

Press Release

NLD government Must Protect Rohingya People

We, the undersigned Rohingya organizations express our serious concern that the security, honour and dignity of the Rohingya population continue to be at stake due to growing anti-Rohingya sentiment at the behest of the powerful and influential groups in the Myanmar.

We are worrying that the ruling National League for Democracy (NLD) government seems to have inclined to yield to the demand of the extremists calling for “Rohingya ethnocide”. Following a protest in late May in Yangon by about 300 ultra-nationalists, including Buddhist monks, publicly denouncing the United States of America for using the word Rohingya, the Myanmar Foreign Ministry, headed by State Counselor-com-Foreign Minister Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, had surprisingly advised foreign embassies in Myanmar avoid using “Rohingya”, although the Rohingya people have the right to self-identify.

In addition, in a press conference on 13 May, the Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing had denied the existence of the word Rohingya in Myanmar by lying that “they were called Rohingyas under former prime minister U Nu to win their vote” although history testifies that Muslim Arakanese are called Rohingya.

Such actions of the government have, to all intents and purposes, encouraged the extreme racist nationalists, and since then protests have grown and spread in Myanmar by stirring up prejudice against Rohingya and Muslims in general. But no action is taken against those inciting hatred and violence.

The Aung Mingalar Ghetto, the only Rohingya quarter left in the heart of the Rakhine State capital Sittwe with 4350 people, is now under threat and the decision of the Rakhine State government to conduct house to house check under the pretext of looking for so-called 20,000 people from outside are living in it is unjustified.

We respect the right to freedom of expression and protest, but it needs to be within the framework of the democratic norms and principle. We are very much concerned that the current waves of protest spreading hate speech and Islamophobia against Rohingya in particular could lead to violence against them. Round the clock senses of utter insecurity and abject helplessness on the part of the persecuted and traumatized Rohingya people are prevalent in squalid segregated concentration camps, confined villages and ghettos under siege in Rakhine State.

The government should not allow people to disturb the law and order situation with threat of violence that could amount to a breach of the peace. The NLD government has “the responsibility to protect” the defenceless Rohingya people. It has also the responsibility to uphold the internationally recognized principle of having the right to self-identify.

We urge the NLD led government to take the following immediate measures:

1. To allow Rohingya people to self-identify their ethnic name “Rohingya”
2. To take action against those spreading hate speech against Rohingyas and Muslims in Myanmar.
3. To end ghettoization and allow all internally displaced persons to return to their community, places and properties.
4. To end persecution against Rohingya, including restrictions on their basic human rights and freedoms.
5. To lift all restrictions on the operations of international aid agencies in Rakhine State and take action to ensure the security of aid workers.
6. To amend 1982 Citizenship Law to conform it to international human rights law and citizenship standards ensuring full citizenship and all accompanying rights to Rohingya?

We also call on the international community, including US, UK, EU, ASEAN, OIC, to support the establishment of a United Nations Commission of Inquiry into the situation and human rights violations in Rakhine State and the government policies and laws targeting the Rohingya.

Signatories:

1. Arakan Rohingya National Organisation
2. Bradford Rohingya Community in UK
3. Burmese Rohingya Community in Denmark
4. Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK
5. Rohingya Community in Netherlands
6. Rohingya Community in Germany
7. Rohingya Community in Switzerland
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