanmar languages.

❷ **Specialized investigations and expertise:** Conducting highly specialized open-source investigations and retaining expertise in investigating sexual and gender-based crimes and crimes against and affecting children.

❸ **Witness protection and support:** Facilitating appropriate protection and support measures to enable safe engagement with witnesses.

❹ **Civil society engagement:** Supporting the Civil Society Dialogue to build trust and strengthen cooperation with civil society organizations.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

IS THE MECHANISM INVESTIGATING THE USE OF DRONES?

The Mechanism investigates airstrikes in Myanmar involving a wide range of aircraft, including fixed-wing aircraft such as fighter jets, helicopters, paramotors, gyrocopters and drones. The Myanmar military operates surveillance, reconnaissance and strike drones, including domestically designed attack drones and commercially available drones that have been adapted to drop munitions. The Mechanism has investigated the military's use of drones in strikes that appear to deliberately target schools and places of worship.

It is not only the Myanmar military which is using drones, including for strikes against civilians. The Mechanism is investigating the use of drones by all parties to the conflict.

The Mechanism's Financial Investigation Team investigates individuals and entities responsible for supplying and servicing aircraft, weapons and related equipment used in military operations, including drones. The team's investigation covers individuals and companies, both in Myanmar and other countries, that are involved in the supply of such goods and related services, including weapons exporters and importers, brokers, financial providers and logistics operators.

The team traces who owns and who has effective control over relevant companies, who makes and receives payments, and how equipment is transported and used. By linking this information to specific military units and documented airstrikes, investigators collect evidence that can be used by authorities to initiate criminal investigations and proceedings.

IS FORCED LABOUR A VIOLATION OF INTERNATIONAL LAW?

Forced labour is prohibited under international law and constitutes a violation of international human rights law. It refers to work or service that a person is compelled to perform under threat, coercion or punishment, and which they have not agreed to do freely. States have an obligation to prohibit and prevent forced labour at all times.

In certain circumstances, forced labour can also amount to a serious international crime. It may constitute the crime against humanity of "enslavement" where there is evidence that the perpetrator exercises powers attaching to the right of ownership over a person. This can include significantly limiting a person's autonomy, freedom of choice or freedom of movement. To qualify as a crime against humanity, the conduct must also form part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against a civilian population.

Not all forms of forced labour will meet this threshold. For example, the forced recruitment of adults into military service does not, in itself, necessarily constitute enslavement.

Forced labour may also constitute a war crime when it occurs in the context of an armed conflict. Under international humanitarian law, civilians and detained persons must not be forced to perform labour in prohibited circumstances, including work directly connected to military operations or labour carried out under coercion.