



Incident 4 – Gu Dar Pyin Village, Buthidaung Township

The Gu Dar Pyin incident occurred between August 25 and 28, 2017. By the evening of August 25, some Muslims from Gu Dar Pyin had already begun to leave their village. While the disturbances were ongoing, all the villagers deserted the village for security. The majority of them sought refuge in neighboring villages, from where some traveled to Bangladesh. At present, about half of the Gu Dar Pyin villagers have returned. What follows are excerpts from the findings on events in Gu Dar Pyin village. This text is based on a total of 43 testimonies by 15 ethnic nationals and 28 Muslims who witnessed the events. These interviewees came from villages in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, namely, Gu Dar Pyin, Tha Yet Taung, Taung, and Kyauk Sar Taing ethnic village, and Hnget Pyaw Chaung ethnic village.

(a) Profile of Gu Dar Pyin Village

Gu Dar Pyin village, in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, is located about eight miles south of Buthidaung Town, on the Buthidaung-Ah Ngu Maw road. From Buthidaung to Ka Kyet Bet village there is a concrete road, after this it turns into a dirt road. During the period of heavy rains, only small four-wheel drive cars and motorbikes can use the road.

Gu Dar Pyin village Tract consists of four villages. Gu Dar Pyin, Tha Yet Taung and Gu Dar Pyin Taung (southern village)¹ villages are inhabited by Muslims. Kyauk Sar Taing village is an ethnic nationals' village. Although the Muslim-inhabited villages are designated as three separate villages, they are close to each other and sometimes the three are referred to collectively as Gu Dar Pyin village. Kyauk Sar Taing village is also close by, being only one mile west of Gu Dar Pyin village, at the foot of the Mayu mountains.

The whole village Tract sits in a plain between the Mayu mountain range and the Mayu river. The Buthidaung-Ah Ngu Maw road runs north to south through the village Tract, parallel with the Mayu mountain range. It takes only 45 minutes on foot to reach the base of the Mayu mountain from Gu Dar Pyin village. Most of the

¹ On the maps from the Myanmar Information Management Unit (MIMU) this village is simply referred to as Taung.

area of the village Tract is taken up by fields; agriculture is the main source of livelihoods. Those who do not own farms depend on the hills and forests of the Mayu mountain range for their livelihoods. The table below, shows the latest data on Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, according to Buthidaung Township's General Administration Department.

No.	village	Status of destruction		Houses		Families		Population	
		Completely destroyed	Partially destroyed	Past	Present	Past	Present	Past	Present
1	Gu Dar Pyin (Muslim)		✓	265	47	319	0	1910	0
2	Tha Yet Taung (Muslim)		✓	135	119	131	59	1279	1068
3	Taung (Muslim)		✓	48	12	49	0	350	0
4	Kyauk Sar Taing (Na Ta La) (Ethnics)	✓		81	81	81	81	377	377

(b) Statements of ethnic nationals from Kyauk Sar Taing and Hnget Pyaw Chaung villages

Statement 1

Only Rakhine and Khami ethnic nationals reside in Kyauk Sar Taing village. Currently, there are about 70 Khami and about 15 Rakhine households. There are three Muslim villages nearby – Gu Dar Pyin Ywama [main village], Gu Dar Pyin Taung [southern village], and to the north Tha Yet Taung. In the Muslim vernacular Tha Yet Taung village is called Dhoombar Phara.

I was in Kyauk Sar Taing village during the August 25, 2017, disturbances. I will tell what I know about what happened before the turmoil erupted and how events unfolded.

Prior to the 2017 upheaval, there was one incident in Kyauk Sar Taing village. I cannot recall the exact date of the incident right away. Relevant government departments might know the date. It after ARSA attacked the border guard police headquarters in Kyee Kan Pyin village, Maungdaw Township, in 2016. To give a brief account of the incident, two Khami ethnics, U Tun Thar Maung and U Aung Kyaw Sein, went finishing in the small streams along the Mayu mountain ranges' hidden caverns to the west of their village. At one place, some Muslims killed U Tun Thar Maung. U Aung Kyaw Sein was able to escape with only minor injuries.

The details of the incident were as follows. Both men had their breakfasts early in the morning and walked towards the Mayu mountain ranges in search of fish,

carrying lunch packs with them. As they passed through the caverns, they were so engrossed in their work that they did not notice they had entered Maungdaw Township. By the source of a stream, they met a Muslim, who called to them from a distance and told them not to come any further and that they would have to turn back as there were steep cliffs ahead. U Tun Thar Maung and U Aung Kyaw Sein stopped where they were and sat down to take a short rest. While they were resting, they opened their lunch packs and started to eat.

The Muslim shouted to some of his companions, "Hey guys, let's go back." Two more Muslims then came down to join him. One had a hatchet in his hands and the other was holding a long knife. Without saying anything, they started hacking the two men who were eating their meals. U Aung Kyaw Sein escaped, but U Tun Thar Maung received a cut to the neck and collapsed on the spot. U Aung Kyaw Sein took to his heels, the whole day and night, through the jungle, and reached Kyauk Sar Taing village around 5 a.m. He informed the Kyauk Sar Taing village Administrator, the Border Guard Police station in Kyauk Sar Taing, and Regiment 234 which was in Gu Dar Pyin village at that time. Our villagers also assembled to search for U Tun Thar Maung. However, we waited as the village Administrator and the police station had to report to the relevant higher authorities, and those authorities were checking the facts. There was no response on that day so we just waited. Similarly, the next day passed without any result. We were not able to start doing anything, as we were waiting for instructions from above. At this point, we villagers discussed the situation and decided to mobilize people ourselves. We mobilized 39 able-bodied men, including myself. The next day, taking U Aung Kyaw Sein as our guide, we entered the Mayu jungle in search of U Tun Thar Maung. No soldiers or police accompanied us. As we approached the place where we believe the incident had occurred, we left the stream bank, went along a hill path and climbed up a hill. Looking around we saw, not far away, that a space about the size of a volleyball court had been cleared, where there were also some huts. We also saw clothes hung out on bamboo poles. At that time, there were two different opinions among us, those who wanted to go and clear up the area and those who thought it was too dangerous to do so. I firmly said, whatever may happen, we should go and clear it up, then all agreed. As we approached the place, we shouted together, "Surround them, and don't let them escape! Shoot, shoot". We did this to make them think we had security forces accompanying us. Actually, we were only carrying knives and sticks. When we reached the clearing, there was no one to be seen. It seemed that they had run away. We found a series of huts, used as dormitories for about 20 to 30 people, cans of rice and oil, uniformed track suits (24 jackets and slacks), solar panels, batteries, and copies of the Koran. In front of the huts was a leveled area, where it appears military trainings were carried out. Coming down a bit from the covert camp, we found the butchered body of U Tun Thar Maung. There was no phone connection. We couldn't contact our village by phone, and were a long way from the village. We were in Maungdaw Township. Therefore, we decided not to go back to the village, but instead try to cut across towards Maungdaw. A little further

into Maungdaw Township, we were able to get an intermittent phone connection. The first person we contacted was the former village Administrator of Kine Gyi (Mro), a recently established village on the Maungdaw-Ah Ngu Maw jetty road. We told him what had happened, and told him to report it to the relevant authorities, saying that our group was coming to Kine Gyi village. Not long before, there had been an incident where six Mro villagers from Kine Gyi (Mro) who were engaged in shifting cultivation were brutally killed by ARSA. We took pictures of U Tun Thar Maung's dead body, but were unable to carry his body at that moment and so we left it there. The telephone connection was erratic throughout. Because of the Kine Gyi Administrator's report, the military came on trucks to Kine Gyi village and met with us as we were approaching the village. We showed them the pictures and recounted what we had seen and what had happened. The next day, a military platoon went with some of our villagers to the camp, picked up U Tun Thar Aung's body and sent it to Maungdaw hospital for a post-mortem. It was buried in Maungdaw. We heard that the military discovered and laid siege to other caverns where the ARSA had been hiding in the Mayu mountain range. The ARSA camp that we saw was reportedly a clandestine training camp; Muslim villagers were called to the camp in turn from each village Tract and given military training.

