FACTSHEET: TWO ASPECTS OF THE RAKHINE CRISIS

Since 2012, land belonging to Muslim and Buddhist communities who fled violence has been seized for economic projects:

Maungdaw Economic Zone (announced on 1 Sep 2017): Maungdaw Township became the launching point of security forces’ “clearance operations” on 9 October 2016. Civilians were killed, Muslim houses were burnt down, children were thrown into the burning homes, and women were sexually assaulted by security forces. In June 2017, violence reigned in Maungdaw Township, killing hundreds and displacing thousands.

Sittwe SEZ (announced in Aug 2016): Designed to complement a US$120 million deep sea port built by India, and to compete with Kyaukphyu SEZ. Sittwe has been the scene of ongoing violence since 2012: In June 2012, nearly 1,000 Rohingya homes were burned, over 100 were killed and more than 300 were wounded. In March 2014, anti-Muslim mobs violently attacked international aid agencies’ offices, destroying numerous buildings.

Kyaukphyu SEZ (announced in Sep 2013): Expected to cost US$ 8 billion, the Chinese-led project is being promoted as a “mini-Singapore” in terms of facilities. Kyaukphyu was worst hit on 23-24 October 2012 when Buddhist Arakanese razed the entire Muslim quarter, destroying over 800 houses. Officials said that 64 people died as a result of the unrest, but rights groups feared the number could be much higher.

The crisis, which was escalated by the military, may have contributed to a 55.56% increase in budget, adding to the overall increase of 175% since 2011.

Military spending has substantially increased by 175% since 2011, the year Burma transitioned to a nominally civilian government under former General Thein Sein: from K 1.2 trillion in 2011-2012 to K 3.3 trillion in 2016-2017.

On 16 January 2018, the Defence Ministry asked for an additional K 1.3 Trillion (US 1 Billion) budget increase for Jan-Jun 2018. If this amount was granted in full, the military budget for 2017-2018 went up by 55.56% from the previous year.