



Press Release: Rohingya Continue to Suffer Food Shortages and Unlivable Conditions

15 March 2018, London, U.K. -- The Burma Human Rights Network has been informed by several Rohingya villagers who remained in Burma's Northern Rakhine State of continued food shortages and unlivable conditions due to restrictions put in place by the government and security forces. Of those remaining, frequent complaints were made related to limited food rations, inability to access agricultural work, severe travel restrictions and fear of continuing attacks by vigilante groups from neighboring ethnic Rakhine communities.

Villagers from Gutar Pyin, in Buthidaung Township, have complained of food shortages and increased restrictions on movement since August of 2017 when security forces began their "clearance operations" in the area. After 200 homes were burnt down as part of the military's campaign, only 1500 villagers are reported to remain. Those remaining lack adequate shelter and are dependent on monthly rations from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). One villager told BHRN, "In one house three families have to live together. We've requested permission from the authorities to rebuild the homes but we have not received it yet."

"The continued desperation of the Rohingya who remain in Northern Rakhine State is inhumane. The authorities are imposing restrictions on the most basic of aid supplies in what appears to be an effort to make life unbearable for the remaining Rohingya. Yet at the same time, the Burmese Government is claiming they are prepared to offer safe and comfortable conditions to Rohingya refugees returning from Bangladesh. Clearly there is a contradiction here, and its purpose seems to be an attempt at fooling the International Community," said Kyaw Win, Executive Director of BHRN.

In Taung Ywa, Taung Che Ywa, Myaut Ywa villages, Buthidaung Township, villagers complained of restrictions on areas they once worked in agriculture or wood gathering. Villagers have said they are forced to share what few rice paddies they have locally, and when they are able to get permission to go to markets to get food they are forced to pay bribes to police in order to enter. In Nga Yant Chaung village tract, there are 11 houses and in Pauk Taw Pyin village, there are only 9 houses left. In Kyay Hnot Thee village there were previously 800 people lived now only 500 remain. Similarly, villagers from Adu Gaw Ni village (Kan Du), Kyein Tan village (Zin Ka Nar) Pho Nyo Leik Ywa Gyi and Pho Nyo Leik have complained that they are unable to work or support themselves due to worsening restrictions on areas they previously worked in and said that safety concerns of vigilante threats are causing residents to continue to flee to Bangladesh.

As Burma attempts to convince the world that they are capable of resettling the 700,000 Rohingya refugees who fled to Bangladesh last year, it is vital that the international community insist that Burma address the human rights violations and squalid living conditions which the Rohingya population in Northern Rakhine is currently facing. Further, Burma must create a viable plan in coordination with UNHCR and other relevant agencies to resettle the Rohingya to their original lands with assurances of full rights and mechanisms to ensure their safety.

Editors' note

Since 25 August 2017, the Burmese Authorities unleashed a brutal campaign against the civilian population, which has caused more than half of the Rohingya population in Rakhine State to flee. Plans to repatriate the Rohingya have been discussed by Burma and Bangladesh since the fall of 2017, with the first plan officially announced by the two nations in late November. Since then NGOs and various states have criticized these plans for their failures to adequately address any concerns of the people they would directly affect and their lack of actionable plans to protect and ensure their rights. Besides, there are also 120,000 IDPs remaining in squalid camps since 2012, and facing severe humanitarian crisis.

Organisation's Background

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.

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