



**Human  
Rights  
Now**

**Human Rights Now**

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## Statement regarding the human rights situation in Rakhine State

Human Rights Now, a Tokyo-based international human rights NGO, expresses serious concern in relation to the human rights situation regarding the Rohingya people in Rakhine State, Myanmar.

Muslim Rohingya residents have not been granted formal citizenship from the Myanmar government and have been subject to discrimination and persecution for many years. From 2012 onwards, confrontation and conflict between the Buddhist population of Rakhine State and the Rohingya residents has become more severe, where many persecuted Rohingya have been forced to seek refuge in neighbouring countries, resulting in an international problem.<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately, under the new administration of the National League for Democracy, the seriousness of the situation continues to increase without sufficient efforts from the administration to find a human rights based solution to this problem.

On the 9<sup>th</sup> of October, an armed militant group attacked Myanmar security forces. In response, security forces have undertaken a sweeping counterinsurgency against Rohingya, from which there have been various reports of serious human rights violations perpetrated by security forces, such as extrajudicial killings, rape and sexual assault, arbitrary detention and torture, and the burning down of houses and mosques.<sup>2</sup>

While the Myanmar government completely denies such reports of human rights abuses, given that there has been no independent investigation and media coverage of the conflict area is restricted, the truth of the human rights situation cannot be verified.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> United Nations, General Assembly, Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar: Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, A/HRC/32/18, p.3 (29 June 2016), available from: <https://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G16/135/41/PDF/G1613541.pdf?OpenElement>

<sup>2</sup> OHCHR, "Myanmar: UN expert warns of worsening rights situation after "lockdown" in Rakhine State," (18 November 2016), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/DisplayNews.aspx?NewsID=20895&LangID=E>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid; OHCHR, "Press briefing notes on Myanmar, Colombia and 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Human Rights Covenants," (16 December 2016), <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Media.aspx>.

International organizations have reported that during this period, around 30,000 people have been forced to flee their homes, the majority of whom were Rohingya.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, since the attacks in October, many Rohingya in fear of persecution are reportedly seeking refuge across the border in Bangladesh.<sup>5</sup> Under these circumstances and given that access for humanitarian agencies has not been sufficiently secured, the humanitarian situation of those forced to flee is a serious concern.<sup>6</sup>

In August, the Myanmar government established the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, appointing former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan as chairperson. In December, Mr. Annan inspected the conflict area and has condemned the lack of transparency of the Myanmar government.<sup>7</sup>

Human Rights Now strongly warns that conflict will become further complicated by the continuation of oppression and discrimination by, and the persecutory policy of, the Myanmar government against Rohingya residents. There is a significant danger that systematic human rights abuses against civilians by military and security forces, which target Rohingya, will increase Rohingya residents' affinity towards extremism.

Human Rights Now strongly urges the Myanmar government to exert greater control over the military and security forces and to immediately stop attacks, contrary to international human rights law and humanitarian law, on civilians. In addition, an immediate and highly transparent investigation should be implemented to thoroughly investigate the truth of reported human rights abuses, and bring those who are responsible for human rights violations to account.

The United Nations should be involved in investigating the truth of human rights violations in Rakhine State, including the dispatch of a fact finding mission,

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<sup>4</sup> United Nations, UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Humanitarian Situation in the Northern Part of Rakhine State", 13 December 2016, <http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/ocha-update-humanitarian-situation-northern-part-rakhine-state-myanmar-13-december>; BBC News, "UN condemns Myanmar over plight of Rohingya," (16 December 2016), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38345006>.

<sup>5</sup> BBC News, "Bangladesh presses Myanmar as Rohingya flee across border," 23 November 2016, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38083901>.

<sup>6</sup> US Embassy in Burma, "Joint Statement on Humanitarian Access to northern part of Rakhine State," 9 December 2016, <https://mm.usembassy.gov/joint-statement-humanitarian-access-northern-part-rakhine-state/>.

<sup>7</sup> Mike Ives, "Kofi Annan, in Myanmar, Voices Concern Over Reported Abuses of Rohingya," 6 December 2016, The New York Times, <http://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/06/world/asia/kofi-annan-myanmar-rohingya.html?action=click&contentCollection=Asia%20Pacific&module=RelatedCoverage&region=Marginalia&pgtype=article>.

and the Myanmar government must allow full access for such investigation. At the same time, access for independent media should be ensured.

Securing access to supplies necessary for survival of refugees is a pressing issue and access should be provided urgently. While Aung Sun Suu Kyi promised to ensure access for the provision of humanitarian supplies at the recent ASEAN Foreign Ministers' meeting, this needs to be carried out urgently on the ground.<sup>8</sup>

Human Rights Now urges the Myanmar government to promptly grant full access for humanitarian agencies to northern Rakhine State.

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<sup>8</sup> The Bangkok Post, "Suu Kyi: Myanmar to let aid into Rakhine," 19 December 2016, <http://www.bangkokpost.com/news/asean/1163521/suu-kyi-myanmar-to-let-aid-into-rakhine>.