

DIGITAL HATE



**Incitement of public opposition to the case
against Burma the International Court of Justice (ICJ)**

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About BHRN

BHRN is funded by the National Endowment for Democracy (NED), Unitarian Universalist Service Committee (UUSC), the American Jewish World Service (AJWS), Tide Foundation (TF), and private donors. We have members across Burma and on the Thailand and Bangladeshi borders. Any information we receive is checked for credibility by experienced journalists and researchers in the organisation. We publish press releases and reports after our own investigations.

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Acknowledgement

Digital Hate is an ongoing series by Burma Human Rights Network that will regularly publish information regarding the spread of hate speech inside of Burma and the risks of escalating tensions and violence that could occur as a result. Issues will be released as relevant topics emerge, rather than monthly, to ensure that the information contained in the issue is pertinent and current.

BHRN has tried best the nearest translation of the original Facebook post from Burmese to English and apology in advance if there is any shortcoming.

Executive Summary:

- Following the case against Burma at the International Court of Justice a steady increase in anti-Muslim hate speech has been observed in the country.
- State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's own language has dismissed the legitimacy of the courts and UN missions while rallying the public against them.
- Individuals close to Aung San Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy have posted comments on social media advocating the death of Rohingya and undermining the ICJ's legitimacy.
- A former military officer and ally of the military aligned USDP party spread conspiracy theories about Rohingya as part of an Islamic invasion into Buddhist lands and demonised the Rohingya as unwanted even among Muslims. The same officer referred to the ICJ case as a "threat to rape the future of Myanmar"
- Several prominent Buddhist-nationalists continue to use social media to spread disinformation about the ICJ case and demonise Muslims.
- The grandson of former Burmese Dictator Ne Win has frequently used social media to demonise the Rohingya and undermine the legitimacy of the ICJ case, once writing, "The exiled Bengali activists should be prosecuted as they are the traitors who are liars and working for the cause of Bengali people."
- Facebook continues to be slow or inactive in moderating posts containing hate speech by public figures and nationalist inside of Burma.

Methodology:

The information compiled in this report is based upon the monitoring of hundreds of social media accounts and thousands of posts. The information presented in this report highlights the most prominent figures among those posting hate speech on social media. The information compiled is from December of 2019 to February of 2020. The staff who compiled this information live inside of Burma and are native Burmese speakers. Any interviews conducted in relation to this report were done in Burmese by native Burmese speakers living inside of Burma.

Introduction

This first issue of Digital Hate focuses on hate speech around the International Court of Justice's ruling to allow provisional measures against Burma to protect the ethnic Rohingya while the court investigates Burma for genocide against them. Burma was ordered to submit a review on 23rd May of measures they've taken to demonstrate to the court that they have complied with the ruling. Burma Human Rights Network has documented several of Burma's failings to do so since the order was issued and it appears possible Burma will not submit any documents demonstrating compliance.

Since a lawsuit against Burma was submitted to the International Court of Justice (ICJ), there have been increased attacks against the case on several social media platforms, including Facebook and VK (A Russian based social media). Most of the comments in the social media posts about the issue suggest that the lawsuit was unjustly submitted to the ICJ through collusion between the court and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

There have been several posts by pro-nationalists that appeared on Facebook and VK against the West African State of The Gambia which filed the lawsuit against Burma in the ICJ. The posts also criticised political activists and Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) which support the lawsuit, calling them traitors.

In an address to the nation on 18 December last year, the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi shared her experience of representing the country at the ICJ. She said the accusations made in the lawsuit by The Gambia were based on the report of the International Fact-finding Mission on Myanmar (FFM). She said Burma did not recognise the FFM from the time it was established by the United Nations Human Rights Council. She said, "If the people of Myanmar stand together with us it would be an invaluable strength for us". This message amounts to advocating for public opposition to the case.

