



## **Pope Francis First Visit to Burma is a Historic Opportunity to Challenge Crime Against Humanity and the Violation of Freedom of Religion in Burma**

London, 27th November 2017: Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) looks to the first visit of Pope Francis to Burma as an opportunity for him to speak up for oppressed minorities, especially the Rohingya Muslims, Kachin and Shan people.

Kyaw Win, Executive Director of BHRN, said, "Pope Francis' visit is a crucial opportunity for a leader of a Global Faith to speak up for the rights of religious minorities, especially Rohingya Muslim with to the Burmese Government and Military. It is also critical that the Pope support Press Freedom in light of recent disappearances of Citizen journalists".

BHRN urge the Pope to not only speak up for freedom of religion in Burma, but also implementation of Rabat Plan of Action on hate speech and religious community. Further, Pope Francis should ask for the abolition of the 'four protection of race and religion' laws along with the continued plight of Rohingya people and the government's anti Muslim persecution policy that is damaging democratic reforms in Burma.

### **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 neighbouring Bangladesh by committing crime against humanity.

According BHRN report "Persecution of Muslims in Burma" there are more than 20 locations Muslim are not allowed. These places are known as "Muslim-free-zones". The religious intolerance in Burma significantly increased as United State Commission on International Freedom of Religion has recommended Burma as Countries of Particular Concern.

### **Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)**

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London 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.

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