



## **Incident 8 – Chein Kharli, Koetan Kauk villages, Rathedaung Township**

The following are statements of eight Rakhine ethnic nationals from Chein Kharli village and three Rakhine ethnic nationals from Koetan Kauk village, who were eyewitnesses to the incidents in Chein Kharli and Koetan Kauk villages. Since all the former Muslim residents of the villages could not be found, statements from them were not obtained.

### **(a) Profile of Koetan Kauk and Chein Kharli villages, Koetan Kauk village tract**

Koetan Kauk village tract consists of four villages, namely, Koetan Kauk (Rakhine), Koetan Kauk (Muslim), Chein Kharli (Rakhine), and Chein Kharli (Muslim) villages. Koetan Kauk is one of the village tracts in Rathedaung Township, neighboring Thawin Chaung and Thinbaw Kwayt village tracts in Maungdaw Township. Situated on the Maungdaw-Ahngumaw road, it is 37 miles from Maungdaw Town. In 2017, there were 80 households in Koetan Kauk (Rakhine), 142 in Chein Kharli (Rakhine), and about 700 each in Koetan Kauk (Muslim), and Chein Kharli (Muslim) villages. In the aftermath of the 2012 conflict, there used to be an IDP camp in the two Muslim villages, but they were said to have been closed down right after the 2017 conflict. The border guard police station in Koetan Kauk village was attacked by terrorists in October 2016. Prior to the 2017 conflict, there used to be one border guard police station each on the southern and northern sides of Koetan Kauk Rakhine village, and one station in Chein Kharli Rakhine village. There were only about 10 police force officers posted in each of the police stations.

### **(b) Statements of witnesses from Koetan Kauk village**

#### **Statement 1**

A Muslim mob, led by terrorists, initially attacked the border guard police station at the southern part of Koetan Kauk village at 4AM on August 25th. The border guard police were defending from inside the police station against the attack by terrorists. Help was sought from the military, who were stationed at the Koetan Kauk monastery. The military responded with weapons fire from inside the monastery compound. Because of the support of the military, terrorists attacking

the Koetan Kauk police station retreated and fled. Terrorists then approached and surrounded the border guard police station at the northern side of Koetan Kauk village. With help again from the military, terrorists who were violently attacking the station retreated and fled at 5AM.

#### Statement 2

When terrorists were attacking the border guard police station at the northern part of Koetan Kauk village from all sides, the police station called the military for help, to which they responded by shooting one or two warning shots. The terrorists then retreated. I heard that about 70 soldiers from the military had arrived at the Koetan Kauk village monastery on the evening of August 24.

#### Statement 3

As terrorists were approaching the police stations to attack them, they were also exploding IEDs on the roads. Members of the military, the police, and the ethnic nationals only left the village after three days of the attack, and were just observing the movements of the Muslims. During that time, smoke were seen rising from the Muslim village. Meanwhile, Muslim villagers were also seen leaving their village. The military stayed at Koetan Kauk Rakhine village for about four days. While the fire was raging in Muslim villages, the military had banned Rakhine nationals from going to the Muslim villages. They themselves remained behind at the monastery and did not go anywhere. I saw 11 dead bodies of terrorists inside the police station compound.

Muslims greatly outnumbered ethnic nationals, who dare not go into Muslim villages without any reason. Ethnic nationals entered the Muslim villages only about 10 days after the fires started in the village. For the poor, it was mainly to search for food. At that time, it was said that there were no Muslim houses left as before. Later, temporary shelters were found on the hills, leading people to believe that the Muslims must have stayed for a while on the hills after leaving their village. There are some ethnic nationals who had plundered the buffalos and cows the Muslims had left behind. The military and the border guard police members did not take them though. Besides our villagers, people from even Sittwe were seen buying buffalos and cows. I heard that no matter the size, each cow was trading at about Kyats 40,000, lower than the prevailing price. Locals were selling them for whatever price they could get, and some villagers took away scattered household things, untouched by the fire.

**(c) Statements of witnesses from Chein Kharli village****Statement 4**

Beginning from June 2017, Muslims who used to come each year for the regular paddy cultivation and cow herding did not show up at the Rakhine village. There were also significant changes in the Muslims' attitude towards the Rakhines. I heard from my Muslim acquaintances that terrorists were planning to attack the police station. Names of Chein Kharli Muslim terrorist leaders who were plotting the attack are: 1. Hite U Saung (father Thar U Saung), 2. Sut Yu (father NubyuSaung), 3. AdulMozi (father AdulRukku), 4. Mawlawi Abul Dutra (father Nudula). Although the villager administrator always reported whatever information was available to the respective military base and police station, no action was seen to be taken.