Daw Thin Thin Shwe and Mg Mg Aye

In an interview with the *Democratic Voice of Burma (DVB)*, Daw Thin Thin Shwe, who travelled to The Hague from Yangon to support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi during the trial said,

“What I want to say is anyone who faces assault on the country will react in such a way. As you know the powerful countries are killing even those who try to approach their country’s border. We believe it is fair to treat them in such a way as they are the people who are trying to snatch a piece of land from us.” The comment came at the time when the whole country was focusing on the case against Myanmar in the ICJ.

Another supporter of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Mg Mg Aye, recently made an atrocious statement on social media in which he called for the killing of Rohingya people. Mg Mg Aye attracted public attention for his critical comments against Rohingya people made on social media during the brutal military operations against the Rohingya people in 2017.



“ I want to organise a game in Rakhine State today. The game will be like this: I would put up loudspeakers on Tanks there and play the national anthem of Myanmar and kill those who did not sing along with the anthem. ”



In the picture, U Mg Mg Aye (picture A) and Daw Thin Thin Shwe (picture B) are seen together with Daw Aung San Suu Kyi.

Dr Nay Zin Latt

Dr. Nay Zin Latt is a former military officer and a crony. He established the National Progressive Party and serves as the chair of the party. His party is an ally of the military aligned Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

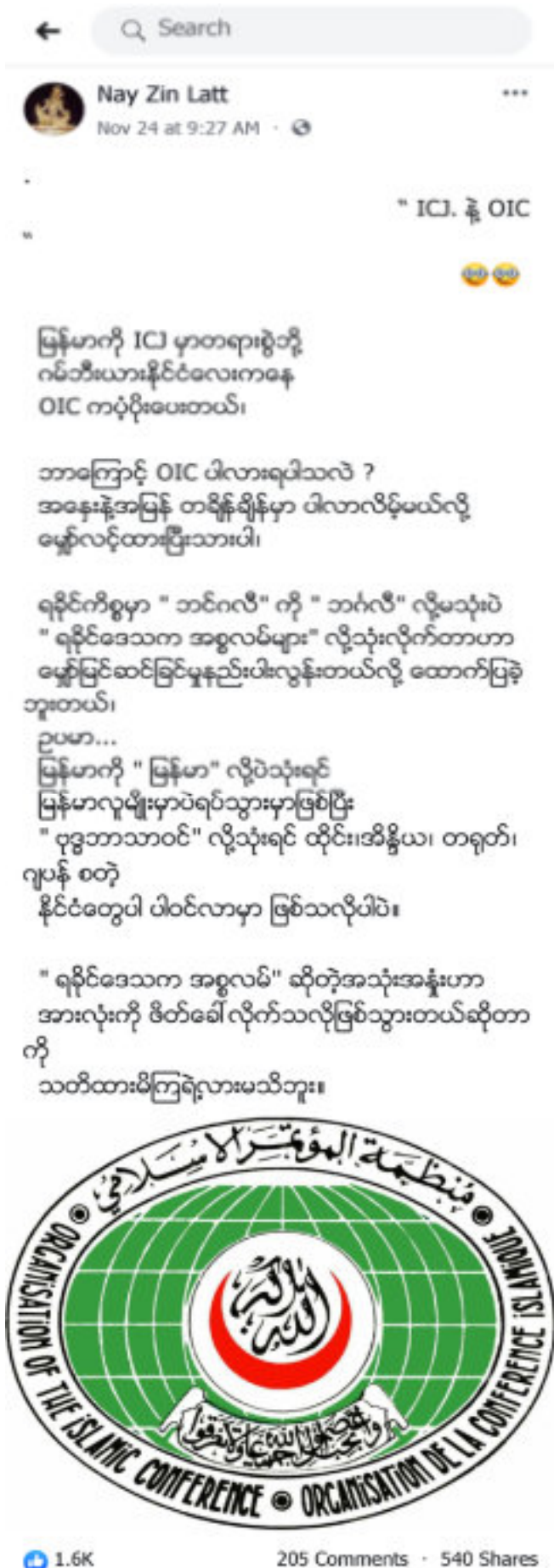


It is not a matter of Rohingya, it is a political matter.

