



EMBASSY OF THE REPUBLIC OF THE UNION OF MYANMAR

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The Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar presents its compliments to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, Senate of Canada and has the honour to enclose herewith Information Sheet on Rakhine Issue of Myanmar as of September 27, 2017.

In this regard, it would be highly appreciated if the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights could kindly circulate the above mentioned Information Sheet among the Honourable members of the Committee.

The Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar avails itself of this opportunity to renew to the Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights, the Senate of Canada the assurances of its highest consideration.

Ottawa, 29 September 2017

Standing Senate Committee on Human Rights
Senate of Canada
OTTAWA



Information Sheet on Rakhine Issue of Myanmar *

(27-9-2017)

Introduction

For Myanmar, peace and stability always has been our utmost priority as internal conflict started on the day of our independence back in 1948. And development has to be achieved within the context of the first two – nurturing democratic values, establishing peace and stability, and achieving the kind of sustainable development that would be seen as equitable by all our peoples.

Myanmar is a complex nation and yet making every effort to overcome all of these challenges in as short a time as possible.

The world's attention is focused on the situation in Rakhine State. Myanmar is committed to a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability and development for all communities within that State.

Though Rakhine issue is on the headlines of the media, it is not portrayed in a balanced or objective way. It should be a fair reporting coverage on both sides of the narratives, taking into account of the facts and figures available on the ground to portray otherwise.

Perception

- > State Counsellor, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi believes in practical solutions and has been making serious efforts to solve this issue effectively. Our Government is seeking fair and lasting solution to the issue. Establishment of Dr. Kofi Annan Advisory Commission alone is a demonstration of Myanmar's strong commitment to resolve the issue by addressing the root causes.
- > The situation in Rakhine is deeply challenging and complex. It is not a religious issue between Muslim and Buddhist. Everywhere else in Myanmar, many Muslims and Buddhists locals are living harmoniously.
- > The issue in Northern Rakhine is clashes between Local ethnic groups and community of what local peoples perceived as illegal migrants. The discrimination or restrains are because of their legal status not for religious reason.

- > The government does not and will never pursue policy of genocide or ethnic cleansing. One should not use this world carelessly without any sound basis or proof.
- > The government also fully shares the concerns of international community regarding the displacement and suffering of all those affected by the latest round of violence.
- > It is important to underline that the fresh round of violence was the result of simultaneous and coordinated attacks by the terrorists, known as Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on 30 police outposts in northern Rakhine in early hour of 25 August. It wasn't for those provocative attacks, we would not have seen the worsening of the situation like this. The current situation poses a very important security risk for Myanmar.
- > ARSA which has claimed responsibility for the attacks, has been independently verified to be externally funded and inspired terrorist group. There are strong evidences of their links to outside support and terrorist groups.
- > The acts of terrorism targeted not only Myanmar security forces but also innocent civilians including smaller ethnic groups such as Mro, Daingnet, Khami, and other religious groups such as Hindus.
- > We cannot condone terrorism in any form or manifestation. We should not in any way glorify the terrorists for whatever reasons.
- > The government of Myanmar strongly condemn such act of terrorism and welcomes the statement issued by the UN and a number of countries firmly condemning the terrorist attack.

Timing of the attacks

- > We should be aware that the act of terror were timed to coincide with the release of the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine and few weeks before the General Debate of the 72nd UNGA.
- > It is also evident that the terror campaign is an attempt to undermine the government's commitment and efforts to find lasting solution through the speedy implementation of the Commission's recommendations and also to elicit the response of the international community before the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly.

- Attracting the international attention by systematically creating of exodus, is masterminded and synchronized by their strategic leaders who are linked to international players.

Sovereign Rights

- Myanmar has the legitimate right to self-defense just as any other nations. Any country would respond strongly if many of their border posts were attacked simultaneously like this.
- Our security forces in exercising the legitimate right to defend themselves, have been instructed to act with restraint and to take all measures to avoid harming innocent civilians. Their mission is to restore rule of law and order and to bring the perpetrators to the justice.
- The fact of the problem is that the terrorists are using civilians including children as combatants as well as human shields. It is difficult to distinguish from terrorist group members and innocent civilians. They always choose to fight during the night time.

Release of the Kofi Annan's Advisory Commission's Final Report

- The Advisory Commission has issued its final report on 24 August 2017.
- The government of Myanmar immediately welcomed the Report and has committed itself to carry out the Commission's recommendations to the fullest extent within the shortest possible timeframe, in keeping with the situation on the ground.

