



Burma Human Rights Network and 22 Organizations Call on The International Community to Pressure Myanmar to Give Full Access to UN-Mandated Fact Finding Mission

27th April 2017, London, UK – The Burma Human Rights Network and 22 Organizations and Individuals have released an open letter calling upon The United States, United Kingdom, and the member states of the European Union, Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation to strongly encourage the Myanmar government to fully cooperate with the forthcoming Fact-Finding Mission into the human rights situation in Rakhine State, as well as Kachin and Shan States, as recently mandated by the United Nations Human Rights Council.

The undersigned are: Angkatan Belau Islam Malaysia (ABIM), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), ALTSEAN-Burma, Amnesty International, Burma Campaign UK (BCUK), Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN), Burmese Muslim Association (BMA), Christian Solidarity Worldwide (CSW), Civil Rights Defenders, International State Crime Initiative, Fortify Rights, Geutanyoe Foundation, Global Peace Mission Malaysia, Gusdurain Network Indonesia, Human Rights Now, Human Rights Watch (HRW), Majlis Persundingan Pertubuhan Islam Malaysia (MAPIM), Malaysian Humanitarian Aid and Relief (MAHAR), Refugees International, Restless Beings, The Arakan Project and Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC)

The UN Fact-Finding Mission is largely in response to events following October 9th of 2016 when a new wave of atrocities began after an attack on three border guard police outposts near the City of Maungdaw. The attacks resulted in the deaths of nine police officers. In response Myanmar began conducting “clearance operations” against the group responsible for the attacks. It became clear within days that the operations conducted by security forces were largely targeting the civilian population as what can only be described as collective punishment. Very soon after the attacks accounts emerged of Rohingya women who had been gang raped by security forces, civilians shot while fleeing, men being arbitrarily detained and tortured and a systematic campaign to burn down entire Rohingya villages. The crackdowns lasted over three months and drew unprecedented rebukes from the international community.

In particular the undersigned of the letter have stressed concerns about Burma’s history of delaying and hindering such endeavors and is calling on the International Community to use their influence to help ensure a quick, thorough and unhindered investigation. High-level and sustained international

engagement will be needed to ensure the authorities provide the Fact-Finding Mission with free and unfettered access to all the areas to which they are seeking access.

The undersigned also want to emphasize the safety of witnesses so they can speak freely to investigators without any fear of retaliation. The authorities must ensure the safety of witnesses to speak freely without reprisals from state or non-state actors.

While the situation remains volatile and may easily worsen if not addressed we believe there is still time for positive change that will make room for peace and justice if those with the power to create change are willing to do so. If the Fact-Finding Mission can be completed adequately it will allow the most vulnerable greater access justice to address their grievances while also allowing the Burmese Government a chance to prove their claims, reflect on findings and then to self-correct and improve in the future to reduce egregious behaviors. The problems in Rakhine State are far from an internal affair and as time passes it become increasingly difficult to introduce measures to restore calm and move towards a more peaceful situation.

Notes for Editors

Background on current situation:

On October 9th three Border Guard Police posts near the Burma-Bangladesh border were overrun by a group of militants believed to be ethnic Rohingya, a marginalized Muslim ethnic group in western Burma. Nine police officers were killed in the attack. In response the Military moved to Maungdaw, near where the attack happened. The subsequent crackdown on the township and surrounding areas has been especially harsh with observers from the UN and human rights groups saying there is strong evidence of Crimes Against Humanity.

The United Nations mandated a fact-finding mission in response to evidence of human rights violations in Burma with an emphasis on Northern Rakhine State. The Burmese Government has thus far been uncooperative with establishing such a mission.

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

Media Enquiries

Members of The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) are available for comment and interview.

Please contact:

Kyaw Win

Executive Director of the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

E: kyawwin78@gmail.com

T: +44(0) 740 345 2378