They do not allow them (Rohingya) to live with them (Muslims in other countries), even though they belong to the same race.

The answer is very clear. The Rohingya people are used as victims, they hit us with the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). We are threatened with the ICJ and the Information and Communication Technology (ICT). They are trying to create a condition to paralyse the institution.

Do you think Bangladesh would be peaceful? There is one opening for China. After Myanmar, they will turn towards you. You wait and see there will be war break out before the matter with the ICJ is resolved.



A small country the Gambia is supported by the Organisation of Islamic State (OIC) to file a lawsuit against Myanmar in the ICJ. Why did the OIC have to get involved? We always expected OIC to get involved in the matter sooner or later. I have pointed out that the attempt to refer to the Bengalis as Muslims in Rakhine State was an unwise move.

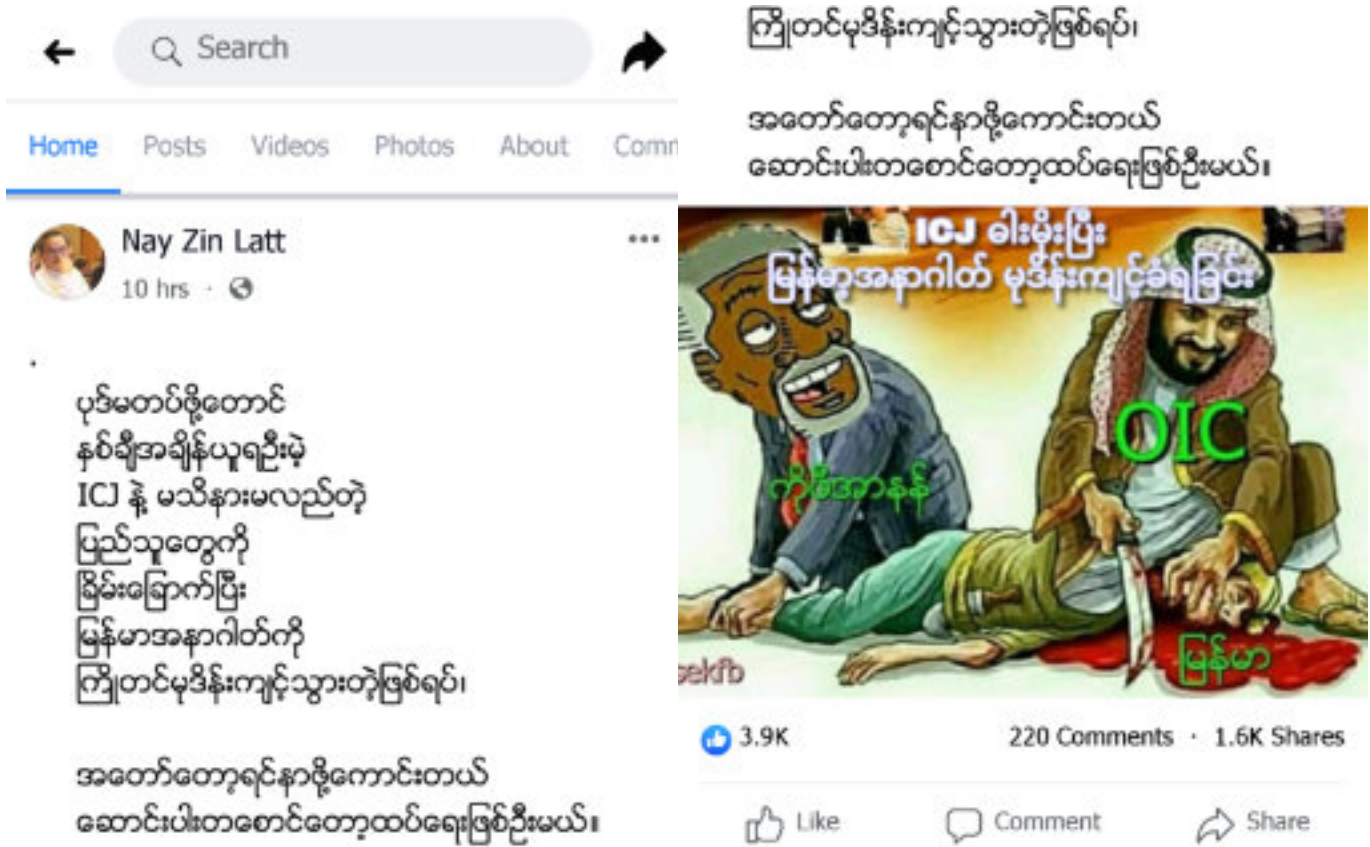
For example, if we use Myanmar as Myanmar it will end as a reference to Myanmar. Otherwise, if we use Buddhists, Thailand, India, China, and Japan would also get implicated. I wonder why the people overlooked the fact that if we refer to Muslims from Rakhine Region it invites all Muslims.