Before the incident, our relationship with Muslims from Gu Dar Pyin and other nearby areas was brotherly. We would sit together at teashops in the markets and would chat and drink with each other. We would go to their village, they would come to our village, and we would invite one another to attend weddings or donation ceremonies. But three or four months prior to the 2017 incident, the relationship gradually started changing. It started from the Muslim side. Intimacy diminished and some would even turn away from us. As the incident drew nearer, the Muslims' attitude towards us changed noticeably. The Muslims cut off not only personal relations with us, but, significantly, also interactions with the Union government's administrative machinery. At the same time, Muslims who were friendly with us told us quietly not to come to them, especially after dark. From about one month before the incident, they refused to collaborate (as they had in the past) even with official directives from the village Administrators. Those officially-appointed as In-Charges of Muslim villages² would openly turn down instructions [from the administrative hierarchy]. From that time onwards, normal relations between the ethnic nationals and Muslims were almost totally severed. We also had to take special care when we moved about. About two days before the incident, one of our Khami ethnic villagers called a Muslim friend from Gu Dar Pyin, who was a former customer of his and who owned a shop, and asked if he could come over to Gu Dar Pyin to buy betel nut, cigarettes, tea and other groceries that had run out in Kyauk Sar Taing. The Muslim friend replied, "You may come, but when you go back, you might not have your head attached". In Kyauk Sar Taing village, there is a

² In villages with no village Administrator, a Head of Ten Households or Head of Hundred Households is appointed the village In-Charge. This person has responsibility for the administration of the village.

Border Guard Police station headed by officer Zaw Min Tun. The officer called the government-appointed village In-Charge of Gu Dar Pyin village to tell him that he was going to come shopping for supplies. The Muslim In-Charge told him not to come, and said he would instead make arrangements to send the things that were needed. At that time, it can be said that the situation had already intensified. The tension came from the Muslims' side, and we were in their hands, considering the vast disparity in our populations and the location of our ethnic villages. We were helpless, having to suffer whatever the Muslims did to us.

Before the incident on August 25, the Border Guard Police were concerned about the situation, so the whole force from the Border Guard Police station in Ahr Kar Pyan village, just two miles away from Kyauk Sar Taing village, came to join the Kyauk Sar Taing police station. New information arrived at that time – a report that terrorists would attack, and besiege the Kyauk Sar Taing police station that night. The Kyauk Sar Taing police reportedly relayed the information to their area police officer. In response, they were told to join the area police station in Nyaung Chaung. On August 25, 2017, the members of the police force left for Nyaung Chaung. From about 5 p.m. that evening, Muslims from Gu Dar Pyin village started shouting threats, via loudhailer. Their rallying cries were so loud that the sound could be heard clearly from Kyauk Sar Taing village, which is separated from the Muslim villages by a hill. At that time, our villagers from Kyauk Sar Taing did not have anyone they could depend on, and so all fled to the hill in the western part of the village. Friends from other places were calling us to know what was going on in Kyauk Sar Taing. At that time, U Maung Kan Sein, our then village Tract Administrator was able to contact [Myanmar's Defence Services] Regiment 540 and ask for their help. The military was said to have replied that they would head towards us, and to stay calm and not worry. No help arrived from the military that night. Some of our men were watching from the hill to see whether the Muslims would come and attack Kyauk Sar Taing or not. The Muslims did not come. However, the sound of their threats kept being heard. Most of the villagers went back to our village. But two groups remained on the hill to monitor the situation. One group of three or four of us was between the eastern tip of the village and Gu Dar Pyin. The other group was led by U Maung Kyaw Hla. From the hill, one could clearly see Gu Dar Pyin and the adjoining plain. By 9 p.m. that night when we also came down from the hill and returned to the village, there was no trace of movement from the military. Soon after we arrived back in the village, probably around 10:30 or 11 p.m., a loud bomb explosion was heard. Although we could not see where it exploded, from the sound, it seemed that it was near the wooden bridge between Gu Dar Pyin and Tha Yet Taung. All the villagers started gathering at the monastery at the center of Kyauk Sar Taing village. I kept worrying the whole night until dawn. Phone lines were cut off, so no-one could be contacted anymore. When morning broke, I went outside to see the situation. At the bridge at the exit of Kyauk Sar Taing towards Gu Dar Pyin I was able to get a phone connection, so I called my brother-in-law from Hnget Pyaw Chaung village to ask for information. He

told me that the military arrived in their village the previous night, and from there had proceeded on towards Gu Dar Pyin during the night on 11 motorbikes. When they arrived at Gu Dar Pyin, the security forces were attacked, but did not suffer any casualties. Later, it came to be known that terrorists had mined the wooden bridge, and were hidden in groups in the paddy fields on the left and right sides of the bridge, were waiting to set off the mine and attack when the military approached. Once the soldiers came near the bridge, the attackers set off the mine. At the same time, about 300 terrorists who were hiding in the fields turned their flashlights on the soldiers and began attacking them. Reportedly, it was only then that the soldiers responded with gunfire. The attackers surrounded the soldiers and kept attacking until after midnight. The military then retreated to Hnget Pyaw Chaung. Early on the 26th, the next day, the soldiers came from Hnget Pyaw Chaung to Kyauk Sar Taing village and had their lunch here. That day, they didn't go anywhere, but stayed in Kyauk Sar Taing village. All the villagers from Gu Dar Pyin had fled since the battle on the night of the 25th. After having breakfast on the 27th, the soldiers left and headed in the direction of Gu Dar Pyin. There were no villagers left in Gu Dar Pyin village when the soldiers arrived there. The soldiers did not allow us to follow them. After they had left, I and some of the other villagers went up the Phayar hill on the eastern side of the village [Kyauk Sar Taing] and monitored the situation in Gu Dar Pyin. One of the higher ranking soldiers who had stayed in our village for awhile had asked for my phone number. He called and asked me about the situation in Gu Dar Pyin. At that time, we could see that a crowd of Muslims had past the bridge area, where the mine explosion and battle had occurred the previous night, and were entering the edge of Gu Dar Pyin village. I reported the situation back to the soldier. At that time, there was the sound of gunfire from the crowd. Later there was another battle with shootings between them. The Muslim crowd was large. From the edge of Gu Dar Pyin village, where the battle erupted, there were people along the road as far as Sein Hnyin Pyin. There were approximately 300 of them. Following the battles, there was smoke coming from the houses at the northern outer area of Gu Dar Pyin village. We didn't see who started the arson. Once the battles were over, troops from Battalion 99 again came to Kyauk Sar Taing village. They told us that whoever wanted to follow them could do so, so we accompanied the military to Gu Dar Pyin. When we reached Gu Dar Pyin, I saw with my own eyes a large number of mines laid by ARSA terrorists at the edge of Gu Dar Pyin village, near the bridge on the road leading to Sein Hnyin Pyin village.

