



## **Incident 7 – Inn Din Village, Maungdaw Township**

In the aftermath of the Inn Din Village incident, Muslims from all Muslim villages in Inn Din Village Tract left for Bangladesh. Due to difficulties making contact with former Muslim villagers of Inn Din, their statements were not obtained. Following are excerpts from the 14 ethnic nationals' eyewitness accounts.

### **(a) Profile of Inn Din Village Tract**

Inn Din is a village in the southernmost part of Maungdaw Township. Inn Din Village Tract consists of five villages. Inn Din (Rakhine) and Pae Youne (NaTaLa) are ethnic national villages. After the incident another ethnic national village (Aung Thu kha) was created. There are around 300 ethnic national households in the village tract. Inn Din Muslim Village was separated into three parts, namely Inn Din (East), Inn Din (Middle), and Inn Din (West). Before the August 2017 incident, there were more than a thousand Muslim households in Inn Din. To the north of Inn Din Village are Thin Baw Kwea and Kyauk Pan Du Village Tracts. Gwa Sone and Tha Win Chaung (Kan Pyo) Villages are close to Inn Din Village to the south. Inn Din village had a Border Guard Police Station and a police outpost.

### **(b) Statements of 14 ethnic nationals**

[Note: the statements are not presented individually, except where they diverged or where particular interviewees added key details not included by others]

Until 2016, Muslims and ethnic nationals in Inn Din village tract lived together without problems and had regular contact. The relationship deteriorated significantly after the 2016 incident. Starting from the early part of 2017, Muslim daily laborers rarely came over to the Rakhine village. Later, when ARSA members became dominant in the Muslim villages, Muslims were restricted from contacting Rakhine. There were instances of Muslims being told off or beaten in the mosques as punishment for making contact with Rakhine. For example, Fari

Mulla who had served as an In-Charge<sup>1</sup> for Inn Din Muslim Village for ages was beaten up in the middle of the village by masked fellow villagers, who were ARSA members, seriously injuring his back. The Union Solidarity and Development Party's local branch secretary U Swe Ussan, who was influential with Muslims and on good terms with ethnic nationals, was killed by ARSA terrorists a few months before the incident. After such beatings and killings, all Muslim Heads of Hundred Households and Heads of Ten Households broke off contact with the Rakhine and with government officials.

When asked why they no longer showed up to work for Rakhine villagers, Muslims said that ARSA were requiring one member of every household to attend compulsory military training and that poor Muslims were provided with a bag of rice and 5,000 Kyats every week. The financial support and assistance reportedly came from Muslims from Saudi Arabia. The ethnic nationals learnt this before contact was broken off. Later, buffaloes, cows, and goats raised by Muslims were deliberately let loose onto paddy fields and farmlands used by Rakhine and ethnic nationals, destroying their crops. Some Muslim workers who were close to ethnic nationals suggested to their ethnic national friends that they should send family members to some other, safer place rather than staying in Inn Din. Some of the ethnic nationals interviewed were advised to move to Rathedaung. When schools were making preparations to reopen for a new academic year in 2017, some Muslim parents were heard wondering whether the schools would reopen as usual. Teachers at that time did not understand what the Muslim parents were hinting at. Only later did they realize that the parents already knew about the ARSA group's plans, and that the Muslims had started to make preparations.

According to local elders, the leader of the terrorist group in Inn Din Village was a Mawlawi<sup>2</sup> named Taw Yup. A report was sent to the Border Guard Police Tactical Command Headquarters, but despite the proof and evidence provided, there was no arrest. Inn Din elders also filed a complaint against Taw Yup at the Maungdaw Township Court, and so he had to go to Maungdaw to face trial. The man was in Maungdaw Town before and after the incident, and is still living there. People say that if he had been in Inn Din during the incident, the Rakhine and the police station would have suffered more, as he was the leader of ARSA in Inn Din. It was sheer luck for the Rakhine and the Inn Din Police Station that he was absent as, without him, his followers were not able to effectively carry out the attack. About seven days prior to the the incident, the Rakhine State Chief Minister and the Minister for Security and Border Affairs held a meeting with the public at a school. Village elders informed them that terrorists had a

<sup>1</sup> In villages without a Village Administrator, a Head of Ten Households or Head of Hundred Households is sometimes appointed as the Village In-Charge. This person has responsibility for administrative matters in the village.

