



For Immediate Release

United Nations Must Act Urgently to Bring Justice for Myanmar's Atrocities

(Geneva, 17 September 2018) – The United Nations and its member states must act urgently to investigate and prosecute those responsible for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes said Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), Progressive Voice and Women's Peace Network - Arakan following the release of the full report of the Independent International Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFMM), today, which was followed by an interactive dialogue at the UN Human Rights Council with states and other stakeholders – a large majority of whom endorsed the report.

'The report is courageous and historic,' said Wai Wai Nu of Women's Peace Network - Arakan and a Rohingya human rights defender. 'The detailed findings in the report confirm that genocide may have been committed against the Rohingya, while war crimes and crimes against humanity are being perpetrated in Kachin and Shan States. Our communities have been suffering decades of systematic and institutionalised discrimination and persecution at the hands of the Myanmar military. Now is the time to act,' she continued.

The IIFMM in its 440-page report detailed information of 'crimes that shock the human conscience,' and provided the Council with a five-point framework for accountability including the establishment of an international judicial mechanism, and reiterated its initial calls to prosecute Myanmar's Commander-in-Chief, Senior General Min Aung Hlaing and leaders of the Myanmar military for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes. The report indicates that there is circumstantial linkage between offline and online hate speech - particularly on Facebook - that has plagued the country since last year, particularly as ultra-nationalists have been emboldened to spread their racist rhetoric, hate-speech and violence, while the government has been unwilling and unable to take action against this rising Bamar Buddhist nationalism.

'The IIFMM's report is a major turning point in history toward justice and accountability especially for the people,' said Khin Ohmar of Progressive Voice. 'The report has set the record straight by bringing to light the longstanding institutionalised and systematic oppression and atrocities committed by successive regimes. They have robbed the history of ethnic and religious minority communities as well as their dignity and equality in favor of the majority Bamar Buddhist status quo,' she continued.

Report finds similar patterns of violations by the Myanmar military in ethnic areas throughout Myanmar as minorities continue to experience discrimination and persecution on ethnic and religious grounds. Due to the resumption of war in Kachin and northern Shan States in 2011 and the ever growing intensification

of conflict and conflict-related human rights violations, over 120,000 civilians have been displaced and 200 churches have been attacked, ransacked and destroyed or replaced by Buddhist pagodas that have been reconstructed in its place.

‘The peace process is stalled while it also lacks genuine political will by the Myanmar military,’ said Stella Naw, a Kachin human rights defender. ‘The Myanmar military continues to breach the Nationwide Ceasefire Agreement and commit crimes against humanity and war crimes targeting civilians indiscriminately in Kachin and northern Shan States. This situation further displaces civilians, as humanitarian aid continues to be blocked,’ she added.

The report also finds that the UN system failed to react when acts that may amount to genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes occurred. ‘The UN system needs to urgently look itself in the mirror and review its behavior in Myanmar,’ said R. Iniyang Ilango of FORUM-ASIA. ‘This is not the first time that UN actors have been implicated in downplaying human rights concerns in the face of crises. It is imperative for the UN Secretary General Antonio Guterres to address this as a matter of priority and devise a common system-wide strategy for Myanmar that is accountable to human rights priorities of the UN and its Human Rights Upfront Action Plan,’ he said.

FORUM-ASIA, Progressive Voice and Women’s Peace Network - Arakan call on UN member states to act urgently on the IFFMM’s recommendations and work towards an immediate UN Security Council referral of the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court. The organisations further urged the ongoing session of the UN Human Rights Council to act by setting up a mechanism to prepare case files for prosecution, collect and preserve evidence as recommended by the IFFMM, and to set up a Trust Fund to meet the urgent needs of victims, including through psychosocial, livelihood support, legal aid and other services.

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