The Fresh round of terrorist attack

- Within 48 hours after the release of the Report, the ARSA terrorist group also known as *Harakah al-Yaqin* launched a series of coordinated attacks on 30 police outposts in Northern Rakhine on August 25.
- It is evident that this fresh round of terror campaign is an attempt to damage the government's commitment and efforts to find lasting solution through the speedy implementation of the Commission's recommendations and also to elicit the response of the international community before the forthcoming session of the UN General Assembly.

Declaration of ARSA as terrorist group

- Due to the recent planned attacks on security forces and brutal killings of innocent people, the anti-terrorism Central Committee declared ARSA as

terrorist group, in accordance with Counter-Terrorism Law and we have also informed the United Nations Counter Terrorism Committee.

Reinforcement of security with maximum restraint in the use of force

- > In the light of these attacks and breach to our security, the security forces in northern Rakhine State were reinforced. However, maximum restraint are exercised in the use of force to avoid collateral damage. Only calibrated force will be applied.
- > No major armed clashes have been recorded with the terrorists since 5 September, 2017.

All communities affected

- > All communities living in that area are affected by the acts of terror and suffered from psychological trauma.
- > The recent violence has led to widespread of fear and subsequent displacement of all communities.
- > *The Hindu people, Rakhine and other smaller ethnic minorities such as Mro, Daingnet, Khami have had to flee their home towards the south such as Sittwe in fear of their lives while Muslim community to the north, towards Bangladesh border.*
- > In terms of percentage, these smaller ethnic minorities make up a significant number. Sadly, their plights have been duly overlooked by the many observers.

The reason for the exodus

- > The reason for the exodus of refugees has several reasons. Prominent among them is the fear factor. As the fighting against ARSA terrorist groups broke out, many fled for fear factor. Most of the women and children were forced to flee and the men were forced to join ARSA in fighting against security forces and intimidating all villages to flee from the affected area, to attract international attention. These are synchronized by their strategic leaders who are linked to international players.
- > Terrorists are sowing seeds of terror among the populations by brutal and savage murders of those considered to be collaborating with the government.
- > ARSA group and its member are threatening the Muslim villagers not to remain in villages and to flee to Bangladesh side. Those who chose to stay peacefully were intimidated by violence including explosion of bombs in their villages.

Strategy of ARSA

- > The current attacks clearly indicate the intention of ARSA terrorists to carve out a separate territory for themselves.
- > To achieve this aim, they carried out the attacks with a clear strategy which is publicly declared: *Firstly, killing security and government personnels ; Secondly, killing people who are believed to be collaborating with the government ; Thirdly, killing ethnic people such as Rakhine, Mro, Daingnet and people from other religion; Fourthly, launching brutal attacks and threatening the remaining inhabitants to flee these areas through intimidation and fear.*

All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization Condemns ARSA terrorists

- > Everywhere else in Myanmar, many Muslims and Buddhists locals are living harmoniously.
- > We welcome the statement from the highest Islamic organization in Myanmar, **All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization**, issued on 9 September, condemning the terrorist attacks in Rakhine and have pledged collaboration with the government, interfaith groups and the public to help to restore peace.

Communities in Rakhine

- > In Rakhine, we can say Muslim community and ethnic Rakhine as the two largest communities. But, we also have other communities such as Hindu and some smaller minorities including Mro (1.33%), Daingnet (0.56%), Khami (1.16%).
- > In the affected Northern Rakhine State, the Muslim population is about 97 % and they are not the minority.

Mass grave of Hindus,

- > On 24th September 2017, security forces and Hindus villagers found 28 bodies of Hindus, who were brutally killed by ARSA extremist Bengali terrorists near Yebawkya Village in Maungtaw Township.
- > Additionally, as security forces and Hindus villagers got foul smell, they dug two pits at a distance of 10 feet a pit measuring three feet in diameter and five feet in depth and another pit. This place was found at about 400 meters, northeast of the mass grave where the remains of Hindus were found, earlier.