<sup>2</sup> A Muslim religious teacher.

strength of about 180 in Inn Din Village and requested action. The Chief Minister said that they should not be concerned about the matter as it was just rumors, but that their concerns would be reported to the next level. The State Minister for Security and Border Affairs asked for and received the list of the 180 terrorist in Inn Din. The matter was also reported to the military and police departmental heads. The government officials' failure to take effective action resulted in the ARSA terrorists achieving success for a short period of time.

With regards to the actual incident, early on the evening of August 24, everything was quiet in Inn Din Village Tract, even though news had been heard about attacks in other places. Due to these reports, some villagers from Inn Din (Rakhine) Village went to stay in the monastery at the entrance to the village.

Early on the morning of August 25, an Inn Din villager named U Maung Ni went to release his buffaloes, which were tied up outside the village. He had not returned by lunch time, so his sons went out and searched for him. Then another villager who had gone with U Maung Ni came running back saying, "Your father was taken away by some Muslims wearing masks and hoods." The sons continued their search and found U Maung Ni's umbrella nearby, with some blood stains on it. Eventually, they returned and filed a report at the Inn Din Police Station. At that time, a loud explosion was heard from the mosque in Inn Din Muslim Village. At the same time, a Muslim from the mosque was heard leading a rally call, through a loudspeaker. He shouted and the crowd echoed "this is our land, this is our region." When these chants and shouts were heard, all Rakhine villagers went to seek refuge in the monastery. The Muslims were heard chanting in their own language, "We'll eat the flesh of the Rakhine, we'll eat the flesh of the soldiers." By the sound of the chants, the crowd was quite large.

Two cars left Inn Din Police Station to reinforce Kyauk Pan Du Police Outpost, which had reportedly been surrounded by Muslims. However, the two cars were hit by mines in front of a school in Pae Youne (Na Ta La) Village. One car was completely destroyed and the other damaged. The policemen pushed back the damaged car back to Inn Din. As the policemen were walking back to Inn Din Police Station, a Muslim crowd was seen following them. When the policemen reached Inn Din Police Station, the Muslim crowd withdrew towards Thin Baw Kwea. There was no attack on the police station. There were sounds of explosions from several places in Inn Din Muslim Village. The small contingent of policemen in the monastery were then joined by a convoy of soldiers. The soldiers assessed the situation and remained in the monastery. Later, the Muslims encircled Inn Din Police Station and Inn Din Rakhine Village but didn't attack or advance further after noticing the presence of the military. The situation remained the same throughout the 25<sup>th</sup>, 26<sup>th</sup>, and 27<sup>th</sup>. By then, Muslim villagers had been seen leaving and heading southward, carrying their bags and

belongings. The soldiers did not prevent the Muslims from leaving, but simply observed them. As the Muslims were leaving, smoke started to rise from some houses in their village. Sounds of explosions were heard continuously and the soldiers and policemen didn't dare leave the monastery. Most Muslim houses were thatched huts that were readily flammable. Smoke was first seen around noon on August 29. The Muslims did not leaving their villages in a single day. They left over the course of several days. Some went south and some went towards the sea, but they all were said to have met at the coast, at Alai Than Kyaw.

Another interviewee stated that on August 25, a Muslim crowd numbering over ten thousand was heard shouting, 'Pakistan Zindabad'<sup>3</sup> through loudspeakers. There were also calls for everyone to come out. Later, a Muslim crowd advanced towards the Rakhine village and Rakhine villagers ran to seek refuge in the monastery. Seven policemen, sent from Inn Din Police Station, provided security at the monastery. As the Muslim crowd surrounded the monastery on all four sides the policemen fired warning shots into the air, but the crowd did not retreat. However, the crowd stopped short of attacking and simply surrounded the monastery. Later in the evening, a column of soldiers from Rathedaung reached the monastery without the Muslims realizing it. On August 26 it was heard that Kyauk Pan Du Police Station had been surrounded by Muslims and that Chein Kharli Police Station was under attack, but there was no attack on Inn Din Police Station. A few days later, around the end of August and start of September, smoke was seen rising from houses on the southern edge of Inn Din Muslim Village. Muslim women were seen filing out towards the sea carrying children and stuff. Up to that time, the Rakhine and security personnel had not been outside the village. Smoke rose as the Muslims left. The interviewee did not personally see anyone starting fires. The military were also observing the fires from within the Rakhine village. Muslims from the Chein Kharli side left in the early days, followed by Muslims from Gwa Son Village. Only after they left, did the Muslims from Inn Din Village start to leave. A few days later, there were no Muslims left in the Muslim villages.