We can describe this episode as ICJ, who will (continue) for years, even to decide the charge against Myanmar and attempt to rape Myanmar's future by exaggerating the threat of ICJ.

It is a very heart-wrenching episode, I am planning more articles on this.

Nay Zin Latt played a key role in the advisory team of former president U Thein Sein. He was instrumental in establishing the Centre for Strategic and International Studies, which is still indoctrinating citizens with ultra nationalist ideologies. He foments division, religious nationalism, and violence through his posts on social media. One of his recent posts shows a man in middle eastern dress cutting the throat of a man in traditional Burmese dress.


On his Facebook page, Nay Zin Latt wrote a post with the title "Rape of Myanmar's future under the shade of swords". The post was liked by more than 39,000 people in about 10 hours and it was shared among 16,000 social media users. 220 people wrote remarks on the post, most of whom expressed their opinion in support of the post.



Dr. Kyaw Swe (Taungtwin Gyi)

Dr. Kyaw Swe (Taungtwin Gyi) is a nationalist activist who said in a public forum on nationalism held in Hpa-An City, Karen State that human rights are only for human beings and that "Bengalis" could not be called human beings. He wrote on a social media page that if the ICJ grants citizenship rights to Rohingya, he would become a rebel against the state. His comments overtly engage in dehumanisation which is a part of genocidal intent. It can also be argued that his comments encourage mass killing, or some kind of armed response to the Rohingya as a group while Muslim in Karen already facing immense pressure from ultra nationalist arms groups.

← Search

 **Kyaw Swe** Nov 21 at 12:08 PM · 🌐

မယ်မယ်ကို ကြိုဆိုကြမှာက
 ရိုနေဆန်းလွင် ဦးဆောင်တဲ့
 နိုင်ငံစုံဆန္ဒပြသမားတွေဖြစ်နေရင် ---
 တရားရုံးမှာ အမှုရင်ဆိုင်နေချိန်
 တရားရုံးပြင်ပက
 မယ်မယ်တို့ကို ဆန္ဒပြနေကြရင် ---
 ဒီထင်ဘာ ၉ ရက်နေ့ လိုပြီ ၊
 ဒီထင်ဘာ ၁၀ ရက်နေ့ ပြိုင်ပြီ၊
 ၁၁ ရက်နေ့ ခံပြုဖြစ်သွားမယ်
 တရားရုံးဆုံးဖြတ်ချက်မှာ
 ဖင် ပိတ် ပြန်လာခဲ့ရင် ---
 နောက်လာမှာက
 အနိုင်ဆုံးက ရိုအဖြစ် လက်ခံ၊
 နိုင်ငံသားအခွင့်အရေး အပြည့်ပေး၊
 အလယ်အလတ်က Safe zone ခွင့်ပြု
 UN Peace-keeping Force ခြေချစွင့်၊
 အမြင့်ဆုံးက ခွဲရေး/တွဲရေး အတွက်
 ဆန္ဒခံယူပွဲ ခွင့်ပြု ရလားအတိုင်း
 ဆောင်ရွက်ပေးရမယ်ဆိုရင် ---

ဘယ်လမ်းကိုမှ လက်မခံနိုင်တဲ့ ကျွန်ုပ်
 ဘာလုပ်ရမလဲ???

