



Incident 10 – Kyauk Pandu village, Maungdaw Township

Kyauk Pandu village incident occurred on August 25 and 26, 2017. After the incident, Muslims from all Muslim villages under Kyauk Pandu village tract left for Bangladesh. The following are accounts of six Rakhine who witnessed the incident.

(a) Profile of Kyauk Pandu village

KyaukPandu is an ethnic national village in Kyauk Pandu village tract, Maungdaw Township. To the east of the village is the Mayu mountain range and to its west is the Bay of Bengal. The village tract consists of Kyauk Pandu YwaGyi (Muslim) village, Zedi (Muslim) village, Hike Doh (Muslim) village, and Kyauk Pandu (Na Ta La) ethnic national village. Three Hindu families were also living in Kyauk Pandu village.

There were three police outposts in Kyauk Pandu village tract. The Pinma Gon police outpost near Kyauk Pandu village had a strength of about a dozen police personnel. Tada Oo police outpost near Zedi (Muslim) village had a strength of about seven personnel, while hill top police outpost near Kyauk Pandu Ywa Gyi (Muslim) village had a strength of about 15 personnel.

(b) Statements of six Rakhine nationals

Statement 1

In the past, Muslims and Rakhines worked together in both social and economic activities. Even after the 2012 conflicts, when relations were soured in other regions, the relations in the village tract halted for a brief period only and resumed as before. But after the violence of 2016, even though nothing had happened locally, relations and contacts dropped significantly, and it was no longer warm like before. Yet those who had business relations or were working together for mutual benefit still retained their usual close relationships.

Three months prior to the unfolding of 2017 events, relationships changed more significantly. As ethnic nationals were the minority among the Muslims, they noticed the changes because they were always observing the situation with care. Ethnic nationals were no longer allowed into Muslim villages. Close Muslim friends of ethnic

nationals cautioned the ethnic nationals not to come to their village or to be careful when travelling in the evenings. Some Muslims who were friendly, close to or were working for mutual benefit with ethnic nationals were accused of being informers and intimidated, beaten up or even executed.

Two months prior to the incident, the military uncovered stockpiles of rice, cooking oil, swords and improvised explosive devices (IEDs), made from iron pipes, in Zedi and Kyauk Pandu Ywa Gyi villages. Iron pipes were made from parts obtained from an intentionally destroyed communication tower near the village. There was also an unsolved murder of a Hindu man. Muslims who had Rakhine friends were also restricted or prevented by ARSA from associating with the Rakhines, and their Rakhine friends were prevented from visiting them in order that the training activities conducted by ARSA would not be exposed. Muslims also warned their Rakhine friends not to go deep into the mountain and forests but to travel along the coastal areas only.

Muslims who worked for ethnic nationals also stopped showing up for work one month prior to the incident unfolding. A more obvious matter was when a former administrator, who was a Muslim, came to seek help from the current administrator. He was asking for advice on what to do as his sons were being recruited by the ARSA terrorist group to attend a training course. 'Attending the course would make my sons bad, while refusal could result in ARSA killing them,' he said. Afterwards he and his family fled to Alai Than Kyaw village. Another Muslim who would not attend the mosque regularly, but always drank liquor with ethnic nationals, stopped showing up as usual and was seen to be attending the mosque regularly. Ten days prior to the disturbances, a village in-charge and a clerk were killed. People called in for questioning into the murders did not show up. There were also cases of cows being lost in Kyauk Pandu Rakhine village and a total of nine cows from the village disappeared, but the villagers dare not search for it in the Muslim villages.

On the evening of August 24, 2017, an explosion and sounds of a crowd gathering were heard. On August 25, we heard locations in the north such as Myin Lut, Alai Than Kyaw, Maungdaw were to be attacked by ARSA. As per instruction from higher authorities, police personnel stationed at Gyate Taw police station, about three miles from Kyauk Pandu village, were to come to Kyauk Pandu police station. Six policemen from Kyauk Pandu police station, accompanied by 15 sword wielding villagers, went by a construction group-owned car to fetch them. Mid-way, the car struck an IED laid by ARSA, damaging the car tires. At the same time, terrorists in the hills nearby fired on the car with guns. The ARSA terrorists withdrew only when the policemen fired back and eventually brought back the policemen from Gyate Taw police station to Kyauk Pandu. Around 10AM, explosions were heard near Kyauk Pandu village. A huge crowd of people, numbering more than 30,000, dressed in black and waving black flags approached the Pinma Gon police station

from the south, while chants on loudspeakers were heard. The group included men, women and children, holding sticks and swords.