**Statement 5**

Terrorists started to detonate an IED near the police station at about 4 a.m. on August 25. At the same time, rallying cries of the Muslim mob could also be heard. The Muslim mob, led by terrorist fighters, began to attack the Chein Kharli police station. A battle ensued, after the police responded by opening fire. The battle ceased at about 5AM, before dawn, when terrorists withdrew. Once they retreated, I was worried for the police, so I went inside the police station to ask about them and to encourage them. I saw one dead body of a terrorist inside the police station compound, and another outside. When I looked closely at the dead bodies, I found out that they were Chein Kharli Muslim villagers. As we grew up closely with Muslims, we are familiar with each other. I called and reported about this to the township general administrator. At that time, our utmost desire was the arrival of the military, but until then, no soldiers had turned up at the village. As morning broke, the terrorists retreated. Soon after, the Muslim crowd surged ahead with rallying cries for another attack. This time around children and women were in the front. Right at that time, the military arrived from Don Pite area, south of Chein Kharli, the soldiers taking their positions between the Muslim and Rakhine villages for a while to observe the situation. Just then, I saw two 16 or 17-year old Muslim lads emerge from the crowd to detonate an IED. The soldiers then started shooting, using small arms. I was not sure whether there were casualties or not. After the gunfire, Muslims were seen starting to leave their village. While the Muslims were departing their village, smoke was seen rising from the village.

**Statement 6**

Regarding the same incident, about 20 to 30 soldiers from the military arrived at Chein Kharli village at about 8 AM. First, there were no shootings yet, but after a

while, warning shots were fired into the air. Despite this, the Muslim mob did not withdraw, but instead surged forward, brandishing their swords. The mob and the military were then only a furlong apart, when the soldiers again fired warning shots, causing the Muslim mob to retreat at about 9 AM. I did not see soldiers shooting straight at the crowd. I also saw women among the mob. As the Muslims outnumbered the soldiers, the troops did not enter their section of the village that day, but encamped themselves at the Rakhine village monastery. The next day, they went on patrol towards the Muslim sections of the villages. I did not know whether they went inside the villages or not. The patrolling usually took from one to two hours and villagers were not told to accompany them.

#### Statement 7

Another witness says the military came back to the Rakhine section of the village at about 7 PM on August 25, left the next morning, and I did not see them again. I saw fire raging in the Muslim village area at about 2 PM on August 25.

#### Statement 8

I went to the Muslim section of the village, four or five days after the incident, and saw that only small dwellings were engulfed in flames, but that the large or grand houses and zinc-roofed houses remained in good condition as before.

#### Statement 9

One other witness recounted, on August 26, when police, soldiers, and villagers together went to the Muslim section of the village, all the houses were burnt down, there were no one left, and only a few goats and cows remained on the hill. The cows were taken away by the Rakhine ethnic nationals, and nothing else could be taken as everything was burnt to ashes. No dead bodies were seen.

#### Statement 10

At about 10 or 11 a.m. on August 25, I saw groups of Muslim villagers, from kids to men and women heading towards the hills. I heard that when they departed, they torched their houses, and they were seen staying about three or four days in the hills, before moving towards the coast [Alai Than Kyaw area]. We only dared to go into the Muslim village only around September 6 or 7, and while we were there, we did not see anyone in the village. I saw Rakhine villagers taking away cows, goats, and other worthwhile things. Those who attacked the police stations from Chein Kharli and Koetan Kauk villages are not outsiders, but Chein Kharli and Koetan Kauk Muslim villagers only.

**Statement 11**

Witness 11, a local villager, who was with the military during the Chein Kharli incident saw the Muslim mob attacking the police station, during the Chein Kharli incident. He stated: The Muslim mob was shouting rallying cries, some were throwing stones, some were shooting with handmade guns, and the majority on the sidelines were shouting calls for action. The Muslim mob turned towards the soldiers and opened fire. They surrounded the troops and were shouting hard. The soldiers warned them not to approach further. The mob ignored the warnings and moved forward. At that time, the military began to shoot at the mob. I saw the turmoil and commotion myself. One officer from the military told me that they never intended to respond this way, that it was impossible to use the conventional methods to control the mob in this kind of situation, that there was no option left but to use the most effective short term approach, that the military had to take an approach of regaining control of the situation before it got out of hand.

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