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ARAKAN

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)



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Editorial

The Rohingya Genocide: A Call for Justice and Recognition

The plight of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, epitomizes a grave humanitarian crisis defined by systematic violence, persecution, and egregious human rights abuses. Predominantly residing in the western state of Rakhine, the Rohingya have faced relentless discrimination and violence, catalysing a mass exodus from their homeland.

The situation deteriorated markedly in 2017, when the Myanmar military, supported by local militias, initiated a harrowing campaign of ethnic cleansing. This brutal crackdown involved mass killings, sexual violence, arson, and the forced displacement of countless Rohingya, driving them to seek refuge in neighbouring Bangladesh. Both the United Nations and a myriad of human rights organizations have denounced these acts as ethnic cleansing and genocide, underscoring the severity of the crisis.

Despite international outcry, the Myanmar government staunchly refutes allegations of genocide, framing its military operations as counter-terrorism measures. However, this stance has not mitigated global condemnation nor the urgent calls for accountability and justice for the victims of these heinous crimes. In response, both the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) have embarked on investigations to scrutinize the allegations of genocide and other crimes against humanity.

The Rohingya crisis is deeply entrenched in historical animosities and systemic discrimination, necessitating a multifaceted approach to resolution that addresses the root causes of the conflict. This includes acknowledging and rectifying the longstanding denial of citizenship and recognition of the Rohingya's ethnic identity within Myanmar. The international community remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting the displaced Rohingya through humanitarian aid and advocating for accountability for the perpetrators of the atrocities.

In this pivotal moment, the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar is presented with a unique opportunity to affirm its dedication to human rights and equality by recognizing the Rohingya as equals among Myanmar's diverse ethnic tapestry. Such a gesture would not only align with the NUG's professed values but also herald a new chapter in Myanmar's history. The Rohingya community, for its part, has consistently advocated for peaceful coexistence and mutual respect in Arakan, envisioning a future marked by peace and prosperity for all inhabitants of the region and successive generations.

This editorial implores both the national authorities and the international community to redouble their efforts in addressing this crisis, fostering an environment where the Rohingya are not merely survivors of genocide but recognized members of the global community, entitled to justice, dignity, and the right to return home.



From Never Again to Yet Again: The Rohingya Genocide

Nurul Islam

Chairman,

Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA)

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)

It has been almost 76 years since the United Nations passed the Genocide Convention in 1948. If there was one single idea behind the Convention, it was encapsulated in two words - Never Again - which expressed many people's reaction to the atrocities committed in World War II. Yet today, genocide is happening again and again due to failure of the international community to invest resources to prevent and to stop it.

On 11 December 1946 the U.N. General Assembly unanimously passed Resolution 96(1), which identified genocide as 'a crime under international law' and called on Member States both to 'enact the necessary legislation for the prevention and punishment of the crime' and to 'cooperate speedily to prevent and punish it'.

Article II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948, clearly defines genocide as the act of destroying in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group -- such acts are held to include: killing, seriously injuring or causing mental harm to members of such groups, inflicting upon such groups adverse living conditions so that physical destruction of the group is threatened, deliberate attempts to prevent members of the groups from having children, and forcibly transferring children from one group to another.

The Rohingya genocide is a series of ongoing persecutions and killings of the Rohingya people by the Myanmar military, its partners and accomplices with intent to destroy this ethnic community on grounds of ethnicity and religion. Almost all acts as outlined in the Genocide Convention have been perpetrated to date.

The destruction of Rohingya people in Myanmar began decades ago, particularly when dictator General Ne Win's takeover of the government in 1962. He was highly suspicious of non-Buddhists and Muslims, and the Muslim Rohingya were made his main targets. Ne Win and his cronies have had designed a series of armed operations to victimize and exterminate Rohingya which continue until today.

The popular slogan in the country is "to be a Burmese is to be a Buddhist". In Arakan, the Rakhine ultranationalists have been harping on the tune of "Arakan is for Rakhine only, Bengali or Rohingya have nothing to do in Arakan." The military dictatorships have put the two communities at loggerheads and divided them on racial and religious lines. The Rakhine communities are instrumental in the 'Rohingya annihilation' plan of the military junta. Rakhine leaders and academics like Dr. Aye Maung, Dr. Aye Kyaw, Monk Ashin Nayaka, U Khin Maung Saw, Dr. Aye Chan and U Shwe Zan are some of the masterminds, to mention a few.

