



Joint Statement by Karen Community of Canada and Rohingya Human Rights Network Canada

December 3, 2019

As community-based organizations representing refugees from Myanmar in Canada, we welcome The Gambia for filing a case at the International Court of Justice against Myanmar for its violations of the Genocide Convention against the Rohingya people. We also welcome the commitment made by Canada's former Minister of Foreign Affairs and now Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon. Chrystia Freeland, to explore options to support Gambia's initiative.

Like the Rohingyas, other ethnic nationalities in Myanmar have also suffered systematic violations and abuses of fundamental human rights, and they remain subjected to violent persecution under military rule. It is common practice for the Myanmar military to conduct arbitrary arrest and detention, brutal beating and torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence, land confiscation, and indiscriminate killing of vulnerable ethnic nationalities in remote regions of the country.

The continued presence of the Myanmar military in and around villages in ethnic areas enables the perpetuation of this brutal treatment against ethnic nationalities. Consequently, hundreds of thousands of Internally Displaced Persons of different ethnic nationalities are currently living in makeshift tents under perilous conditions along the nation's borders. Hundreds of thousands more have fled their homes to neighboring countries, where they are living as refugees and stateless persons without proper protection and subjected to constant fear of arrest and persecution.

The current NLD government is not democratic. It has failed to protect the people of Myanmar from military abuses. Under the NLD government, more political prisoners have been detained in jails for longer periods of time. The current NLD government continues to discriminate against ethnic nationalities and violate their freedoms of movement, expression, and peaceful association. For example, the government has unlawfully detained Karenni youth who protested the government's plans to install a nationalist statue in Loikaw, Kayah State.

Canada's support for action at the International Court of Justice will bring hope to the remaining genocide survivors. Up to 600,000 Rohingya remain confined in the villages of Rakhine, with severe restrictions on movement, livelihood, marriage, education and health care. Canada's support could also help deter Myanmar from continuing to perpetrate atrocities against other minorities, who are constantly being targeted, murdered, tortured and raped by Myanmar's military.

Finally, Canada can lead in mobilizing international support among its key allies, such as the United States, the European Union, and the wider international community, to take concrete legal action to prevent Myanmar from continuing its criminal conduct, to stop all forms of abuse in the country, and to restore genuine democratic government, peace and harmony among all ethnic nationalities in Myanmar.

Media Contacts:

- Slone Phan, Chair, Karen Community of Canada. Ph: (204) 229-6613. Email: chairkcc@gmail.com
- Fareed Khan, Director of Advocacy and Media Relations, Rohingya Human Rights Network.

Ph: (819)684-5061. Email: fareed-khan@rogers.com