



**UN Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict Pramila Patten
condemns sexual violence in Myanmar and calls for measures to protect
and assist Rohingya women and girls**

Press Release: For Immediate Release

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I am gravely concerned about the security operations in northern Rakhine State that have forced approximately 400,000 Rohingya civilians to flee into Bangladesh to escape violence, since 25 August 2017. The situation has rightly been called “catastrophic” by United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres, and condemned by the UN Security Council. I echo their concerns about reports of excesses committed in the context of security operations and the call on the Government of Myanmar to enable the United Nations to extend humanitarian support.

My Office has been closely monitoring reports of sexual violence committed during these counter-insurgency operations and is concerned particularly about the security of women and girls who constitute the majority of those crossing the border. More than half of the Rohingya women interviewed in early 2017 in a refugee camp in Bangladesh reported experiencing rape or other forms of sexual violence, but due to the acute social stigma, such cases are significantly under-reported. Interviews with victims and witnesses indicate disturbing patterns of rape, gang rape and other forms of sexual violence, such as invasive body searches. Survivors have described sexual violence being used as a calculated tool of terror to force targeted populations to flee. They describe the perpetrators as mainly members of the military, with the police and Rakhine villagers also identified, in some cases.

I would like to remind the authorities of their obligations to fully respect international humanitarian and human rights law, and call upon the Government and all parties to put an end to this violence and adopt specific measures to prevent and mitigate sexual violence. This includes the issuance of clear orders through the military chain of command to prohibit such crimes, rigorous investigation and accountability processes, training for the security forces, and the implementation of a policy of zero tolerance, in line with Security Council resolution 2106 on sexual violence in conflict. My Office stands ready to support the national authorities to put such measures in place, and to ensure that the United Nations system supports survivors to receive the critical medical and psychosocial care that they require.

I commend the Government of Bangladesh for hosting the refugees fleeing across the border and call on the international community to provide commensurate support and ensure that the refugees receive protection and adequate assistance. Ensuring specialized services for survivors of sexual violence must be treated as an urgent, life-saving priority.

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