In 1979 Ne Win, despite his own mixed Burman-Chinese heritage stated:

"Today you can see that even people of pure blood are being disloyal to the race and country but are loyal to others. If people of pure blood act this way, we must carefully watch people of mixed blood. Some people are of pure blood, pure Burmese heritage and descendants of genuine citizens. Karen, Kachin and so forth, are of genuine pure blood. But we must consider whether this people are completely our race, our Burmese people."

In 1982, Ne Win adopted his "Burma Citizenship Law", redefined citizenship and declared Rohingya as non-nationals. "Some observers have suggested that this law was specifically designed effectively to deny Rohingyas the right to nationality." The 1982 law violates several fundamental principles of international law standards, offends the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and leaves Rohingyas exposed to no legal protection of their rights. It serves as an oppressive legal tool particularly against Rohingya people rendering them stateless in their own country.

The military and Buddhist chauvinists, Rakhine extremists – who include politicians, academics, journalists, and monks— have denied the existence of Rohingya. After 1990, the military State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) excluded the Rohingya from its shortlist of 135 so-called national races that Myanmar has recognized indigenous, although, in 1960 U Nu parliamentary government recognized and included them in the list of about fifty ethnic groups and Ne Win also put them on his shortlist of 144 ethnic races.

Systematic misinformation, fake news, and hate speech against Rohingya are widespread in Myanmar. In Arakan, Bengali-phobic and Islamophobic hate crimes spread like wildfire, accusing the Rohingya of being Bengali immigrants suggesting their expulsion to Bangladesh is appropriate and needed. Frequent armed operations have been carried out against Rohingyas, involving terrorization, torture and criminal atrocities, arrest and detention, destruction and expulsion from the country.

In 2012 the organized Buddhists under the aegis of the administration attacked and killed many hundreds of Rohingyas and consequently removed about 140,000 people to internal displacement camps in Sittwe and southern towns where they are living in subhuman conditions without adequate food, health care, education and necessities for life. On 23 August 2012, the former U.S. Ambassador to Myanmar Darek Mitchell said, "In Myanmar the Rohingya are oppressed by everybody."

In 2013–2015 isolated incidents of violence against Rohingya continued to take place. In 2015, the Allard K. Lowenstein International Human Rights Clinic at Yale Law School found "strong evidence that genocide is being committed against Rohingya." The study found that the Burmese government, with the help of extremist Buddhist monks, was responsible for ethnic cleansing and genocide against the Rohingya". In late November 2016 Human Rights Watch released satellite images which showed about 1,250 Rohingya houses in five villages in Kyaukpyu, western Arakan were burned down by security forces. Many people were detained. Their average age was 34, the youngest is 10, and the oldest is 75.

In 2017, the world was appalled by the images of hundreds and thousands of innocent Rohingya men, women and children fleeing mass atrocities in Arakan State. Families were massacred, mass graves uncovered. Hundreds of villages scorched, thousands of houses burned to the ground, women gangraped, babies thrown into the flame, forcing nearly a million survivors to take refuge in neighboring Bangladesh creating a great humanitarian disaster. The crisis spilled over into many countries in the region and beyond, posing threats to regional peace and security. Boats carrying Rohingya refugees on the Naf River were often gunned down by the Myanmar military, including helicopter gunships and the Myanmar Navy. The military also planted internationally banned landmines along the border. Some villages were targeted for ariel bombing.

Since 1948 almost three quarters of Rohingya population were expelled from their homeland in the most inhumane manner. Today Bangladesh is a home to more than 1.2 million Rohingya, including those who came before 25 August 2017, creating the world's largest refugee camps in Cox's Bazar district. Under an impossible situation, many escaped to India or risked deaths by rickety boats to Thailand, Malaysia, Indonesia and other parts of South and Southeast Asia. Thai-Malaysia border, Bay of Bengal, Andaman Sea, and Strait of Malacca became graveyards for the Rohingya boat people. The Rohingya are very appreciative of Bangladesh and other receiving countries for sheltering and taking care of them on humanitarian grounds.