I did not witness any killings. It is possible that some people were killed during the exchange of gunfire. We could also hear gunshots from the [Muslim] crowd. The sound of shots fired by terrorists and by the military is not the same. We could hear the difference while they were fighting with each other. I do not know the number of casualties. From what I saw, the battle took between 10 and 20 minutes. It could not be more than that. The mob carrying guns was coming down from the north towards Gu Dar Pyin village to attack the military. I haven't seen anything that could be described as Muslim ethnic cleansing. It doesn't exist. When the military arrived,

the villagers had taken flight. It is certain that there were lives lost due to the shooting by both sides when the mob was coming down. The mob included ARSA terrorists and their supporters and used guns for the attacks. We are sure of this because the sound of their gunfire was different from the military gunfire. Although they knew that the military was already in Gu Dar Pyin village, the ARSA terrorists came down with the mob from the north. Before the soldiers arrived in Gu Dar Pyin, all the villagers had already left. There is no possibility of committing rape in a village where there was no one left. I did not hear any reports about rape.

Regarding looting of Muslims' items by the ethnic villagers, at that time, the ethnic villagers' movements had been restricted for days and they were starving. In that situation, some ethnic minorities caught and ate the chickens that the Muslims left. I, myself, shot the chickens with slingshot and took them. A few things like old baskets and old punnets that they left might also have been taken. But I did not witness it.

Regarding the matter that Muslims were being driven out and had left their native places to flee to the other country, I can say that they never were chased away. They were not fleeing, they left of their own accord. They left noisily at night time with flashlights. Groups kept doing this [leaving] for by day and night for months after the incident. When a group leaves, there are usually about 300 people walking slowly, carrying big and small bundles. They were leaving in groups not only during the months following the incident, but even in the new year. I heard that they left, despite being told not to leave by the relevant authorities.

As a local and a native, I would like to say that there is a wide gap in the size of the populations of ethnic nationals and Muslims. In fact, we, the ethnic nationals, are the minority. Those who are being threatened, who are being killed, are not Muslims. The Muslims, and only the Muslims, have been consistently terrorizing, attacking and killing the ethnic nationals. Those who started creating this crisis of attacks, killings, and threats are ARSA and the local Muslims who support them. We do not mean all Muslims.

The military responded to the initial attacks by the ARSA terrorists and annihilated them. We should prosecute and denounce individuals and organizations from other countries who take the side of ARSA terrorists for inciting and provoking violent killings. In practice, the opposite has come to pass, and we are shocked and saddened by that. The military did not retaliate until the terrorists started firing and attacking. There was no other option left for the military than to retaliate in defense. If the military was serious in their counter-offensives, I would say that there would be no Muslims left living in the area. We are disgusted with the one-sided accusations.

Statement 2

In the past, the relationship between the Muslims and ethnic nationals in the area was cordial and peaceful. After the Kyee Kan Pyin incident in 2016, the Muslims' attitudes towards the nationals changed. The worst situation was when Tun Thar Maung and Aung Kyaw Sein, our villagers who were ethnic Khami, went fishing in the streams on the Mayu mountains to the west of the village. Tun Thar Maung, age 35, was killed and Aung Kyaw Sein fled back to the village wounded. When this incident was reported to the security forces, they replied that this was not within their jurisdiction. Two days after, 39 of us from our village went in search of Tun Thar Maung. In a jungle area, we unexpectedly discovered a terrorist hideout. They were not there anymore when we found the camp. If they had been, I presume, we would have suffered because we were only carrying knives and sticks and they, as fighters, would surely have had guns. In the camp, we also found bags of rice, oil cans, tracksuits and slingshots. They were not living in caves. They had built huts for accommodation. That camp is where, I assume, they had been giving military training to Muslims from both Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships. The paths towards the camp did not have any undergrowth, so one could assume that they had been well-used. Tun Thar Maung's body was recovered near that camp. Later, the military came, seized all the materials from the hideout, and carried Tun Thar Maung's dead body to Maungdaw.

Before the 2017 incident, Muslims from Gu Dar Pyin warned us not to go shopping there. We dared not go anywhere else either, but stayed put in the village. As there were no skilled doctors or nurses, Muslims, ethnic nationals, and the police would ask for my help in health matters. I would help them out as much as possible. Thus, I have a large number of friends. On the 25th, reports came in that ARSA terrorists had attacked a number of police stations. People were shocked and worried. During that time, the border guard force from Kyauk Sar Taing left for Nyaung Chaung, where their area police office was. I think it was on the 25th, around 5 p.m., when a mob of Muslims from Gu Dar Pyin were shouting rallying cries, which could be heard even from Kyauk Sar Taing. I then called my Muslim friends, whom I had treated before, one after another, and asked them what was happening in their village. They said they had already run away from Gu Dar Pyin. Some said that they were in Kan Da village, some in Kan Pyin village, and others in Hpon Nyo Leik village. They said they had already fled from their village before the bomb explosion. I couldn't ask them anything. I understood that they must have taken to their heels before anything happened, and that they must have known ahead of time that this was going to happen. When U Maung Kan Sein, the Kyauk Sar Taing village Administrator, called the village In-Charge from Gu Dar Pyin village, the Muslim village In-Charge replied that the situation was not good and that ARSA terrorists were going to come and attack Kyauk Sar Taing village. As soon as we received this information, all the villagers from Kyauk Sar Taing ran away into the jungle. I asked one villager, who was working in a field near the Nyaung Chaung area police office, to report to the authorities what was happening in Kyauk Sar Taing. He told me that

he himself had already reported to the area police office. He called me again to say that security forces were coming towards Gu Dar Pyin. At 11 p.m. that night, the sound of a huge bomb explosion at the edge of Gu Dar Pyin village was heard. We could also hear the sound of gunfire. We stayed the whole night in the jungle. We came back to the village in the morning. We returned, relieved, when we heard the news that the military was coming. During the following days, we could hear the sound of battles, but did not witness them. From our village, we could see smoke rising from Gu Dar Pyin village. We did not see who torched it. The military did not want us to follow them. They took only two of our villagers as guides. I did not see any killings. There could have been casualties because both sides were attacking each other. I do not know how many. I did not see ethnic nationals looting belongings owned by Muslim villagers.

A few days before the incident I went to Gu Dar Pyin village and treated a patient there. This patient told me that Muslims would not accept discrimination as they had in the past. He went on to say that they already had gardening forks, swords, and spears. They had manpower. The police had only 25 bullets each. Once they [the police] had run out of bullets, it would be easy to just chop them up, he concluded. After the attacks had occurred, I came to understand that the Muslims had been planning and were already prepared for these events.

Statement 3

The main problem was that during the 2014 census taking, they [the Muslims] demanded that their race be registered as 'Rohingya'. The fact that the government did not accede to their demands and did not recognize them as Rohingya, caused dissatisfaction and led them to do these things. We heard that terrorists had already stored food and other supplies on the hill near Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay and had provided military trainings. Quite often they executed Muslims, members of their own community, who were close to the government. They also murdered ethnic nationals whenever they had the chance. They had already infiltrated Muslim villages and clandestinely carried out military activities. The terrorists are known to have used children as human shields when clashes erupted after the bomb explosion at 10 p.m. on August 25. A Muslim, named Tawru, a Tha Yet Taung villager, was killed. We also heard that four or five persons from Gu Dar Pyin village had been killed. I did not witness this, though.

A military convoy arrived in Kyauk Sar Taing village on August 26. It is not true that there were mass killing of Muslims during the Gu Dar Pyin battle. The number of villagers from Gu Dar Pyin who died was only about eight. There were also about four or five from other Muslim villages who were killed, but it was not a mass killing. There was shooting from both sides and it is true that there were deaths and injuries, but it was not that many. Because the dead bodies were left just as they were, they became scattered due to wild dogs pulling them apart. This misled people into thinking that there were a huge number of deaths.

