

Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network statement on the situation in the Rakhine State of Myanmar

13th June 2012

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) condemns the recent sectarian violence in the Rakhine State (Arakan State) in Myanmar. APRRN unequivocally deplors the use of violence by all sides, which has resulted in a still indeterminate number of killings and injuries, and the loss of livelihoods for thousands of ethnic Rakhine and Rohingya alike.

The root cause of the problems in Rakhine State is unabated and systematic discrimination suffered by the Rohingya at the hands of government authorities, including severe restrictions on movement, employment, right to marriage, and right to a family which are linked to the Citizenship Law of 1982 that rendered them stateless.

The Myanmar government has responded to the violence by imposing a state of emergency, but there have been worrisome reports that local authorities in Maungdaw and other areas may not be applying the restrictions of the state of emergency equally, with the result of further targeting and persecuting an extremely vulnerable religious and ethnic minority.

There are also reports that the Bangladesh government has increased security on its border with Myanmar, and closed parts of the frontiers, thereby preventing people from fleeing the violence in Rakhine state.

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) calls on:

The Government of Myanmar to,

1. Protect equally all people living in Rakhine State.
2. Initiate an independent investigation into the human rights abuses and bring the perpetrators to justice, including their trial in an independent and fair court of law.
3. Permit access to international monitors based in Myanmar, such as representatives of the UN Country team, and Yangon-based diplomats and the media, to assess the situation and make recommendations for further action.
4. Amend the 1982 Citizenship Law to accommodate the Rohingya as an ethnic group of Myanmar and guarantee that they are not excluded in the forthcoming 2014 national census.

5. Ensure freedom of movement, employment, right to marriage and right to a family that are now denied to the Rohingya, and also ensure that local authorities and military/police commanders cease atrocities like forced labor against the Rohingya.

The government of Bangladesh to,

1. Immediately open its borders, for humanitarian reasons, to allow people to escape from the violence and to provide them with basic assistance until they can return to their homes in Myanmar in safety.

The international community to,

1. Take appropriate measure to pressure the Myanmar government to halt the ongoing violence in Rakhine State, while also recognizing the Rohingya as legitimate citizens of Myanmar, enjoying equal protection of the state.
2. Encourage UNHCR and other international NGOs to maintain their presence in Rakhine State during this state of emergency.
3. Offer both strong support and vigorous pressure to the Bangladesh Government so that it will open its borders to refugees.

Endorsers as of 14/6/2012

ANCORW Cooperative Ltd	Australia
Centre of Refugee Research	Australia
Motra Hayward	Australia
Refugee Council of Australia	Australia
Tyrell Haberkorn	Australia/US
Altsean-Burma	Burma
Cambodian Volunteers for Society (CVS)	Cambodia
Monireth	Cambodia
University of Cambodia	Cambodia
Egyptian Foundation for Refugee Rights	Egypt
Development and Justice Initiative	India
Loyola College	India
Socio Legal Information Centre.	India
LBH Jakarta	Indonesia
Health Equity Initiatives	Malaysia
Vivienne Chew	Malaysia
Cassandra Pillay	Malaysia
Pak Leh	Malaysia

Lawyers For Liberty	Malaysia
SEACeM	Malaysia
Tenaganita	Malaysia
The National Human Rights Society (HAKAM), Malaysia	Malaysia
Myanmar Youth Knowledge Initiative	Myanmar
SalusWorld	Myanmar
Scholar Research and Development Journal	Myanmar
Wimutti Volunteer Group and Political Prisoners' Families Beneficial Network	Myanmar
INHURED International	Nepal
PPR Nepal	Nepal
New Zealand National Refugee Network	New Zealand
PIHRO	Pakistan
Jose Maria Dimaandal	Philippines
The Arakan Project	Regional
Korean Public Interest Lawyers Group GONG-GAM	Republic of Korea
Alistair D. B. Cook	Singapore
The National Council of YMCAs of Sri Lanka	Sri Lanka
Taiwan Association for Human Rights	Taiwan
ForDIA	Tanzania
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development	Thailand
Chin Human Rights Organization	Thailand
COERR of Caritas Thailand	Thailand
Human Security Alliance	Thailand
Sara Baumann	Thailand
Jesuit Refugee Service Asia Pacific	Thailand
Thai Committee for Refugees Foundation (TCR)	Thailand
Asylum Access Thailand	Thailand
AMIT KUMAR SINGH	Thailand
Fahamu Refugee Programme	UK
The Equal Rights Trust	UK
Nicola Tannenbaum	USA
University of Southern California	USA

The Asia Pacific Refugee Rights Network (APRRN) is an open and growing network of over 116 civil society groups and individuals from 18 countries committed to advancing the rights of refugees in the Asia Pacific Region.