It is appalling that Daw Aung San Suu Kyi did not help the Rohingya even when she was head of the government and even while she was not totally powerless. To the contrary, she and her National League for Democracy (NLD) government defended the military brutalities against the Rohingya even at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). However, the same military are now committing mass atrocity crimes against the whole Myanmar population, and Aung San Suu Kyi herself has been kept in detention.

In 2017 and 2018 the United Nations weighed in on the Rohingya issue. In September 2018, the U.N. Human Rights Council (HRC) mandated Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar (IIFFMM) released a searing report which concluded that the military, as well as some civilians, have committed genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes against its own people; Burma's civilian authorities, including State Counsellor, have not met their "responsibility to protect the civilian population" and have enabled the commission of atrocity crimes. The report found evidence of "genocidal intent", including policies designed to alter the demographic composition of Arakan (Rakhine) State and a premeditated plan for the destruction of Rohingya communities. The IIFFMM also stated that at least 392 Rohingya villages in Rakhine State had been razed to the ground since 25 August 2017. It called for top military officials, including Armed Forces Commander-in-Chief Gen. Min Aung Hlaing to be prosecuted for genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes.

In August 2018, a study estimated that more than 24,000 Rohingya people were killed by Myanmar military and local Buddhists, over 18,000 Rohingya Muslim women and girls were raped, 116,000 Rohingyas were beaten, and 36,000 Rohingyas were thrown into fires. There were also mass killings of Rohingyas by the military, police and Buddhist vigilantes in the villages of Chut Pyin, Inn Din, Ali Than Kyaw, Du Cheratan, Tula Tuli, Gudapyin and others in Rathedaung, Maungdaw and Buthidaung townships. Alongside the Armed Forces, the Myanmar Border Guard Police and Rakhine Buddhist militias were also involved in these atrocities.

Human Rights Watch stated that the gang rapes and sexual violence were committed as part of the military's campaign while Pramila Patten, the United Nations Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, said that the Rohingya women and girls were made the "systematic" target of rapes and sexual violence because of their ethnic identity and religion. Other forms of sexual violence included sexual slavery in military captivity, forced public nudity, and humiliation. HRW reported of a 15-year-old Rohingya girl who was ruthlessly dragged on the ground for over 50 feet and then was raped by 10 Burmese soldiers.

Since November 11, 2019, three separate developments have taken place in different corners of the world within a span of just one week that have shone on Myanmar over its alleged genocidal crimes perpetrated against the Rohingya people. Its civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi and army chief Min Aung Hlaing and others stand to face indictment in various courts. The first one was filed on November 11, at the ICJ by The Republic of Gambia on behalf of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). On November 13, with the initiative of the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK, the second case was submitted in Argentina under the principle of universal jurisdiction, a legal concept enshrined in many countries' law. One day later, on November 14, the International Criminal Court (ICC) approved an investigation into alleged crimes against humanity perpetrated against the Rohingya by the Myanmar military on the territory of Bangladesh. On March 21, 2022, the United States determined that members of the Burmese military committed genocide and crimes against humanity against Rohingya.

Despite the provisional measures ordered by the ICJ in *The Gambia v. Myanmar* case, the military bulldozed and flattened the burnt Rohingya villages and mass graves in order to destroy the evidence of atrocities committed. Some intact villages that lost their Rohingya inhabitants because of the military crackdown were also bulldozed

The utmost important for the Rohingya now is to return home. But they cannot return where bloodshed and violence await them, and the Rohingya in Arakan continue facing existential threats. The international community also has a responsibility to protect this population from the risk of further atrocities.

The Rohingya genocide is an enormous challenge for the international community. It is one of the greatest humanitarian issues of our time. The credible accountability efforts must be supported to ensure victims see justice served and the circle of violence is not repeated.

The Rohingya should be able to peacefully coexist as equals in Arakan/Rakhine State with their 'collective rights' within the Federal Democratic Union of Burma/Myanmar consistent with other ethnic nationalities of the country. Suitable conditions must be created for their voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return to their homeland with appropriate reparation. International community has failed them again and again; it must not fail them again.

Last but not least, no genocide can be prevented or stopped without intervention.