It was not that the military committed arson. While both sides were attacking each other, shooting by launchers started the fire. Fire could have spread due to the wind. One Mawlawi,³ who was crouching among the shrubs at the side of the road, suddenly stood up and cursed at the soldiers and tried to stab them with a sword, so the military shot and killed him. He was one of the supporters. What they call ARSA is in fact an armed group. There was no rape against women. All the villagers had already fled beforehand. Among those who attacked the village, only ARSA members remained. All Gu Dar Pyin, including a Mawlawi named Zaw Latt, had turned into ARSA members. He is now known to have arrived at a refugee camp in the other country. If they return, they would be arrested. When the military besieged their camp, computers and phones were confiscated. The military is known to have obtained information from those devices. People from Gu Dar Pyin village were included in the list of ARSA terrorists based on this data. The military obtained some records, including information about ARSA members carrying out military training. The military spent one night in our village, during which they showed me the pictures they acquired from the ARSA mountain camp. Showing me the pictures, they asked me, "Uncle, do you know this guy or this one?" I replied, "Yes, I know the villagers from Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay and the people from Gu Dar Pyin". The Myanmar's Defence Services carried out clearance operations after acquiring these pictures and other evidence.

There was not any torture. I did not hear about any. There were no arrests of people here. Buffalos and cows were left behind. I saw from afar that the cattle were being taken by ethnic nationals. Clothes and some other utensils, left behind on purpose by the Muslims, were carried away. No one got that much. Some Kalar⁴ who remained also took some of those things. The Muslims also took each other's possessions. I also saw people from Hpoe Khaung Chaung taking away things. As there were only a few ethnic nationals, we dared not walk around in areas where Muslims used to live. During that period, people were not able to buy food or supplies, so the goats and poultry left behind by the Muslims were consumed. Seven villagers were assigned to guard our village.

(c) Statements of Muslims from Gu Dar Pyin village

Statement 4

In Gu Dar Pyin Muslim village, Tha Yet Taung Muslim village, and Taung Muslim village, in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, there were about 1,500 Muslims, and in Kyauk Sar Taing Rakhine village and Hnget Pyaw Chaung Rakhine village, there were about 300 Rakhine. There is a Border Guard Police station in Kyauk Sar Taing.

I had opened a shop in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay, one mile from Gu Dar Pyin. At 4 p.m. on August 26, my wife called me from my home in Gu Dar Pyin. She said, without a

³A Muslim religious leader.

⁴A derogatory term used for Muslims

pause, that there was a large gathering in Gu Dar Pyin and that they were all shouting and hollering, that no-one knew where they had come, that she was scared and did not know what to do, and that she was concerned about where I was. Just by listening to her voice, I knew that she was terribly frightened. I closed my shop after telling her that I would return home soon, and to remain cautious. It was about 5 p.m. I came back on my motorbike along the main road. near Gu Dar Pyin village, I met face-to-face with a Muslim mob holding weapons, such as sticks, spears, swords and daggers. They were not from Gu Dar Pyin. This mob was coming from the Gu Dar Pyin area towards Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay as I was coming back from Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay to Gu Dar Pyin. They didn't ask me anything, nor did I ask them anything. Gu Dar Pyin is south of Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay. Back in the village, I asked my friends in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay what was happening, and learnt from them that they [the mob] had come from neighboring villages (to the north). As I had already heard reports about attacks, deaths, and arson in other places on August 25, I became worried and wondered whether events in Gu Dar Pyin would turn out like in the other villages if security forces came to Gu Dar Pyin, and whether other groups would come and attack the village. Taking a lesson from the incidents that I had already heard about, all my family members and I went to another village, which we considered safer. Like us, other villagers also left. We left the village not because someone told us to do so, or kicked us out. We left of our own volition, lest our lives should be endangered. The village where we sought shelter and stayed is not far from our own. It was Kan Pyin village, in Hpoe Khaung Chaung village Tract, which is divided from Gu Dar Pyin by a creek. There are fields near Kan Pyin village that are owned by Gu Dar Pyin villagers. From Kan Pyin, one can see Gu Dar Pyin.

At about 2:30 p.m. on August 28, everyone in Kan Pyin could see a civilian crowd heading from the north towards Gu Dar Pyin village. At that time, soldiers had already taken up positions inside Gu Dar Pyin village. After about half an hour, there were incessant sounds of bomb blasts around the northern exit of Gu Dar Pyin village. There was a clash at the edge of the village between the crowd, who were coming from the north, and the soldiers inside the village. While the battle was ongoing, some houses in the northern part of the village erupted in a blaze of fire. All these happenings were clearly seen by us from Kan Pyin village. We didn't see who started the fires, though. We could only see the blaze from Kan Pyin.

About four or five days after the incident, I went back to see the situation in Gu Dar Pyin, and I saw dead bodies scattered here and there in the fields. Some bodies were covered with earth, but with legs and heads sticking out. They were not buried, just covered with earth. Who did that, I do not know. Since I saw them from a distance, I cannot say whether they died of gunshots or knife wounds. At that time, I saw about 12 dead bodies. I do not know how many bodies were buried. Later, I came to know that 17 persons from Gu Dar Pyin village Tract were killed. I do not know how many of those from other villages were killed. I think those who were killed perished during the battle. But we did not see people being killed.

I do not know and did not see whether things were being looted or taken away. Since everything was burnt, I don't think there would have been anything left to be collected. I cannot also say who caused the fires, because I didn't see it. Regarding rape, to be frank, it would be impossible in that circumstance. There wasn't anyone left to be raped, as all the villagers had already fled from the village before the turmoil. It is impossible.

During the incident, the tactical commander of a battalion based in Buthidaung gave us a lot of assistance. We were able to come back to the village, and were permitted to share and live in the remaining 59 houses that were not burnt down. The Union government is also constructing new houses. They are individual houses, each measuring 30 foot x 40 foot, with zinc roofs, plied bamboo walls, and standing above the ground. One hundred and nineteen houses have already been built. Initially, there were about 300 households. About 200 households have fled to Bangladesh. Some of my relatives also accompanied them. We have to survive with whatever assistance we get. Since we are now living in an internally displaced persons' camp, we have to suffer all kinds of weather conditions. Job opportunities are only available for some people, and not everyone secures a job.

Statement 5

If I have to give an account of what happened on that day – August 25, 2017, it was a Friday and I heard the report that ARSA terrorists had simultaneously attacked 25 locations. On Friday morning, I went to Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village market, one mile north of Gu Dar Pyin. I heard from the radio that the ARSA had attacked 30 police stations. People were gathering in the market and seemed to be agitated. I sensed the situation was not good, and so headed home from the market. I didn't go anywhere the whole day. I stayed home and monitored the situation. On the morning of the next day, Saturday, a police officer from Gu Dar Pyin village Tract's Kyauk Sar Taing village police outpost called me to ask for help in arranging food supplies for them, as they had run out. During those days, police force members were ordered not to leave their posts. As the village In-Charge, I felt I was duty bound to help them out of these hardships. I asked one assistant to go to the market to buy some supplies and send them to the police outpost. At 10 a.m. on that day, a group of police came out of the outpost. The police officer called me again, asking my help in repairing a generator. I called one mechanic and fixed his generator. As the village In-Charge, I was duty bound to help them and protect them. At about 3:30 a.m., 18 of them [the police] from both Kyauk Sar Taing police outpost and Kin Chaung village Tract's Arkar Pyan (Khami) village police outpost came out and again called me for help. They were asking me to urgently arrange for a big motorboat or a motor car. They said they had to go to the area office, which is in Nyaung Chaung. I asked one motorboat owner for help, he obliged by offering his boat, but said that, as the water level was high, the boat would not be able to pass under the bridge. The police officer asked me to at least arrange for motorbikes for their trip to Nyaung Chaung. So, I helped with that.

