



Press Release: Bilateral Agreement On Rohingya Repatriation Deeply Flawed

[30 November, 2017, London] – On November 23rd, Burma and Bangladesh signed an agreement concerning the repatriation of Rohingya Muslims who fled the country following a targeted violent campaign by the Burmese security forces. Commenting on the plan today, Burma Human Rights Network Executive Director Kyaw Win said:

“What has been agreed to by the Burmese and Bangladeshi Governments is inadequate in addressing even the most basic concerns of the displaced. The proposed plan makes no effort to address the statelessness and suffering of the Rohingya. In parallel there is insufficient explanation of the verification process for the returnees who have lost relevant documents due to arson attacks by security forces. We therefore urge the international community to reject this plan as it stands, and instead press Bangladesh and Burma to make appropriate revisions, including by ensuring that the UNHCR has a formal role in the return process, to ultimately enable the successful repatriation of the Rohingya”.

Mr Kyaw Win added, “Repatriating the Rohingya must be done on a voluntary basis, whilst ensuring their rights, including citizenship and the right to self-identify on any government documents, are guaranteed. It provides no assurances that they will be returned safely to a home where they will be granted fundamental human rights. Without such assurances, there is no guarantee the repatriated persons will be protected from further harm, discrimination and arbitrary punishment, and avoiding a repeat of the circumstances witnessed by the Rohingya in central Rakhine State; confined to squalid camps under military guard since 2012. It is therefore vital that the agreement is urgently revised, including with input from the international community in order to move forward with this agreement. Given the continued flow of refugees from Myanmar into Bangladesh, the current situation in Myanmar is still too dangerous for the Rohingya. All violence must cease before repatriation can begin.”

The international community must uphold its responsibilities to insist that all promises made by the Burmese Government are monitored and enforced through appropriate mechanisms. We urge Bangladesh to participate with the international community in redrafting this agreement, and to seek consultation with the affected communities on their needs and concerns as they go forward. All Arbitrary timelines, including the two month window as suggested by Bangladesh, must be avoided. Finally we urge the Burmese Government to address these issues and the above recommendations earnestly, with sincere investment in the affected communities and with the intention of creating a peaceful and equitable future for all those living within its borders.

Editors note

On August 25th an insurgent group called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacked 30 police posts and killed 12 security officers and one soldier. In response the Burmese Authorities have unleashed a brutal campaign against the civilian population, which has caused more than half of the Rohingya population in Northern Rakhine State to flee. Security forces have been monitored burning down Rohingya villages systematically and driving the population into neighboring Bangladesh. These actions by the Burmese army have widely been described as ethnic cleansing, with the UN even evoking

the term when they said the military's actions "seemed like a textbook case of ethnic cleansing." The military operations have caused a humanitarian crisis in neighboring Bangladesh which many nations have stepped up to address. Those remaining inside of Myanmar have not been given the same response as Myanmar has limited how much access NGOs have to the region and currently only the International Committee of the Red Cross has been given limited access in the north of the state.

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London, operate across Burma and 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

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