MYANMAR MILITARY'S PLANS TO DIVIDE AND CONQUER IN ARAKAN

*Myanmar Military brings out its most time-tested
and successful weapon to keep control of Arakan.*

By Tin Thein

Since the dawn of human civilisation, kings and generals have frequently utilised a very effective strategy to weaken opposition to their supremacy. The concept of 'Divide and Rule' or 'Divide and Conquer' has successfully destroyed the revolutionary dreams of many communities and brought beleaguered regimes back from the brink. It is a simple yet effective tool in political and military science, yet it has worked successfully on most occasions. One of the forces who have successfully implemented this strategy is the Myanmar Military, especially in relation to Arakan, where they have now created an ethnic tinderbox with even many community leaders in the Rakhine and Rohingya communities looking to each other as arch-enemies rather than the Myanmar Military which distinguished itself with the first genocide of the 21st century against Rohingya Muslims and has currently embarked on a brutal campaign against the Rakhine Buddhists in the name of fighting the Arakan Army.

In 1948, the nation now called Myanmar reappeared on the world map after more than a century of British rule. At first glance, it seemed that unlike neighbouring India, which was divided into two new states, a result mainly of imperial Britain's divide-and-rule strategy, Myanmar had retained its pre-colonial borders. Underneath the surface, it was all horribly deceptive. By the time the flag of the new state replaced the Union Jack all over Myanmar, ancient history was well alive and burning.

One of the flashpoints is our homeland in Arakan. For centuries, Arakan was a separate kingdom, and before British rule started here in 1826, the last Burmese rule was only 41 years. It is anathema to many people of this land when foreign observers identify Arakan as part of Myanmar without considering that for times immemorial, Arakan had been separated from Burma to the East, and it was with great cruelty and the slaughter of more than two hundred thousand people, both Muslims and Buddhists, that the Burmese king Bodowpaya had ended the last dynasty of Arakan and sent most people fleeing over to the current Chittagong. This dynasty alone ruled for three and a half centuries from the ancient capital of Mrauk U.

Even then, no movement in Arakan considers total independence. Instead, the political and armed movements of the Arakan state demanded federal rule as opposed to centralised Burmese-dominated rule. At present, the biggest of these movements is the Arakan Army, which enjoys massive support from the Rakhine Buddhist majority but is viewed by many Rohingya Muslims with suspicion. That comes as little surprise as the 2017 genocide carried out by the Myanmar Military was viewed as a counter-terror operation by most Rakhines and the rest of Myanmar. The Arakan Army had, however, opposed such sentiments and has said the Rohingya Muslims are residents of Arakan and the refugee population in Bangladesh will be rehabilitated. But the Divide and Conquer policies of the Myanmar Military have been so successful that they are almost ingrained in the mentality of the people.

Since 1948, the Myanmar Military has gradually earned a reputation (if not respect) as a successful counter-revolutionary force struggling against multiple enemies. The Myanmar Military, steeped in Burmese nationalism, took over direct power in the 1960s and held it for the last half a century, during which time, through unabashed brutality and Machiavellian ingenuity, they managed to dominate all other ethnic groups in the diverse nation. History will no doubt remember Myanmar Military as being responsible for the first genocide of the 21st century in 2017 when the Rohingya Muslims were uprooted from their homes through murder, rape, and arson that did not distinguish age or gender, an ominous reminder of King Bodowpaya's invasion of 1784 that depopulated Arakan back then and send refugees streaming across the border.

Less remembered will be that while the world watched in horror, the regime was applauded by the rest of the country, who were convinced by the Myanmar Military's propaganda that they were cracking down on Muslim terrorists' intent on destroying Buddhism.

The propaganda was so successful that the soldiers who committed these heinous crimes and are presently involved in carnage against the entire population of Myanmar this time were hailed as heroes. Little did the audience realise that in less than four years, these 'heroes' would turn on the same crowd which applauded their genocidal success.

This is how successful the Myanmar Military's 'Divide and Conquer' policy had been. It was not the spark of the moment but a meticulous strategy perfected through decades of ethnic Burmese Buddhist xenophobic nationalism that drew inspiration from the same forces that sacked the Mrauk U kingdom.

