

Dozens of Muslim women raped in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, claim human rights groups

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Dozens of Muslim women have been raped by Myanmar's security forces during counter-insurgency operations in the northern Rakhine State, according to various human rights groups.

Chris Lewa, director of a Rohingya rights organisation, claims that around 30 women were reportedly raped by security forces in a single village on October 19.

Lewa further said that she had also received additional reports of five girls aged between 16 and 18 being raped in another village on October 25 and two women at another location on October 20.

According to the Myanmar Times, independent verification of these claims are not possible because of tight military controls in the region, including shutting out of international humanitarian organisations.

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) released a statement on October 25 saying it was "extremely concerned" over at least 10 alleged rape cases that had been documented by civilians in Maungdaw township since the military operation had begun there, including one woman who was three months pregnant and later suffered a miscarriage.

"The Burmese government is deliberately violating international law and committing crimes that it promised the world they would refrain from," U Kyaw Win of the BHRN said.

The reports of widespread sexual assaults come after security forces in the area began hunt for those who were behind three deadly attacks on border police posts on October 9.

According to media reports, these attacks are believed to have been carried out by Rohingya insurgents.

A large swathe of northern Rakhine State has been under military lockdown since the October 9 attacks, with local residents reporting extrajudicial killings, torture, large-scale evictions, and the burning and looting of property.

International groups including the UN and INGOs have demanded that the government should allow an independent investigation into the series of alleged human rights violations emerging from northern Rakhine State.