အားလုံးကို ကြိုနှုတ်ဆက်ထားပါတယ်။
 ကျွန်ုပ် သူပုန် လုပ်မယ်။

👍 1.5K 236 Comments · 340 Shares

👍 Like 💬 Comment ➦ Share

If people like Ro Nay San Lwin, international Rohingya activist, lead in welcoming Aung San Suu Kyi, (he is associating Daw Su with Ro Nay San Lwin)

If they protest against Daw Su from outside of the court, while she is at the court facing the lawsuit on 9th and 10th December,

On 11th December it will be demonstrations by both sides while she would return miserably

The next step at least would be accepting them as Rohingya and granting them citizenship. The moderate outcome would be to grant them a safe zone, allow a UN peace keeping force to station in the area,

The strongest demand would be to have referendum on secession or remain as a part of the union,

And we have to abide by the outcome of a referendum,

So what should I do as any of the above options are unacceptable for me?

I will bid farewell to everyone in advance because I will become a rebel.

U Wirathu



U Wirathu is widely known as the leader of various Buddhist ultra-nationalist groups that have spread anti-Muslim hate speech throughout Burma. He has been blamed for instigating anti-Muslim riots in Rakhine State in 2012 and again against Muslims throughout Burma in the riots of 2013. In particular, his Facebook posts have been directly linked to violent episodes where attacks occurred after Wirathu posted anti-Muslim rumours regarding specific cities and townships in Burma. Wirathu is widely believed to maintain relationships with some figures in the military and avoided any repercussions for his hate speech until 2019 when a warrant for his arrest was issued for sedition after he publicly insulted Daw Aung San Suu Kyi. He remains a fugitive on the run.



“ Now is time to show our strength ”

“The hostile reactions against the military leaders are the same as an assault on our sovereignty. Also the hostile reactions against the government leaders are the same as an assault on our sovereignty.

During the time of the military rule, the monks and people who love and cherish nationalism have performed their duties fully.

Now is the turn for the government if they value the political parties, political lobby groups, and 12 million people. Now is the right time to show your strength.

The nationalist groups are always ready to protect sovereignty by reinforcing the strength of the nation.”

U Wirathu, wrote another post to incite public sentiment against the case in the ICJ. The post was titled “It is high time to show your strength”. In the body of the post, he said the nationalist politicians are always ready to consolidate the strength of the nation to protect the country’s sovereign rights.