Burmese ethnic nationalists had shrewdly noticed that while opposition to their dominance was substantial, it came from multiple communities that were less uniform than they were. They realised that in order to prevail over these ethnic enemies, they needed to prevent their enemies from uniting. Nowhere was this more important than Arakan, where the Burmese had only ruled for four decades before the advent and consolidation of European colonialism.

Early Burman nationalists had realised long ago that the domination of Arakan state lay in sowing discord between the Buddhist Rakhine and the Muslim Rohingya community. With time, as their independence movement against the British gained momentum, they made this into an axiom, knowing very well that a united Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist front might interrupt their grand plans of centralised rule. Like many ethnic nationalist movements, the leaders were paranoid about federalism, which seemed a precursor to independence. The Myanmar Military, with its roots in this brand of nationalism, took this strategy to a new level.

As everyone predicted, post-independent Burma and even present-day Myanmar is a hotbed of ethnic armed organisations (EAOs). While the Myanmar Military's divide-and-rule policy was paying off and the two communities were eyeing each other with suspicion, there was a substantial degree of cooperation between the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation and the National United Party of Arakan, a Rakhine EAO, which has now merged with the Arakan Army. The understanding between ARNO and the erstwhile NUPA led to one of the rare chapters of Rohingya Rakhine unity in modern times and greatly disturbed the generals of Yangon.

Much to their relief, the divide-and-rule policy began to pay dividends. In the early years of the new millennium, Rohingya EAOs were forced to cease operations for reasons that we can discuss another time, and soon, many in the Rohingya community initially chose to support Aung San Suu Kyi. Such a scenario was a golden moment for the Myanmar Military, which continued to vilify the Rohingyas to such an extent that the community were seen as unwanted and despised people who had no place in Arakan or the rest of Myanmar. Meanwhile, the fortunes of the Rohingyas declined, and amidst the ominous propaganda finding new and effective platforms, especially Facebook, the Myanmar Military's divide-and-rule policy had become so successful that using a group of Pakistan emigres, the genocidal operation of 2017 widely hailed inside the country as a counter-terrorism operation. Using new means of propaganda, especially Facebook, the most popular internet platform in the country, anti-Rohingya and anti-Muslim hate messages penetrated with more intensity than ever before. International events and an atmosphere of international Islamophobia in the post 9/11 years, in an age of populism, spread like wildfire and erupted even as long-time Burma watchers naively celebrated the hybrid democracy that brought the darling of democracy Aung San Suu Kyi out of house arrest into a power-sharing agreement with the Myanmar Military.

At present, the brutal rule of the Myanmar Military in Arakan seems to be on its last page, largely thanks to the operations of the Arakan Army. But Myanmar is a predictably unpredictable country. Even if AA manages to clear out Arakan or even the Shan state along with their allies, celebrations might be premature. The Myanmar Military still holds Naypyidaw and Yangon and has a substantial armoury, complete with tanks, fighter jets, artillery and warships. As noted, they are masters of deception and well-versed in the arts of divide and conquer. In Arakan, lighting up the ethnic tinderbox will definitely prolong their rule and might even reverse their fortunes, as we have seen happen in the past.

It is imperative that, like ARNO and NUPA, there is an alliance or at least an understanding between the Rohingya and the AA so that the Junta does not manage to use its time honoured policies of divide and conquer to create chaos and confusion in the Arakan. That will benefit neither the Rohingya nor the Rakhine but will give the Junta the opening they have been desperately looking for.

There are reports of anti-Rakhine propaganda in the commercial capital, Yangon. Meanwhile, in Arakan, Rohingya village elders in Myanmar military-controlled areas are called and ordered to provide young men to fight against AA amidst nationwide conscription.

On the other hand, some well-known Rakhine politicians have joined hands with the SAC and are attempting to undermine opposition to the Myanmar Military in Arakan. Many are organising around well-known anti-Muslim politicians, the most infamous of them being Dr Aye Maung. They are experienced and well-versed in Arakan affairs. They have made no effort in their intention to wipe out the Muslim population of Arakan. Other shadowy elements, including supporters of Buddhist nationalist movements like Ma Ba Tha and 969, lurk in the background, ready to be on the call of the SAC.

Both Rohingya and Rakhine need to remember that the Myanmar Military will do their utmost to stir up ethnic tensions in Arakan. That is the SAC's only path to victory in Arakan.





