



BURMESE ROHINGYA ORGANISATION UK (BROUK)

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Media Release from Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK

For Immediate Release 10th November 2018

ASEAN leaders must push Myanmar to end Rohingya genocide

Southeast Asian leaders must stop burying their heads in the sand and pressure Myanmar to end the ongoing genocide against Rohingya when they gather in Singapore next week, said the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK).

ASEAN heads of state are meeting for the 33rd ASEAN Summit in Singapore between 13 and 15 November, when they are expected to discuss political and economic issues facing the region.

“ASEAN’s response to the crisis in Rakhine State has been marked by shameful silence and inaction. As heads of state gather in Singapore next week, they must pressure Myanmar to end all abuses against the Rohingya and show that they will not stand idly by while a genocide is unfolding in one of their member states,” said Tun Khin, President of BROUK.

“The almost complete lack of regional pressure on Myanmar will only mean that Nay Pyi Taw feels emboldened to carry out abuse against the Rohingya in the future. ASEAN has a key role to play in ending the atrocities against Rohingya – leaders must take this seriously.”

Although the ASEAN Charter spells out a commitment to human rights and allows member states to “address emergency situations affecting ASEAN by taking appropriate actions”, in practice the regional bloc’s “non-interference” principle has meant that it has largely stayed silent on atrocity crimes in member states.

Since the Myanmar security forces launched a “clearance operation” in Rakhine State in August 2017 that killed thousands of Rohingya and drove more than 700,000 to flee across the border to Bangladesh, there has been no official ASEAN condemnation of Myanmar’s actions.

Some individual ASEAN states and officials – notably from Indonesia and

Malaysia – have, however, spoken out. On 29 August, Malaysian Foreign Minister Saifuddin Abdullah called on Myanmar to bring perpetrators of crimes against Rohingya to justice, and to let the Rohingya return “to peace and a life of dignity”.

“Malaysia and Indonesia have shown moral courage in defending the rights of the Rohingya. Now it is up to ASEAN as body to follow suit, and once and for all prove that it is genuinely committed to creating a region where atrocity crimes are unacceptable,” said Tun Khin.

The ASEAN Summit in Singapore is taking place as Myanmar is preparing to receive the first group of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh, part of a repatriation deal signed between the two states in November 2017.

Myanmar has announced that 2,260 Rohingya will be returned to Rakhine State in mid-November, even though the refugees themselves have not been formally consulted, and conditions in Myanmar are far from safe and secure for their return. Yanghee Lee, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, earlier this week urged Myanmar and Bangladesh to halt the repatriation plans as Nay Pyi Taw had not taken any steps to create a safe environment for Rohingya.

BROUK stresses that repatriation effort should not start until the full human rights of Rohingya can be guaranteed inside Myanmar. This must include ending all forms of discrimination against Rohingya, granting them full citizenship, and a guarantee of international protection for Rohingya against further abuses by the military.

“The rushed plans to push Rohingya refugees across the border into a country where they were subjected to systematic killings not long ago must be stopped. Myanmar continues to impose widespread discrimination against Rohingya, and as long as no perpetrators have been held to account, the risk of further abuse from the security forces is virtually guaranteed,” said Tun Khin.

“ASEAN leaders should do all they can to ensure that the repatriation plans do not begin until the human rights of returning refugees can be guaranteed. Crucially, the Rohingya community itself must also be consulted about any plans affecting their future.”

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