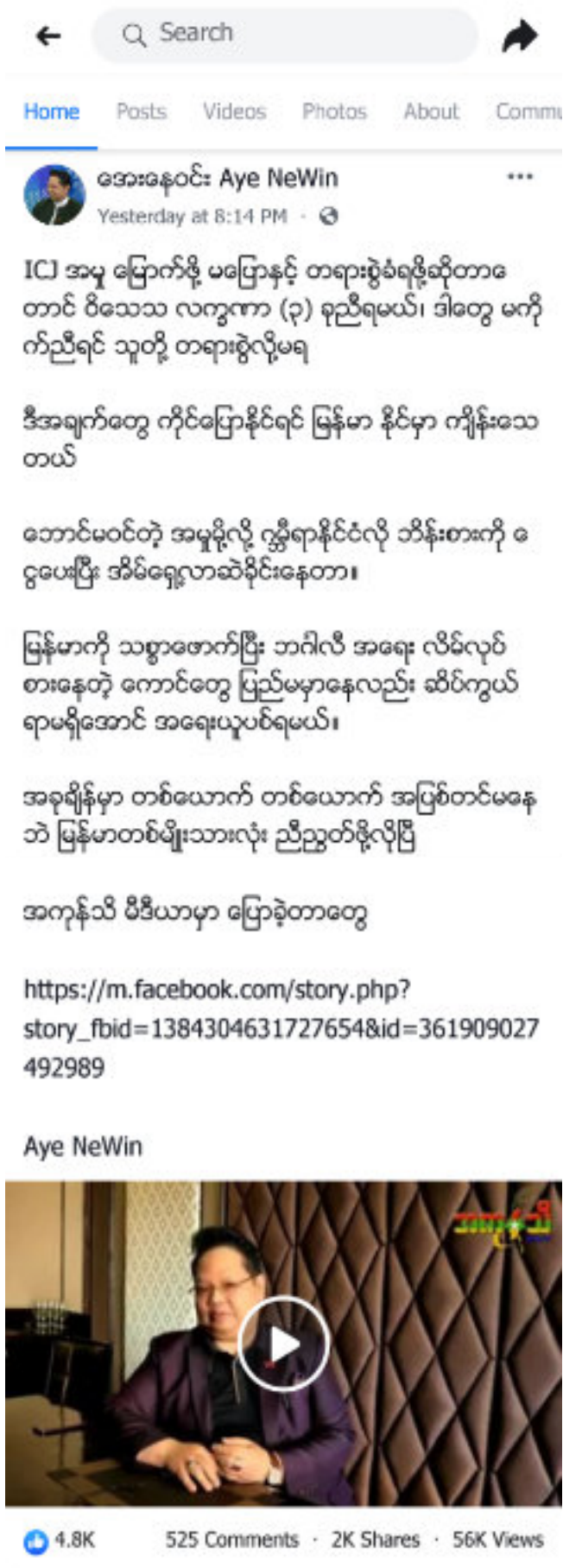
The monk regularly receives donations from the Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing. He was featured on the front page of Newsweek Magazine, with the caption “the face of Buddhist terror”.

Aye Ne Win

Aye Ne Win is a grandson of the former Burmese military dictator U Nay Win, who severely persecuted the entire population of Burma during the time he was in power. Aye Ne Win is known as a crony working closely with the military and NLD government on business. Aye Ne Win is also the founder of a youth gang, Scorpion, which earned notoriety for committing terrors, abuse, and harassment of the general public. His reputation is poor among the public. He was involved in personal attacks against Rohingya rights activists through his social media posts.



In this 2001 family photo courtesy of former Myanmar military dictator Gen. Ne Win's family, Gen. Ne Win sits on a chair with his daughter Sanda Win, second from right, his son-in-law Aye Zaw Win, third from left, and his three grandchildren Aye Ne Win, left, Kyaw Ne Win, second from left, and Zwe Ne Win, right, at Sedona hotel in Yangon. Myanmar's President Thein Sein pardoned 69 more political prisoners Friday, Nov. 15, 2013, part of a promise to free all who remain jailed by the year's end. Among those amnestied are two grandchildren of Gen. Ne Win, Aye Ne Win and Kyaw Ne Win. Both had been on death row since 2002 for allegedly attempting to stage a coup against the then military regime led by Senior General Than Shwe. (AP Photo/Khin Maung Win, Courtesy of Ne Win family) (The Associated Press)



“If the three characteristics are not met a lawsuit could not be accepted in a court, let alone in the ICJ.

If Myanmar can argue from those grounds, we can win the case. As it is not a case which is worthy of being accepted by the court, a country like the Gambia was chosen to serve as a plaintiff. It is like hiring a drug addict to come and curse in front of a house.