Soldiers flee to Bangladesh along the same route they chased away Rohingya Muslims in 2017

Around 340 Border Guard Police, La Wa Ka and at least two military officers abandoned their border and fled to Bangladesh, where they surrendered to Border Guard Bangladesh and locals. The retreat, which ended the SAC occupation of Northern Maungdaw outposts, came in the first week of February after the Ethnic Armed Organisation Arakan Army launched incessant attacks. Soldiers who surrendered to Bangladesh said their supplies and lines of communication were choked off, and they fled to Bangladesh to save their lives, according to eyewitnesses in the region.

Locals said it was ironic how the same forces that chased away the Rohingya Muslims to Bangladesh were now seeking the same escape route to Bangladesh for similar reasons, that is, to save their lives. Smiling soldiers, when questioned on TV about it, said it should not have been done, but they were only following orders. However, they shrugged off most questions by Bangladesh officials in front of the camera, citing communication difficulties. The soldiers, however, asked for alcohol to be served to them, along with food and water. Bangladesh authorities provided the latter two but said they were unable to provide alcohol.

At least two civilians on the Bangladeshi side were killed during the firefight, which forced the soldiers to retreat to Bangladesh and terrified villagers on the Bangladeshi side in Gundum and Taimbru. One of the victims is an elderly Bangladeshi woman, and the other deceased is a Rohingya refugee.

The withdrawal of the motley force marks the end of what looks like the few, mainly BGP and La Wa Ka personal guarding the Northern Maungdaw outposts. Meanwhile, clashes were reported alongside the Maungdaw South border. The Burmese soldiers were later turned over to Myanmar authorities, who carried them away by ship. The ambassador to Bangladesh personally signed for each of them as they were led away by Border Guards Bangladesh to the ship.

Bangladesh armed forces have traditionally been looked down on by the Myanmar Military, and their retreat across the border will cause much embarrassment to the ruling SAC. This is the first time ever Burmese soldiers have fled to Bangladesh to save their lives. Earlier, Burmese soldiers fled across the border to India in Chin and Sagaing state.

More than a hundred were kidnapped in Buthidaung, similar fears in Kyaukphu IDP camp

More than a hundred Rohingyas have been kidnapped by (State Administration Council) SAC forces in Buthidaung township, according to local sources. Many fear that kidnapped Rohingya Muslims will be used as human shields in battles against the Arakan Army or other rebel groups fighting the beleaguered and depleted Myanmar Military. Rohingyas have long been subjected to movement restrictions, making it difficult for them to move from one village to another. However, many locals will try to move to AA-held territories to avoid being kidnapped by SAC forces.

Earlier, Rohingya groups outside SAC areas have unilaterally rejected calls by the Myanmar Military to join forces against the Arakan Army.

While SAC blamed Rakhines for the current refugee situation and the inhumane conditions suffered by the Muslim community, it is well recognised that the Myanmar Military relies on a policy of Divide and Rule to keep up tensions and disunity among the majority Rakhines and the once substantial Rohingya Muslim population of Arakan.

However, most elders say their community has been caught in the crossfire between the two groups. It is difficult to verify the authenticity of information, especially from SAC zones, as many Rohingyas live under the strict watch of the authorities and their local collaborators known as the 'Tabbes'.

Rohingyas need their eyes, ears and common sense to escape permanent refugee life

Arakan has long been rife with ethnic tensions between the Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims, especially since the violence of 2012, which left hundreds, mostly Rohingya, dead. In the state capital, Akyab (Sittwe), and all townships east of the Mayu River, Rohingya Muslims were herded into IDP camps where international media described living conditions as being 'among the worst in the world', where people live side by side with raw sewage. Those living outside the IDP camps are no better and have long been surrounded by hostile gangs backed by state forces.

Meanwhile, west of the Mayu River, Rohingyas were killed in the thousands, uprooted and driven away to Bangladesh, leading to the century's first genocide in 2017.

The Arakan Army's rapid advance across the land has changed all equations in the state. While the Myanmar Military is by no means annihilated, there is little doubt that they have faced severe military defeats all across the state, especially following the catastrophe of the Northern Shan offensive.

