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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 4: Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar

FRESH MILITARY VIOLATIONS HIGHLIGHT ONGOING IMPUNITY IN MYANMAR

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-First session
24 June – 12 July 2019

Mr. President,

We thank the Special Rapporteur for her update. We agree that the human rights situation in Myanmar remains critical.

In Rakhine State, there has been a major escalation in fighting between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group, since January 2019. Amnesty International has documented serious violations by the military against civilians, including unlawful attacks, arbitrary arrests, torture and other ill-treatment, enforced disappearances, extrajudicial executions, and forced labour. All communities – including Rakhine, Rohingya, Mro, Khami, and Chin – are being affected, regardless of their ethnicity and religion.¹

Similarly serious violations are also ongoing in Kachin and Shan States in northern Myanmar, despite the announcement of a temporary ceasefire by the military in December 2018, recently extended by two months until 31 August 2019. These include unlawful killings, arbitrary arrests, torture and ill-treatment, and the use of landmines.

These ongoing violations show the consequences of ongoing impunity for a military which stands accused of crimes against humanity, war crimes, and genocide. The prospect of meaningful justice and accountability in Myanmar is currently almost non-existent. We urge the Council to continue to explore all avenues for international justice and support the swift operationalization of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM).

Mr. President,

There is a worrying erosion of the freedoms of expression, association, and peaceful assembly across the country, and we are concerned by a surge in politically-motivated arrests and imprisonment in recent months.

¹ Amnesty International, “No one can protect us”: War crimes and abuses in Myanmar’s Rakhine State (Index: ASA 16/0417/2019), 29 May 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0417/2019/en/>.

Filmmaker Min Htin Ko Ko Gyi has been detained since 12 April 2019 for criticising the military's role in politics on social media,² while Rakhine journalist Aung Marm Oo is hiding after learning – through the media – that he faces criminal charges under Myanmar's notorious Unlawful Associations Act.³

Politically-motivated arrests and detention are made possible by a range of laws which have long been criticised for violating the rights to freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly. Repealing or else amending these laws is one area where the current civilian-led government could make important progress, but with less than 18 months until general elections, time is running out.

Ms. Lee,

Given continuing violations in the country and the authorities' refusal to cooperate with UN human rights mechanisms, including your mandate, what additional measures do you think this Council should take to address the situation?

Thank you, Mr. President.

² Amnesty International, *Myanmar: Health concerns for detained filmmaker* (Index: ASA 16/0478/2019), 6 June 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0478/2019/en/>.

³ Amnesty International, *Myanmar: Rakhine journalist in hiding, facing charges* (Index: ASA 16/0580/2019), 24 June 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0580/2019/en/>.