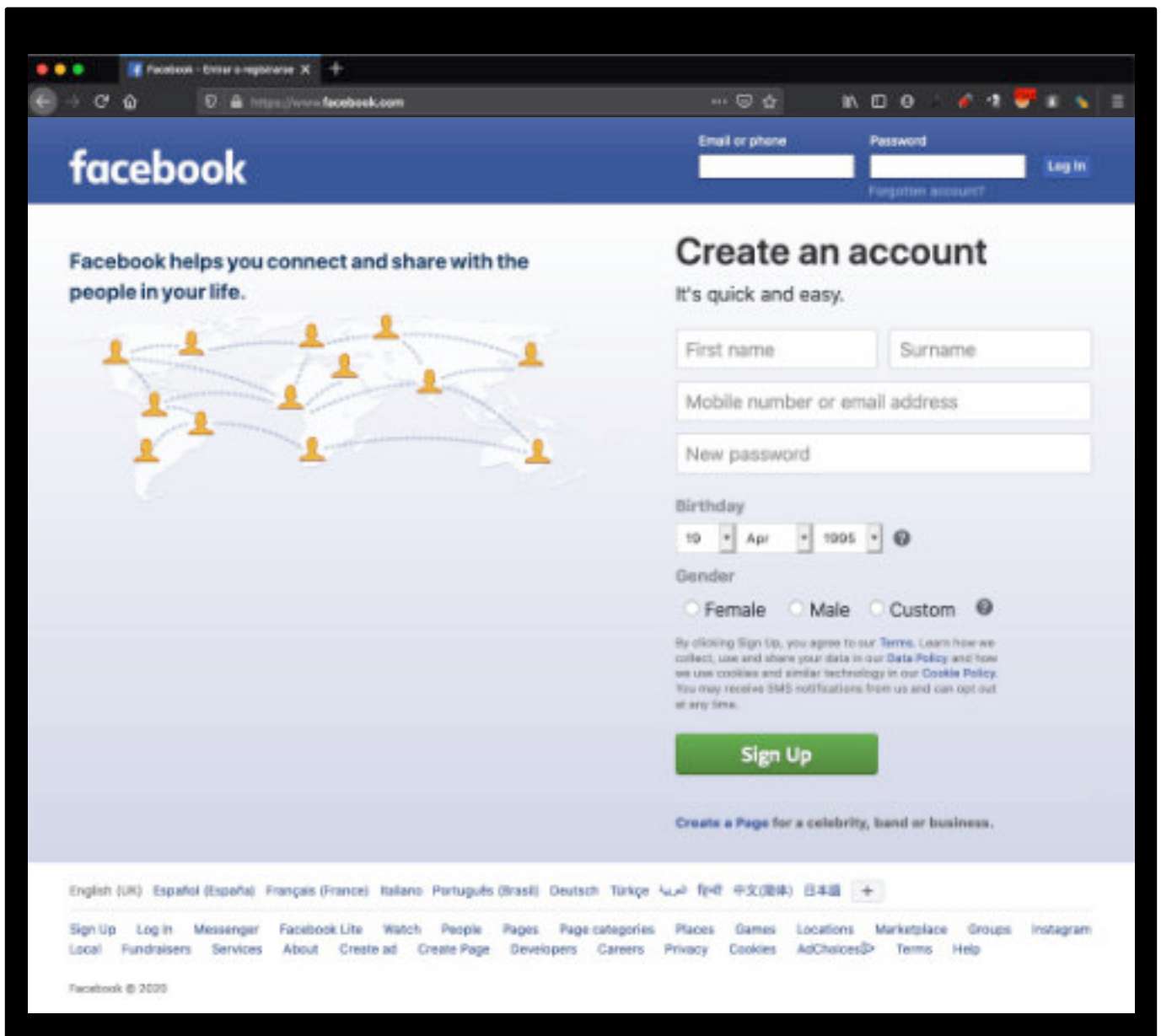
The exiled Bengali activists should be prosecuted as they are the traitors who are liars and working for the cause of Bengali people.

This is not a time to put blame on each other but work together in unity.”

Comment by Aye Nay Win to Ah Kone Thi media which is owned by him.