However, it is now an uphill but urgent task for community leaders to convince their people that tensions between the two communities are exactly what the Myanmar Military is waiting for. Already, we are looking at SAC officials holding meetings with Muslim community leaders in Maungdaw. The same people who had killed the Rohingya Muslims by the thousands a few years ago are trying to convince their brethren to take up arms alongside them.

Meanwhile, a group of anti-Muslim Rakhine community leaders, the most prominent among them being Dr Aye Maung, are fishing in the murky waters of Arakan state.

Press Release

NSU holds a Colloquium on "The Current Crisis of Myanmar and Its Impact on Neighboring Region"

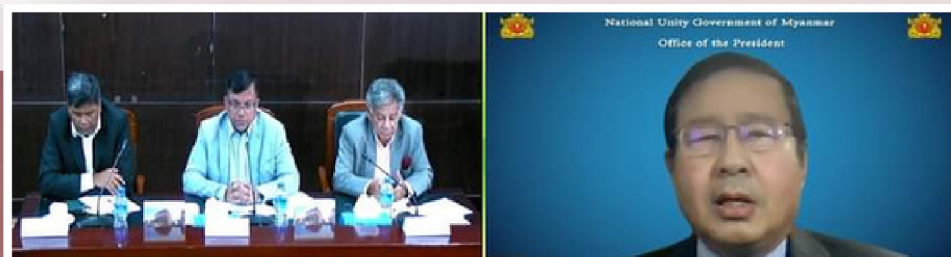
31 January, 2024, Dhaka:

The Center for Peace Studies (CPS) of the South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance (SIPG) at North South University (NSU) organized a colloquium titled "The Current Crisis of Myanmar and Its Impact on Neighbouring Region" on 31 January 2024 in hybrid mode. The panelists of the event were Mr. Kyaw Zaw, Spokesperson and Adviser to the President of National Unity Government (NUG), Myanmar; Dr. Raymond Kwun-Sun Lau, Assistant Professor, PSS, NSU; Brig. Gen. (Retd.) M Sakhawat Hussain, Ph.D., Senior Fellow, SIPG, NSU; Dr. Md. Mahbubul Haque, Faculty of Law & International Relations, Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin, Malaysia and Professor Shahidul Haque, SIPG, NSU. The colloquium was moderated by Professor Sk. Tawfique M. Haque, Dean (IC), School of Humanities & Social Sciences and Director of CPS, SIPG, NSU. The event commenced with the introductory speech of CPS Coordinator Dr. Abdul Wohab.

Mr. Kyaw Zaw said in his speech that the ongoing Spring revolution against the brutal military Junta will be successful as the people of Myanmar are now more united than at any other time in history. NUG will incorporate all ethnic minorities including the Rohingyas currently living in Bangladesh and facilitate their repatriation.

Dr. M Sakhawat Hussain said that the Rohingya crisis is exacerbating and turning into a regional security threat due to the ongoing internal conflict in Myanmar. Bangladesh may also work closely with multiple parties in Myanmar to accelerate the Rohingya repatriation process. Dr. Raymond Kwun-Sun Lau stated that sanctions by the United States and its European allies will not change the military junta's action in Myanmar. Meanwhile, China is making efforts to keep Myanmar under its influence to secure Chinese interests in the region, further complicating the Myanmar crisis. Professor Shahidul Haque stated that Myanmar is a more crucial neighbor to India as it is the only country that provides a geographical connection to ASEAN countries through land. So, India wants to further enhance its relations with Myanmar.

Dr. Md. Mahbubul Haque opined that ASEAN countries are highly divided in the case of Myanmar. So it is unlikely to see any drastic measures taken by this bloc as it adheres to its policy of non-interference. But to uphold their core principle of human rights and democracy it may act to restore democracy in Myanmar. Dr. Sk. Tawfique M. Haque said in his concluding speech that no neighboring countries want to see Myanmar as a battleground of geopolitics in this region. He expected that peace would be ensured by all regional countries. Engaging questions from the media livened up the discussion. Participants from national and international organisations, universities, development organisations, embassies, media outlets, and different other organisations attended both physically and virtually. Noted NSU and SIPG faculty members were also in attendance and provided insightful questions and commentary during the open session.