After the police had left, about 30 Muslim civilians, carrying sticks and knives, entered the village from the north. I asked others who they were, and they told me that they were ARSA terrorists. There were no women in the group, but there were children, youths, and adults. They were not from Gu Dar Pyin, and I did not know where they came from. At that time, there was a call from Nyaung Chaung [police] area office, asking me to confirm the news that they had received about ARSA terrorists entering Gu Dar Pyin village. I replied that I was not sure whether they were ARSA terrorists or not, but that there was a group of about 30 people, carrying sticks and knives. After that, out of fear, I tried to stay away from them. I did not see these people carrying guns. This was about 4 p.m. on Saturday, the 26th. As I was responsible for the village, I reported the situation to the authorities. At 11 p.m. that night, as I was preparing to go to sleep, security forces starting shooting north of the village, on the road from the plain to Gu Dar Pyin, between Gu Dar Pyin and Zayat valley. The whole village woke up in shock. There was incessant shooting until 2 a.m. At about 3 a.m. I and my family took a long boat and crossed over to Hpoe Khaung Chaung village Tract's Kan Pyin village on the other bank of the creek. It was after 5 a.m. when we got there. I missed sleep that night. Almost all the villagers from Gu Dar Pyin left their houses just as they were and fled to Kan Pyin to avoid getting caught up in events. As it was night time, I did not know the strength of the security forces. They were firing gunshots.

On August 27, I heard that the security forces had arrived in Kyauk Sar Taing and Hnget Pyaw Chaung villages. When they heard the gunshots, the scared villagers fled to Hpoe Khaung Chaung, Kan Pyin, and Kan Da villages. Only about five men were left to guard the village. I came back to check out the village on the 28th. I could not enter my house, as a family member had locked it. I observed it from the outside, gave encouragement to the group left behind as guards, and went back to my family, arriving back in Kan Pyin at about 1 p.m. Around 3:30 or 4 p.m., many gunshots were heard from Gu Dar Pyin village. Those who were guarding the village fled. The military was already in the village at that time. From Kan Pyin village, we could see clearly one house after another burning in Gu Dar Pyin village. But I could not tell who set the fire, because I could not see that. Whether it was the ARSA fighters or some others, I do not know. At that time, the military was inside the village. As Kan Pyin village is so close to Gu Dar Pyin, with only a small creek dividing the two, it was getting unsafe to be there. I hired a long boat at about 5 p.m. that day, and moved to Say Oe Kya village. We stayed there for about a week before moving on to Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village. From there, I went back again to check out Gu Dar Pyin, and saw that most of the houses in the village had burnt down, including my house. There were 310 houses that were burnt down, with 59 remaining. I did not see who caused the arson, but the fire broke out after gunshots were heard.

There were deaths during the turmoil. Dead bodies were seen for quite some time lying on the open ground. villagers from Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay and Gu Dar Pyin were among those who died. I do not know how many people from other villages died.

According to the data we obtained, there were a total of 19 deaths – 15 villagers from Gu Dar Pyin and four from Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay. One woman and three or four children were among the dead from Gu Dar Pyin. I saw the dead bodies myself. One week after the incident, when I came back to the village to check out the situation, the dead bodies were still lying in the open on the grass. I came to know the correct figure, because I had to make a list to be sent to higher authorities. They all died of gunshot wounds.

The villagers were not told by anyone to leave. They left of their own accord, after being scared and hearing reports from other places. The majority fled to villages in Hpoe Khaung Chaung village Tract. Now, people are coming back. When a Major-General visited Buthidaung battalion, he gave us permission to stay in the remaining 59 houses, as we had requested. The government is building individual houses, and will resettle people, once they are done with the construction. Some people led to Bangladesh. In the past, there were 3,984 Muslims in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, but now there are about 2,000. Some of my relatives are among those who fled. I have phone contact with them. They wish to come back, as their situation is not good.

Statement 6

I am a native of Gu Dar Pyin. My house is situated in the middle of Gu Dar Pyin. I was a clerk at the General Administration Department, but retired from government employment with a full pension on September 11, 2019. I was assigned to clerical duties in the Gu Dar Pyin village Tract office for over six years. I am now a village elder of Gu Dar Pyin. There is an affiliated high school in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village, one mile distance from Gu Dar Pyin. I worked as the general secretary of the school's administrative committee for 22 years. I ceased doing this work after the 2012 turmoil. At present, I am the chairman of Gu Dar Pyin Middle School's executive work committee.

In the past, there were over 500 houses in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, but about 300 houses were burnt down during the disturbances. Only Gu Dar Pyin village was in flames. Fifty-nine houses remain which were not touched by the fire. Seventeen houses were also razed in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract's Tha Yet Taung village.

I want to give an account of what I know about the Gu Dar Pyin incident. All the incidents in this region began on August 25, 2017. There was a Border Guard Police outpost commanded by Zaw Min Tun in Gu Dar Pyin. Because of worsening conditions, the officer in command of the police for the area recalled police force members from Gu Dar Pyin and Ahr Kar Pyan Ka Mway to Nyaung Chaung on August 26. It was reported that people had gathered and were in an uproar in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village. We also heard that security forces were coming in from Nyaung Chaung, which is to the south. I had already been identified as a government lackey and threatened by the ARSA fighters and supporters. I was worried about the way the situation was developing. Right from the beginning of the armed rebellion against the government, I had explained to the village elders and

the Mawlawis that these activities would not succeed, considering local and international conditions; that it was very dangerous; that the best thing is to try to live in harmony with one's surroundings; that it is important for minorities to know how to live in harmony, as can be seen from global happenings; that the 2012 Maungdaw acts were terribly wrong; and that I hoped these mistakes would not be repeated. All of these leaders came to agree with me. Some villagers, including those with master's degrees and university graduates, shared my views. The Mawlawis and the educated totally understood the risks. Therefore, I became a target of the ARSA. Across the whole region, even those who were leading the terrorists were not educated. They were inciting ignorant villagers. But those who are educated did not wish to listen to them. The terrorists did not even have sufficient arms. They mainly carried sticks and knives. On the night of the 26th, an ARSA leader by the name of Amin called and threatened me again. Being concerned by this, I fled with my family to Hpoe Khaung Chaung the same night. Five minutes later, we could hear the sound of bomb blasts, detonated by ARSA terrorists in Gu Dar Pyin village. Only later, did I come to know that they were not real effective bombs but, instead, bottles filled with gasoline, which were ignited and thrown to create loud blasts and fire. These sounds came from shooting with the security forces, who were already in Gu Dar Pyin. There were no casualties. Scared, the whole village fled towards Hpoe Khaung Chaung. The time was around 9 or 9:30 p.m. on the 26th. Mines were laid on the road, at the end of the bridge. Additional troops arrived from the south on the 27th. On the 28th, I sent my two sons back to the village to bring our clothes. Like us, other villagers were also coming back to get necessary clothes and supplies. My sons told me that, once they heard the military was moving in from the south, all those who were in the village fled back to Hpoe Khaung Chaung village. Hpoe Khaung Chaung and Gu Dar Pyin villages are only separated by a small creek, and one can see from one village to the other. My house is a two-story building located in the center of Gu Dar Pyin village. I could see it even from Hpoe Khaung Chaung village. About 1 p.m. that day, fire started in Gu Dar Pyin village. At about 4:30 p.m., I could see, from afar, my house in flames. I could see it because it was a two-storied building. I did not see who set it on fire.