On seeing the huge crowd, ethnic nationals fled with fear into the Pinma Gon police station. The military was also called by phone for reinforcement. Policemen from Tada Oo police station also came to join others at Pinma Gon. The Muslim crowd then burnt the Tada Oo police station and placed IEDs on the bridge. After burning the police station, the crowd approached the Kyauk Pandu village to burn it down, but the villagers fired upon them with flintlock guns, forcing them to withdraw. About 2PM, 12 policemen from Kyauk Pandu, accompanied by 20 villagers, went to fetch the policemen from the hill top police station. But they were struck by an IED at the bridge, injuring one policeman and a villager. The policemen and villagers were forced back to the Pinma Gon police station as a Muslim crowd was attempting to encircle them. The Muslim crowd was shouting, 'Maung Maung Than, we will drive you Rakhines into the sea this evening.' Maung Maung Than was known to almost every Muslim in the area, because he owned a business that showed movies in all the villages in the area for about nine years.

Around 6PM, about 30 soldiers, thought to be from 536 Light Infantry Battalion, arrived to protect Kyauk Pandu village. Policemen from hill top police station were also able to join up with others in Pinma Gon. The Muslims then torched the hill top police station. Around 7PM, six military personnel and 10 villagers went to inspect the bridge where the IED had exploded. As a crowd of about several thousand came up to them, the soldiers fired warning shots into the air. But the crowd knew the shots were fired into the air and kept on approaching the soldiers and the villagers. The crowd retreated only when the soldiers opened fire at the flanks of the crowd. No one was hurt from the gun fire.

Around 9AM on August 26th, the Muslim crowd encircled within 100 yards of the Pinma Gon police station. At first, the military fired into the air to scare them away, but as the crowd kept on advancing, shots were fired into the crowd. Only then the crowd withdrew, but the casualty figure of the crowd was unknown. Surprisingly, the advancing crowd was found to include women as well as those who were taken care of by the ethnic nationals. They were thought to be in the crowd because ARSA terrorists forced them to participate under the threat of death.

On August 27th, we saw Muslims leaving their villages. Mostly women and children with some men were leaving towards Alai Than Kyaw along the coast, while the majority of men were leaving in two groups for the mountain range on the east along the forest path. As soon as they left, smoke started to rise from villages and about two thatched huts were on fire. At that time, the military, policemen and villagers were still at the Pinma Gon police station. By August 28, Muslims were no longer seen and security forces started conducting patrols only after the fires were

burning. The military provided security for about four days and, after the first group of soldiers left, about 30 soldiers from Light Infantry Division 99 came the next day.

Two days after the Muslims left, the military conducted clearing of IEDs in the Muslim villages. Security was also placed at the coastal areas and the villagers heard the regimental commander ordering his men to shoot back only when ARSA attacked. While conducting the area clearance operation, we heard the military uncovered clothing and rice buried in almost every house. They also found seven IEDs linked to tins filled up with dynamite and connected to a battery, 30 swords, three flintlock guns and 30 spears. They also found 20 foot long bunker style trenches (walls made with bamboos and tarpaulin, and covered with earth on the top), large enough to hold meetings inside, three in Zedi village and four in Kyauk Pandu Ywa Gyi village.

At that time, some houses were on fire already. Earlier, about 10 to 15 Muslims were seen on a hill, and upon further inspection, places where they had cooked food were discovered. As the ethnic nationals were concerned that ARSA may take up position or hide in the remaining houses, ethnic nationals and some military personnel torched the remaining houses. Household utensils, motorcycles, buffaloes and cows left by the Muslims were taken away by ethnic nationals from nearby villages. Although houses were burnt, those remaining standing were taken apart by nearby villagers as well as by those who came by cars from Ahngumaw. Some cows were slaughtered and cooked, while some were sold to those who came up from Sittwe at Kyats 50,000 to 70,000 per head. The military personnel on site did not prevent these people from doing such things and also did not take part in it.

Some Muslims, who conducted business with ethnic nationals before the incident and who had also fled to Bangladesh, would frequently make calls. From there, they told us about Muslims, who were friendly or who were classmates in school with ethnic nationals, being killed about three months prior to the attack, because they were considered as security risks. One Muslim claimed that his younger brother was beaten to death right in front of him for being friendly and close to ethnic nationals. He said he'll testify these matters once he's back in Myanmar, but unfortunately we heard he had died two months ago of hypertension and heart problem.

Ethnic nationals, the military and policemen were all at Pinma Gon police station during the incident, and none of them had gone to attack the Muslim village. They were only defending themselves when they were under attack. Therefore, there was no possibility of soldiers, policemen, and ethnic nationals conducting crimes like rape, and none was committed.