ARNA Press Releases

United we stand, divided we fall

19 February, 2024

It is very disturbing that Myanmar military junta is trying to raise Village Defence Forces from every Rohingya village in Northern Arakan and engage them against the Arakan Army.

Recently junta's civil and military officers met with Rohingya elders and Maulvis in Maungdaw asking them to organize 10 young men from each Rohingya village. The new recruits will be trained and armed by the Myanmar military against the Arakan Army. This is a sinister plan of the genocidaires to further divide the two sister communities of Rohingya and Rakhine on ethnic and religious lines.

Today the whole people of Myanmar are 'utterly and bitterly disgusted' with the long military rule and exploitation, giving rise to widespread armed resistance in the country.

Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA) strongly condemns the ongoing forced conscription of people by Myanmar military across the country. It's involuntary military service; a particularly heinous form of slavery that often ends in maiming and death.

The United Nations has described Rohingya as the world's most persecuted people. Bulk of their population has taken shelter in alien lands as beggars and refugees with no hope of future. Today Bangladesh is a home to more than 1.2 million Rohingya. Those who are still in Arakan are living in confined villages, ghettos, apartheid-like concentration camps under subhuman condition. The junta has robbed of everything from them and are destroyed as human being.

The Rohingya people are victims of one of the gravest genocides in 21st century. We cannot and will not forget the mass atrocity crimes, including crimes against humanity, war crimes and genocide, carried out by the military, its partners and accomplices before or during 2012 to 2017. We will never support the military's heinous plan but will continue fighting against the genocidaire military until a Federal Democratic Union of Burma is established.

We the Rohingya and Rakhine are historically inseparable. We lived together amicably in the past; we have differences preached by the military and vested interests yet living together; and we have to live until doomsday harmoniously with renewed vigour upholding the principle of "peaceful coexistence" burying all disparities.

Last but not least, now is a crucial time. We urge all people of Arakan to take lesson from the past and work in unison. Remember! Arakan is our own, Burma/Myanmar is for all of us.

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رمضان كريم

As the blessed month of Ramadan begins, I, extend my heartfelt wishes to the Rohingya community around the globe, those residing in refugee camps, IDPs, inside Myanmar and to Muslims everywhere.

May this Ramadan bring you peace, tranquility, and the strength to overcome the challenges you face. Let us use this time to reflect, pray, and come together in the spirit of solidarity and compassion.

May your fasts be accepted, and your prayers answered. Let's also remember to pray for justice, peace, and the dignity of our people and all oppressed communities worldwide.

May this holy month lead us towards a path of spiritual growth and enlightenment. Ramadan Mubarak.



ARNA

Nurul Islam
Chairman of ARNO and ARNA

ARNO Press Releases

ARNO condemns violence in the Arakan state as fighting between the Myanmar Military and AA continues

4 February, 2024

Over the course of recent weeks, the fighting in the Arakan (Rakhine) has continued to escalate between the Myanmar military junta and the Arakan Army (AA). On January 28, residents in North Maungdaw reported a loud explosion and 20 homes were burnt to ashes. Subsequently, internet and phone lines were cut in the area.

It is reported that between November 13, 2023, and January 27, 2024, more than 80 civilians were killed, and over a hundred were injured as a result of the escalation in conflict between the AA and the military junta.

Now, intensive fighting is taking place, terrifying the bordering peoples of Myanmar and Bangladesh. There are reports of junta's mortar shells landed in Bangladesh territory near the Ghumdhum border in Bandarban's Naikhongchhari upazila as fighting raged on. Residents are fleeing as a result of the violence.

The Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) calls upon the United Nations Security Council to ask the Myanmar military junta to adhere to UN resolutions and call for a complete ceasefire in the fighting. Further, ARNO calls upon The Gambia to petition the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to take note of the fighting, which is causing more Rohingya people to be displaced and killed. It is a continuation of the genocidal policies which have been in place for decades. These actions are in violation of the January 2020 Preliminary Order, and the Court should request Myanmar to comply with the Order issued by the Court.

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About ARNO

The Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) emerged in 1998 as a broad-based organisation of the Rohingya people with a pledge to promote 'Rohingya unity' and to realise the hopes and aspirations of the Rohingya people.

www.rohingya.org

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