
RAKHINE SITUATION CONTINUING TO DETERIORATE DURING CONFLICT

London, UK -- The Burma Human Rights Network is extremely alarmed by the continued fighting, deaths of individuals in the custody of Burmese authorities, and worsening humanitarian situation in Rakhine State amid the conflict between the Burmese Military and the ethnic insurgent group, the Arakan Army. The conflict in Rakhine stems from the conflict in Burma's Kachin State, where the Arakan Army first formed, but spread to Rakhine State and worsened significantly over the past year. Most recently a 28-year-old man named Zaw Win Hline died under suspicious circumstances while in military custody in Rakhine's Mrauk U Township. He is the 14th civilian to die in military custody in Rakhine State this year, according to The Irrawaddy.

"The number of civilian deaths, reports of torture, arbitrary arrests, and worsening humanitarian situation should be alarming for the entire international community. The issue has seldom been raised and Burma has not been held to account for their continued violations of human rights and international norms. The international community should act now, to avoid repeating the mistakes of past inaction," said BHRN's executive director, Kyaw Win.

As fighting carries on in Rakhine State, BHRN has received continued reports of torture, indiscriminate attacks by security forces against civilians, arbitrary arrests, attacks on religious places, the use of land mines, and injuries or deaths resulting from unexploded artillery shells. At the same time, internally displaced persons (IDPs) are reporting shortages of food and aid due to restrictions related to the conflict. IDPs near Mrauk U Township also complained of flooding during recent rains, which is likely to worsen as the rainy season continues. Rohingya refugees living in northern Rakhine State are also suffering from significant aid shortages, many of them since 2017 when the Burmese army engaged in a genocidal campaign against the minority.

In light of recent revelations about the UN's failure to avoid catastrophes in Rakhine State in recent years, it is imperative that the International Community act now to avoid repeating the same mistakes. Burma must allow full and unhindered access for NGOs operating in Rakhine State and all civilians must have access to aid. The use of sanctions against the Burmese Military and their business associates should be utilized without hesitation until human rights violations cease. The international community should also take steps to negotiate a ceasefire between the Burmese Army and the Arakan Army and move to have the Burmese include the Arakan Army in existing treaties with other insurgent groups throughout the country. Finally, ASEAN nations have a particularly important role to play in influencing Burma's behavior, as they will most likely have to bear the consequences of new refugees created by the conflict fleeing by land or boat.

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London and operates across Burma/Myanmar 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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