

Rohingyas' concerns over the repatriation of refugees from Bangladesh

We, the undersigned Rohingya organisations worldwide express our serious concern over an agreement, signed on 23rd November 2017, between Myanmar and Bangladesh on the return of some 670,000 Rohingya refugees who have recently taken refuge in Bangladesh after fleeing Myanmar genocide.

But the question is how the terrified and traumatized refugees would be repatriated to Arakan/Rakhine State where they experienced, witnessed and fled the genocidal brutality of Myanmar troops, Rakhine extremists and other vigilantes. There is no change of attitude of the Myanmar government and its Military towards Rohingya; still they identify Rohingya as recent “Bengali interlopers” from Bangladesh; and Rohingyas continue entering into Bangladesh due to continuing violence and brutality against them in Arakan.

Refugees are homesick, but they are unwilling to return as congenial atmosphere has not been created yet for safe and voluntary repatriation with dignity and honour. The refugees should be settled in their homes. It would be worst simply moving the refugees from camps in Bangladesh to dislodgement sites in Myanmar. It is dangerous that the regime has already claimed state-ownership of Rohingyas' land within the affected region of Northern Arakan/Rakhine state. Before they return to Myanmar the refugees need guarantee ensuring their life and property security and “peaceful-coexistence” as equals with all other people in Arakan and Myanmar.

In consideration of the above, the following measures are imperative for safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya refugees:

1. The UNHCR, which is a mandated UN protection agency, should be involved in all process of repatriation.
2. The Refugees should be allowed to put down their identity as “Rohingya”, the UN-recognized name to self-identify.
3. Refugee representatives should be discussed in all process of repatriation.
4. Repatriation must be fully voluntary. The refugees should be rehabilitated in

their original homes and properties, with full compensation under the supervision of the UN with peace-keeping force, NOT to displacement sites in Myanmar.

5. Demilitarized UN safe zones shall be created in Northern Rakhine State, as an interim measure, in order to guarantee security of life, property and dignity of the persecuted people, as well as to ensure confidence, faith and understanding in the minds of the heavily terrified and traumatized refugees.
6. The Myanmar government must restore their full Myanmar citizenship ensuring all rights and freedoms -- security of life, property, honour, dignity, freedom of religion, movement, education, marriage, employment etc. -- without any infringement, restriction, and discrimination in all affairs of their national activities.
7. The Myanmar government shall recognize the “Rohingya ethnicity” allowing them to peacefully co-exist in Arakan/Rakhine State as equals with their “collective rights” on par with other ethnic nationalities of the country.
8. The Myanmar Citizenship Law of 1982 must be scrapped or amended aligning it with international standards and treaties to which Myanmar is State Party, including articles 7 and 8 of the Convention on the Rights of Child.
9. Land is asset and means of making living. All previous land and landed properties of the refugees must be given back to them immediately.
10. Necessary arrangement shall be made to try and punish all perpetrators by an international independent tribunal. The Myanmar government shall stop and prohibit all forms of racism, incitement, propaganda, hate speech, Islamophobia, decrees and directives against the Rohingyas and other Muslims.
11. The Myanmar government must allow unimpeded humanitarian aids to all needy and unfettered access to the media and rights groups to Northern Arakan/Rakhine state.
12. The welfare of the offspring of rapes and raped women must be ensured.

Signatories:

- Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)
- Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)
- British Rohingya Community in UK
- Burmese Rohingya Community in Denmark
- Burmese Rohingya Association Japan (BRAJ)
- Rohingya Advocacy Network in Japan
- Burmese Rohingya Community Australia (BRCA)
- Burmese Rohingya Association in Queensland-Australia (BRAQA)
- Canadian Burmese Rohingya Organisation
- European Rohingya Council (ERC)
- Myanmar Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organisation in Malaysia(MERHRM)
- Rohingya American Society
- Rohingya Arakanese Refugee Committee
- Rohingya Community in Germany
- Rohingya Community in Switzerland
- Rohingya Community in Finland
- Rohingya Community in Italy
- Rohingya Community in Sweden
- Rohingya Organisation Norway
- Rohingya Society Malaysia (RSM)
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