When it was reported that security forces would be carrying out clearance operations in Hpoe Khaung Chaung village, which is only separated from Gu Dar Pyin village by a small creek, my family and I once again hired a long boat, and went to Say Oe Kya village. At that time, the General Administrator from Buthidaung called one of my seniors, who told me to come to Buthidaung, so I left for Buthidaung from Say Oe Kya. About a week later, the [police] area office called me to tell me that I should be the interpreter for the area commander when he visited Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay. I had acted as an interpreter for them in the past. I saw that there were also some highly respected Muslims from Buthidaung with him. The area commander and the distinguished Muslims all spoke during the visit. The military was also there. I heard that the security forces involved in the Gu Dar Pyin village

incident were from the Minbya regimental column. During the battle, the security forces used different types of firearms.

I could see that many Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay villagers were among the group of ARSA terrorists. At first I could not hear the sound of small firearms. But we heard that the ARSA terrorists had two small guns with them. They used these two firearms against the security forces. Later, we heard the sound of large firearms, which were used by the security forces, four or five times. At that time, I did not know that there were reports of deaths. Only later, when I went back to check out the situation did I find some dead bodies scattered in the fields. I also saw three places where they were said to have been buried. The bodies were not exhumed.

To be frank, the ARSA terrorist group first created this crisis. The military had carried out clearance operations, in the past, against clandestine camps for military training in the Mayu mountain range, and there were incidents where three or four ARSA terrorists died during the battles. Later on, they [the ARSA terrorists] tried to organize ignorant Muslim villagers from Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships, and threatened or killed those who did not follow them, those who opposed them, and those they considered were close to the government. About four months before this incident, they slaughtered a temporary Head of Hundred Households from Gu Dar Pyin village. Although exact figures were not available, about 20 people were thought to have been slaughtered in Buthidaung Township. Before retirement, I frequently witnessed the Township General Administration Department offering assistance to the families of those who were killed. The terrorists do not like those who are educated or have a wide perspective. To tell the truth, during the Gu Dar Pyin incident, the ARSA attack was led by an illiterate villager from Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village, with ignorant people as his followers

Statement 7 (a Mawlawi teacher)

I am a native of Gu Dar Pyin. At 4 p.m. on August 26, 2017, I got a call from the Gu Dar Pyin village In-Charge. A police officer from Kyauk Sar Taing Police Outpost wanted to hire motorbikes for him and his group to go to Nyaung Chaung. The village In-Charge arranged ten motorbikes, and the police force members from Kyauk Sar Taing police outpost went to Nyaung Chaung. At 10 p.m., my son-in-law from Nyaung Chaung called and told me to be on my guard as ten motorbikes from Nyaung Chaung had begun to head towards Gu Dar Pyin. He did not mention whether they were the security forces or the Border Guard Police. I gathered all my family members and told them to stay inside and not leave the house. I heard the sound of an explosion at a military camp, located between Gu Dar Pyin and Tha Yet Taung villages. With motorbikes hired from Gu Dar Pyin, the security forces and the Border Guard Police had joined together and had a combined manpower of over 20. As soon as we heard the explosion, all of our family members fled to Kan Pyin village, on the other bank of the creek. We reached there at about 3 a.m. Gu Dar Pyin and Kan Pyin are separated by a creek, and we took a long boat to cross it. The

trip generally takes about half an hour. I came back once to Gu Dar Pyin, at about 3 p.m. on the 28th, to collect necessary supplies and household items. Except for one or two people who were left to guard the village, all the others had gone. At that time, some villagers called me to report that security forces had come from the west and the south and had surrounded the village. And so, right away, I went back to Kan Pyin on the other side of the creek.

I witnessed the torching of the village. Rakhine were also involved. My house is by the side of the creek. The creek is not that wide. From the other side, one can see everything. From a distance, I could see about 20 soldiers sitting on a boat jetty. I could not tell whether Border Guard Police were included in the group or not. I watched as the Rakhine set fire to the houses with torches, while the soldiers were firing launchers to start fires. Rakhine went into the houses that were in between and which had not caught fire, setting them alight with gasoline-soaked straw. The Rakhine were from Hnget Pyaw Chaung village. I could tell they were Rakhine, because they are from the same area and their faces were recognizable. Besides, the soldiers were wearing uniforms, while the Rakhine were dressed in T-shirts and short pants. The soldiers were only firing their launchers. They were firing many times. The arson, which began around 3 p.m. on the 28th, went on until 5 or 6 p.m.

The Rakhine removed and took away all the household items, such as rice, chilies, pots and pans, tables and chairs, settees, etc. from my house and other houses in Gu Dar Pyin. I heard that my settee is now at former Gu Dar Pyin Administrator Maung Kan Sein's house in Kyauk Sar Taing. Some of the materials were sold off and some were kept for their own use. Many villagers, including me, saw things being carried away as we watched, while sitting at the edge of the bank.

I did not see security forces executing people. But I saw dead bodies. I saw burial sites in three or four different places. Some of the corpses were left in the fields. At one place, there were about 15 dead bodies. A total of about 60 must have perished. They were not only from Gu Dar Pyin village. There were also some from nearby villages, Hpoe Khaung Chaung, Sein Hnyin PyarZay and Tha Yet Taung. I do not know the exact number. I saw them about one and a half months after the disturbances, when I came back to Gu Dar Pyin. By that point only skeletons were left in some cases. They could be seen in the fields, under the bridge, and on roadsides. No one had cleared them away. The government is building new 30 foot x 40 foot houses on the pile of bones where the dead bodies are buried. Those who formerly owned large yards, now will not own as large a compound as before. The compounds are only about 40 foot square. The new dwellings are being built under a contract system, with zinc roofs, plied bamboo strip walls and wooden pillars. They sit directly on the ground. There is a toilet included, close to the main house.

Statement 8

At 8 a.m. on August 26, 2017, while we were at our home in Gu Dar Pyin, there was a call, telling us to be careful as [the police] had left by motorbikes from Nyaung

Chaung area [police] office. So, we were on our guard. At about midnight, we started hearing sounds of gunfire from the bridge area. We didn't know who was shooting whom. We were terrified because of the sound of gunfire. We fled from the village with some bundles which we had urgently packed. There's a small creek on the eastern side of the village, which we crossed and went to Kan Pyin village. Our house is in the middle of the village. As soon as we heard the gunshots, we rushed out of our house, towards the east, going between the other houses. We didn't have time to look around and see what was happening. We slept the night in Kan Pyin village. We didn't have a chance to bring necessities as we had to rush out of the house. The next day, we came back to our village to take those things, but halfway there, we saw that houses were being torched. On the way, we met with some of our fellow villagers who were fleeing. They told us not to go any further, as the village had been surrounded. So we were not able to go further. As we looked back, we could see soldiers firing with launchers and Rakhine using torches to start fires. We could recognize them, as the soldiers were wearing their uniforms and the civilians their ordinary clothes. People from both villages could see each other, as we were only separated by a small creek. It would be about 100 yards distance. Our house was one of those that was set on fire. On that day, we moved to Hpon Nyo Leik village, which was further away than Kan Pyin. We took refuge in Hpon Nyo Leik for about two months. Later, we were allowed to come back and stay in our village, so we built a hut on the site of our former house. While we were sheltering away from the village, I came back once to see the situation in our village. At that time, I saw many dead bodies. Some were decomposed, and some were even showing their skeletons. I also saw pits where many were buried together. These places were covered with trash. If the trash is removed, I think we could find human bones. Some of the pits now have toilets built above them for the new housing. Since the bodies were not carefully buried, I could see some body parts jutting out. The dead bodies in the fields were just left, without being buried, and we could see them turning into skeletons.