Aye Ne Win posted a video file on social media on 25 November last year, in which he referred to the case against Burma in ICJ as a drug addict that came to curse in front of a home. The video was liked by 3000 social media users, 24000 people had watched the video, and it was shared among 1200 users. 300 other users wrote their comments on Aye Nay Win’s comment.

On the following day, the number of likes increased to 4800 and those who watched it reached 56,000. Those who shared the file reached 2000 and another 525 people commented on the post. Most of the comments were in support of Aye Nay Win’s opinion on the matter.



Facebook's response to hate speech in Burma remains slow at best. While the platform was widely criticised for its previous role in spreading hate speech that coincided with the mass killing of the Rohingya, dehumanising and demonising language against the Rohingya by political figures and nationalists still persists without intervention. The posts in this report are not small cases by unknown individuals which are hard to track, but widely shared, liked, and viewed posts by prominent political figures. Facebook's inability to respond to such widely seen abuses is inexcusable.

Conclusion

The abuse of social media in Burma has long inflamed religious tensions in the country. Anti-Muslim and xenophobic attitudes in the country are widespread and social media has allowed them a greater platform that is often used as a launching point for real world violence. The use of social media for this purpose by prominent figures connected to the ruling NLD party and Military sets the tone for the rest of the country that it is acceptable to incite hatred and violence online that spills over into the real world. These platforms are also used as a tool to gather support for nationalism in opposition to human rights efforts by the international community. In doing so the NLD and military are working towards the rejection of any finding by UN bodies and rulings by the international courts. As hatred and nationalism spread, those in power are better able to avoid taking any responsibility for egregious human rights violations. In this way, the State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi, mentioned in an address to the nation that the government does not recognise the UN's Fact Finding Mission. Her statement that the lawsuit against Burma in the ICJ is based on the report of the FFM indicates that Burma will not accept the verdict by the ICJ. It also indicates that she will use public backing as a strength to oppose the ICJ verdict.

The comments by the two leading supporters of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi in which they justified the killing of Rohingya sends an alarming message on the safety of Rohingya people, who still remain in Rakhine State. As the NLD is widely viewed as the party of freedom and justice in opposition to the military in the country, their tone is especially relevant and shapes the national dialogue. Where demonisation and degradation of the Rohingya are normalised among NLD circles, the rest of the population will follow.

On top of all of this, the widespread public support for extremist views in relation to the lawsuit against Burma in the ICJ can be clearly seen through the support of the social media posts which advocate for extremist views against Rohingya people. As the lawsuit continues it is likely that hate speech, anti-Muslim sentiment will increase. As this trend worsens it is likely that violence against Muslims in Rakhine State and throughout the country will likely follow.

The Burmese Government must take decisive steps to stop all hate speech by government figures and those associated with them. Political parties must set forward standards for the population to follow that encourage tolerance and understanding to avoid further violence. The military must similarly hold all members to the highest standard and avoid any association with individuals promoting discriminatory ideologies.

Social media companies, particularly Facebook, need to increase efforts to monitor and moderate hate speech used on their platforms. Exceptions should not be made for any public figures, especially when their platforms have previously been used as instruments to organise riots, killings, and religious nationalist sentiment. Posts containing dehumanising language against any ethnic group should be removed as soon as it is reported as a violation of terms of service. Facebook's efforts to increase its staff that can monitor Burmese language posts has surprisingly missed out to remove above posts; although it has been helpful, but more work and transparency is needed to ensure they do not contribute to further violence.

The international community must address the issue of hate speech directly with the Burmese Government and insist that all parties refrain from engaging in discriminatory behaviour. It should be made clear to Burma that this kind of language has already resulted in violence against minorities and mass atrocities that it must stop. All parties in the international community should recognise that hate speech by Burmese politicians and military figures is blatantly in defiance of provisions ordered by the International Court of Justice ordering Burma to end all activity which enables or continues the genocide of the Rohingya.