Another interviewee stated that Thin Baw Kwea Muslim Village sent a letter to the military in Inn Din on August 28 saying, "we are ready to fight you."

A further witness stated that either on the 26<sup>th</sup> or the 27<sup>th</sup>, soldiers from Light Infantry Division 33 came up from Ah Ngu Maw together with some villagers from Ah Ngu Maw; about 70 persons in total. They stayed in Inn Din School. The villagers knew of the presence of the civilians because the villagers prepared food for them. When they realized that the military had arrived, the Muslim villagers started to flee. Some were carrying sticks in a way that made it look as

<sup>3</sup>“Long live the pure land” in Urdu, a battle cry of South Asian Muslims calling for an independent country.

though they were carrying guns and the women were carrying bags and belongings. They were fleeing towards the sea or the mountains all day. The soldiers saw them flee and did not harm them or prevent them from fleeing. The soldiers told the ethnic nationals not to do anything. At that time, there were said to be some Muslim men who remained behind to guard their houses. The military and the civilians who came up together from Ah Ngu Maw, four or five Inn Din villagers, and one or two Border Guard Police started torching the Muslim villages in Inn Din Village Tract. The fire was started by throwing gasoline canisters at the houses. As the houses were thatched huts, fire spread from one to another very quickly. The soldiers checked to see that the houses were not occupied and provided security while the civilians started the fire. It took about three days to completely burn all the Muslim houses in the whole village tract. All the Muslim men fled, as soon as the fires were started, so no one was killed or hurt. Two bombs went off when a house was burnt.

In a similar statement, another witness said that a regiment of about 30 soldiers arrived on August 26. Muslim houses started to burn on August 27, and the military conducted clearance operations on August 28.

A majority of the interviewees stated that the Rakhine took the buffaloes, cows, and motorbikes left behind by the Muslims after the Muslims had left. There were instances of people from other villages coming to take things that had been left behind. Some interviewees said that about three weeks after the Muslims left, some went to search for food in the Muslim villages, while others said that they entered the Muslim villages only around the end of September and beginning of October. When they entered the village, Rakhine found hidden food as well as knives.

On the matter of the ten Muslims killed, most witnesses said that the event occurred after August 25, between August 28 and 30. It was not true that the ten Muslims were caught at the seacoast as alleged. Villagers and soldiers (in civilian clothes) went to fish near a prawn pond close to Inn Din Village. A group of Muslims, (most interviewees said ten, but one said between 20 and 30) came towards the villagers and soldiers carrying long knives. The soldiers, who were in civilian clothes, pointed their guns at the Muslims and detained them. Some of the witnesses said that the long knives were hidden in nearby bushes. The Muslims were arrested, tied up and detained.

[There were several discrepancies in the statements regarding this issue.] One witness said villagers went to fish and upon encountering knife-wielding Muslims, sought help from the soldiers in the village. Other witnesses said some villagers and two soldiers (a total of either six or seven persons) went to fish. Two witnesses said the arrested Muslims were kept in a school room for two nights and were taken away the next morning. Two others said the Muslims were kept

for one night only and were not seen the next morning. Among the ten Muslims, one was said to have participated in the killing of U Maung Ni. Three interviewees said Tun Aye, the son of U Maung Ni, went along when the Muslims were taken away. Two witnesses said that one son of U Maung Ni had expressed his intention to kill his father's murderers.

The incident was captured on a phone camera by one policeman. It is not known whether he did this on his own initiative or on someone's instructions. This policeman asked his friend, a school principal, to copy the photos from his phone onto the school principal's laptop. Later, the Inn Din Village Arakan National Party organizer, Thein Saw Oo, came to copy his photos onto the school principal's laptop and found the policeman's photos. Thein Saw Oo took copies of the policeman's photos. Later, Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo [the Reuters' journalists] came to Inn Din Village and obtained copies of the photos from Thein Saw Oo.

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