[NOTE: Investigation team members went to check out the locations of the pits supposedly used for disposing of dead bodies. Since a couple of years have past, there were not significant, visible signs that bodies were buried there. Gu Dar Pyin village elders took team members around, and they saw a pit, supposed to be where dead bodies were disposed of, being used as a toilet pit for new housing built under the government's plan. Coincidentally, one of those responsible for the construction of the new housing was supervising the building work nearby. When asked by team members whether he had seen any bones while digging the pit for the toilet, he replied that he had not.]

Statement 9

I am a native of Gu Dar Pyin. My house is at the side of the main road. The Gu Dar Pyin turmoil occurred near my house.

If I have to give an account of what I saw, at a few minutes past 10 a.m. on August 26, 2017, a security force, thought to be the Border Guard Police, entered Gu Dar Pyin village from the south, along the main road on ten motorbikes. Wishing to know where they were headed, I watched the police force from my house. At the northern exit of the village, there is a bridge between Gu Dar Pyin and Tha Yet Taung villages. When the Border Guard Police reached the bridge, the sound of a bomb explosion could be heard. I think, it was around 10:30 a.m. At the same time, there was the sound of small firearms being fired several times. I realized that there was a battle. The police and the ARSA group were shooting each other for about two hours. It happened approximately two furlongs from my house. Being horrified, I took my daughters by their hands and tried to avoid the situation by going to the creek on the east side of the village. Some other villagers had also arrived there. There were incessant sound of gunfire. Being worried, we crossed the creek on a long boat and took shelter in Hpoe Khaung Chaung village Tract's Kan Pyin village, on the other side of the creek. Like our family, the whole village had to take flight. We stayed in Kan Pyin on the 27th. Nothing unusual happened that day. At about 12:30 p.m. the next day, the 28th, together with some of our fellow villagers, we went back to check on our houses. We crossed the creek, and tried to monitor the situation from near the edge of the creek. I did not dare to go to my house at first, as it was at the side of the main road. At that time, news came in that the soldiers had entered the village. We were sharing the information through our phones. At that time, a large number of our race (Muslims) were headed into Gu Dar Pyin village from the north. I could not see whether or not our villagers were among them. I could only see people from other villages. There were at least a thousand people. As I was at a distance, I could not discern what kind of weapons they were carrying. The military was coming in from the western and southern parts of the village. At that time, the battle erupted, and a lot of gunfire could be heard. I and some of the other villagers were still by the creek on the edge of Gu Dar Pyin village at this point. At that moment, houses in Gu Dar Pyin village started to catch fire. I saw with my own eyes the start of the fire. I could also see my house on fire. But I didn't see who started the fires. The soldiers were in our village. We came back to Kan Pyin village. In my mind, I thought Kan Pyin village was no longer safe, and so I left Kan Pyin with my family and took refuge at our relatives' place in Doe Tan village, Wa Ya Kyun village Tract. After staying in Doe Tan village for about a month, I took my family members to Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village. My 90-year old mother lives in that village. She was still living, but her memory is not good anymore. We stayed in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay until the end of the month, and then came back to Gu Dar Pyin, bringing along my elderly mother. It had been one and a half to two months [since the incident] when we returned to Gu Dar Pyin village. When I arrived back, I could only see dead bodies as heaps of bones. There were no corpse left in their original state. There were also skulls in my field. Whose bones they were or which village they came from, I could not say. Later, I came to know that among the dead were about six people from Gu Dar Pyin village. Among them were a 65-year old woman, a husband and wife of around 60, and young men.

There were a total of 16 deaths in Gu Dar Pyin village Tract, including 11 from the neighboring Tha Yet Taung village. Others were from some other villages. How they died, or who massacred them, I did not see.

Before the fire, there were about 380 houses in our village. Afterwards, there were 59 houses that remained un-burnt. Since my house was burnt down in the fire, I am staying on a temporary basis in one of those that were left. The owner has fled to Bangladesh. Fewer than 20 of the families who own the un-burnt houses stayed and did not flee to Bangladesh. The other houses are now occupied by some of our villagers. There are only about 100 families out of the whole village that did not flee to the other country. The government is constructing new housings. Each family would get a 15 foot x 21 foot plied bamboo strips-walled, zinc-roofed house, built with poles on the ground in a 40 foot x 40 foot compound. In the past, each house was about 100 square foot. No-one wants to live in the new housing. There is no fencing, and since the houses are close to each other, it's hard to even relieve oneself. If possible, we would wish to be allowed to stay in our former places.

Statement 10

I am a native of Gu Dar Pyin, and I take whatever work is available. I do not remember the exact time and dates of the Gu Dar Pyin turmoil. I can only say approximately. As far as I can remember, at about 9:30 a.m. on Sunday, August 27, 2017, a group, whether it was the security forces or the Border Guard Police I do not know, were travelling from the south to the north on Gu Dar Pyin village main road, on 11 motorbikes. As they reached the northern end of the village, a loud bomb explosion was heard. This was followed by the sound of incessant gunfire. I heard from others that there was a battle going on at the village end. The sound of gunshots could be heard non-stop for about three hours. Although we were scared, we just stayed put in our house. At dawn, we crossed the creek on the east side of Gu Dar Pyin, and made a run for Kan Pyin village, which is on the other side of the creek. I did not see who was shooting whom. The battle was going on only at the village end. On the next day, August 28, there was calm and nothing happened. The next day, on August 29, one could see Gu Dar Pyin village on fire from Kan Pyin village. But I didn't see who or how it was started. We could only see the security forces coming in from the south. My house was a long way inside the village, and it was not burnt down. I stayed only three days in Kan Pyin village, and then moved to my relatives in Ah Twin Hnget Thay village. I stayed there for nine days, after which I moved again, to Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village, which is close to Gu Dar Pyin. About 50 households in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village market area and the back area of the market were also burnt down. Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay village is a Muslim village. Generally, there was fire in villages where clashes occurred and not in those where it didn't. There was fire in Gu Dar Pyin because of the battle, but nothing happened to other Muslim villages, close to Gu Dar Pyin.

Statement 11 (a rice mill owner and a farmer)

I heard the sound of gunshots in Tha Yet Taung at about 11 a.m. on August 26, 2017. At around midnight, I sent my family to Hpoe Khaung Chaung. I came back to the village in the early morning. No deaths were seen in that incident. The military column came into the village at about 2 p.m. on the 28th. Three houses were set on fire at about 11 a.m. on September 1, 2017. The arson was carried out using bamboo and tinder. In our village, 59 households were left. I had 4,200 bags of paddy and 40 bags of rice. They took away the rice and 26 maung of chilies. One Maung is 23 Viss.⁵ I do not know who took them. I don't know who took them. Twenty-six buffalos and cows were gone. It was mostly buffalos and cows which were taken. Soldiers from Kyauk Sar Taing military killed people from the village and went away. There were people from Kyauk Sar Taing, but not familiar faces. On the 28th, between 2 p.m. and 6 p.m., they shot and beheaded over 200 people in front of the school. There were also ethnic nationals with the soldiers. They numbered about a hundred. It could be seen from Pazun Kan, where most of the Gu Dar Pyin villagers were hiding. It is estimated that nine people from Gu Dar Pyin died.

