



Open Letter Regarding the Motion to Endorse the United Nations Independent and Impartial Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar

Karen Community of Canada

Date: September 24, 2018

Dear Minister Chrystia Freeland,

As the Karen Community of Canada, we were pleased to see Canadian MPs unanimously support the motion to declare the Rohingya crisis a genocide and to endorse the United Nations Independent and Impartial Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (Burma). Thank you for taking this step in the quest for justice and an end to Burmese military tyranny in our country.

Indeed, as the UN investigators wrote in their final report, Burmese military atrocities affect many ethnic peoples in Burma, including the Karen. Shan and Kachin communities continue to face rampant abuses including bombing of civilian areas, murder of civilians, rape, torture, use of civilians as human shields and minesweepers, and denial of humanitarian aid to displaced villagers.

Although Burmese military campaigns against the Karen, Kachin, Shan, and other ethnic groups have never been recognized internationally as genocide, these campaigns are also consistent with the definition in Article II of the United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. From the 1970s into the 2000s, the military carried out "Four Cuts" campaigns to cut off Karen resistance fighters from all sources of information, recruits, food, and funds; in practice, it involved a systematic targeting of Karen villagers. In 2014, a [Harvard Law School report](#) concluded that Burma's generals should be investigated for war crimes and crimes against humanity for their actions against Karen civilians during just one offensive in 2005-2006.

The Burmese military has used the current ceasefire in Karen State to increase its control of Karen villagers' lands and eventually make resistance impossible. Since August 31, Burmese soldiers have occupied another Karen village, firing mortars and forcing more than 200 villagers to flee, all in violation of the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement. The military's disregard for the ceasefire raises fears that widespread war might return to Karen State, leading to further Burmese military atrocities against Karen villagers.

The quest for justice and accountability for the Burmese military's crimes, including genocide, is vital not only for the Rohingya but for all ethnic peoples in Burma. Only then will it be possible to build a peaceful and inclusive society in our country.

We look forward to continuing to work with the Canadian government to support these efforts.

Sincerely,

Karen Community of Canada

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