A list of those who died from my village are:

- 1) Khaw Barn, son of Amir Hussein, age 65
- 2) Swaydhar Khartu, son of Islam (Ji), age 60
- 3) Mamatel Alam, son of Swaytar Sabit, age 62 (approx.)
- 4) Anit, son of Swaytu Saung, age 28 (approx.)
- 5) Nur Harkim, son of Nur Hussein, age 14 (approx.)
- 6) Sway Tulamein
- 7) Saddam Hussein, son of Label Hussein, age 15 (approx.)
- 8) Khite Hussein

Statement 12 (a motorbike driver)

While I was preparing to have a meal with my brother, the military entered our village, and so we both fled. When we arrived in Tha Yet Taung, I lost track of my brother. After about three days, I tried to look for my brother, but instead saw his body cut in the neck. At about 10 a.m. we discovered four burial pits with 20-dead bodies in each and around 100 to 200 corpses. I saw seven people from my village and others from Tha Yet Taung village among the dead. Although I did not witness houses being burnt, I saw a total of ten military and Rakhine nationals where the fire was burning. I do not know which village the Rakhine were from. I did not see lootings or rape cases.

⁵ One viss is about 1.6 kgs or three and a half pounds. A maung is around 36.8 kgs/83lbs, making the total quantity of goods that the interviewee lost around 957kgs or 49,634lbs.

Statement 13 (a medicine store owner)

I heard the sound of a bomb explosion at midnight on August 26, 2017, when the Border Guard Police, who were coming to our village, arrived at the bridge. It was followed by shouts and gunfire. About three days later, on the 28th, at 1 p.m., three military columns arrived. They came from both east and west. When we saw them torturing Kofi Ahmed and his wife, we crossed over the creek to the other side to Tha Yet Taung. After staying for one month in Hpoe Khaung Chaung, then in Pyinshay Alaivillage,⁶ in Sein Hnyin Pyar village Tract for about a month and a half, I came back, rebuilt my house in its original place and lived there. This was after the government told us to come back to our village. Out of a total of 350 houses in the village, about 300 had burnt down. I did not see who carried out the arson. I heard from elders that about 400 people were killed when the military opened fire. People fled to Bangladesh as they were afraid that the government would detain them. Elderly people left for the other country only in the middle of October. The military was just defeating the evil people who had infiltrated the village. Except for Kofi Ahmed and his wife, no torture was committed. I did not hear about any rape cases. All that I possessed was lost in the fire.

Although on the initial day of the incident, there were no deaths among the villagers, there were casualties when the military opened fire on people, who had fled during the incident, and who came back to the village, and when the soldiers carried out the arson. I say 'soldiers' because we saw from the other side of the creek people with camouflage or green clothes, and ethnic nationals following them, each with a stick in hand. During the incident in Gu Dar Pyin, a total of six persons were killed, three who were seniors (around 60 years old), one 40-year old, and two 14-year old teens.

Statement 14 (a woman)

I think when the military arrived on August 25, they opened fire, detained people, and raped women. We were watching from a hideout. Some women were also taken away. We do not know who they were. We were scared, and so we fled when the military came. We went from village to village, and experienced a lot of trouble, as there was no one to receive us.

Statement 15 (a 40-year old woman, whose husband was killed)

I found out that my husband was killed while he was working in his paddy field only four days after it happened, when the burial site of his dead body was located. I had to escape to another village. Not only my house was burnt down, all my possessions, including the cattle, were also taken away.

⁶ This is an alternative name for Kan Pyin village.

Statement 16 (a woman)

My daughter who lived in Nyaung Chaung told me to be cautious as the police were coming on motorbikes. After hearing a loud bomb explosion and gunfire, we went and hid in a spacious house. Later, we crossed the creek, and went to stay at my daughter's place in Nyaung Chaung. My elderly mother died in Nyaung Chaung, after the difficult journey, during which she had to be hidden and carried by someone. I later went to Wa Ya Kyun. Since that village did not accept me, I had to go and take refuge in Thein Taung, where I stayed for about a week. I came back and stayed about a month in Sintar Malar on the other side. We came back when we were told that we could come back and stay in groups in the houses that had not been burnt. I only know about the clashes, and not about killings or arson.

Statement 17

Although the sound of explosions could be heard on August 25, there were no problems on that day. We took to our heels when the military came in on the 26th. Once they were here, the military torched my daughter's house. We gathered together and hid in the jungle. When we came back to our village after about 15 days, we saw dead bodies. There were about three or four locations where the dead bodies were buried. The military was known to have buried them. As the corpses had become decomposed, it was impossible to identify them.

Statement 18

At midnight on the day of the incident, a group of motorbikes came from Nyaung Chaung, after which we heard the sound of a bomb explosion and gunfire from both sides. We fled to Kaing village at 3:30 a.m. On our return trip to Gu Dar Pyin, we saw the military, dressed in black and carrying arms, and ethnic nationals starting fires. On the road to Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay, we saw six dead bodies, five men and one woman.

Statement 19 (witness who lives in southern Gu Dar Pyin and was an authority at the local market as well as owning ten acres of paddy fields)

At 11:30 p.m. on August 26, 2017, there was a bomb explosion. This was followed by a battle at 2 a.m., which lasted for half an hour. We ran to Hpar WutChaung. Although I heard that there were 100 casualties, only five people from Gu Dar Pyin died.

Statement 20

On the second day after the Gu Dar Pyin incident, people came in from both sides to Zeya Taung. There was the military on one side. The other side were carrying sticks and knives. I do not remember the date. The clashes occurred between 3 and 5 p.m. A large number of the dead were known to have been buried in pits in Gu Dar Pyin. The military torched the village, while Mro and Rakhine ethnic nationals took away all the materials from Katgyi Taungvillage by cars. Out of 200 households in

Zeya Taung, 17 had burnt down. At 4 p.m. on August 25, when the soldiers came into the village, we started to take flight. My son was injured by a gunshot. It was not a battle between two sides. It was only the military that came in and opened fire using launchers, which set fire to the houses. Ethnic nationals accompanied them and took away all the belongings left behind. When we came back to the village, we saw skeletal bones in the pits.

Statement 21

We fled to Hpoe Khaung Chaung village Tract, crossing the creek, after the Border Guard Police or the military, we are not certain which, entered from the southern side of the village on August 26. After they entered the village there was a loud explosion. As we did not hear any more occurrences, we came back to our homes on the 28th. About half an hour later, we heard that the military was coming from the south, and we had to cross the creek again to hide. We saw the military coming, but we did not witness the carrying out of the arson.

Statement 22

On August 26, 2017, an explosion was heard at the bridge between Tha Yet Taung and Gu Dar Pyin, on the road where ten motor bikes from Nyaung Chaung area police station were coming towards Gu Dar Pyin. After hearing the sound of gunshots, we fled to Kan Pyin village, in Hpoe Khaung Chaung village Tract, where we spent about two nights. We came back to Gu Dar Pyin on the 28th. At about 3 p.m., the military came in from Kyauk Sar Taing, north of the village. I heard it was Battalion 99, although I didn't see their insignia. We heard two or three gunshots from their clashes with ARSA at the northern side of Gu Dar Pyin. Then ARSA retreated. About a hundred were killed during the clashes. Six persons from Gu Dar Pyin were known to have been killed, although I didn't witness it, as I was elsewhere. The ARSA members wore black uniforms, but they were not carrying guns. We then crossed back to Hpoe Khaung Chaung. More troops arrived, accompanied by Rakhine and Khami ethnic nationals. Materials from houses left vacant were taken away. After staying for 19 days in Kan Pyin village, and about two and a half months in Sein Hnyin Pyar Zay, I am now resettled back at my house in Gu Dar Pyin.