- Again on 25th September, 2017, 17 bodies of men were retrieved 14 bodies of men from the first pit and three bodies of men from the second pit. To date, a total of 45 corpses have been discovered.
- Union Minister for Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement Dr Win Myat Aye, Rakhine State Chief Minister U Nyi Pu and state cabinet members, members of the National Human Rights Committee, the deputy commander of the military command headquarters and senior military officers inspected the scene and fulfilled the requirements.
- Officials of Maungtaw Township Public Health Department are performing necessarily forensic inspections over the excavated Hindu bodies. Those bodies will be cremated in line with the Hindu traditions.
- The bodies excavated today were Hindu people from Yebawkya Village, approved by U Shimawtaw of Middle Kyeinchaung Village from Maungtaw Township, U Phyamhawri of Thaman Village and some Hindu people who participated in the searching tasks.
- Security forces together with Hindu villagers continue searching the remaining Hindu bodies around the place.

Short term and long term Plans

Humanitarian assistance and relief aid

- Relief aid and assistance is provided immediately after the attacks starting on 27 August.
- The government has the primary responsibility to provide humanitarian assistance to all displaced inhabitants, except the terrorists.
- In doing so, the priorities of the government are not just to restore peace and stability but also to ensure that humanitarian assistance reaches all those who have been displaced as a result of the recent terror attacks.
- Now, more effective measures are being put in place by the government. With the cooperation among the government, the Red Cross Movement and the donor countries, the humanitarian assistance will be provided to all displaced inhabitants, in accordance with the humanitarian principles.

Implementation on recommendations of Advisory Commission

- Regarding the implementation of recommendations contained in the reports of the Advisory Commission (as well as Investigation Commission on Maungdaw), we have established a new Ministerial-led committee on 12 September 2017, comprised of representatives from across the government, to oversee delivery and progress on the implementation.
- In addition, an Advisory Board is soon to be formed with eminent persons from home and abroad to provide an external perspective and to advise the Committee.

Main Point of the Information Sheet

- There is NO genocide or ethnic cleansing in Myanmar.
- Myanmar security forces and all communities including smaller ethnic minorities have been subjected to a series of terrorist attacks.
- Myanmar is determined to ensure that terrorist groups such as ARSA do not prevent us from working to achieve a better, and more prosperous Rakhine, for all communities.
- International community should realize these truths.
- There are allegation of genocide and rape. The Myanmar government has zero tolerance for these crimes. Therefore, if there is clear evidence, serious action will be taken against those perpetrators.
- Many Muslim villages remain intact. Out of the population of 882 thousands of Muslim populations, over 664810 remains. Those who fled across border could not exceed 217,000 as some are still staying inside the country.
- Increasing number of refugees day by day needs to be verified.
- Myanmar is strongly committed to implement the recommendation of Kofi Annan Advisory Commission 's

Information from State Counsellor's information committee

Total number of Bengali villages (471)

- totally vacated (176)
- partially vacated (34)
- not vacated (261)

Armed Clashes between 25/8 – 12/9

- (93) Armed Clashes (38 on 25/9 then went down to 0 since 6/9)
- (45) Arson cases

Latest Developments of Concrete Actions

The State Counsellor instructs the Implementation Committee to start the works

On 22nd September 2017, the State Counsellor met with the Ministerial Level Implementation Committee and the meeting produced concrete steps, which include as follows:

- To start resettlement of IDPs and to preserve the traditional culture and style of small ethnic groups through the assistance of UN-Habitat.
- To set up a Working Group to start verification process based on 1993 bilateral Agreement on verification and repatriation.
- To invite Home Minister and Police Chief of Bangladesh to conclude agreement on Security Dialogue and to send Minister for State Counsellor Office to Bangladesh to start negotiation.
- To probe into the case of 93 Hindu villagers who were missing after their village was attacked by ARSA. To ask Bangladesh to send back 6 Hindu women and 3 children who are reportedly on Bangladesh side.
- To organize a study trip for Dip Corp in Yangon to the affected areas in Rakhin State to observe the situation.

Bilateral engagement with Bangladesh

- National Security Advisor (Union Minister) had a bilateral call with Foreign Minister of Bangladesh on 21st September, 2017, on the sideline of the UNGA, to start action oriented dialogue.

- The Minister expressed Myanmar's commitment to solve the issue by promoting engagement between the two countries.
- The Minister also reflected State Counsellor's Speech by elaborating on the plan for returning the refugees to Myanmar through the verification process based on 1993 principles.

- Other important points made at the bilateral call are the following:

- (1) To invite Home Minister and Police Chief of Bangladesh to conclude agreement on Security Dialogue and to send Minister for State Counsellor's Office to Bangladesh to start negotiation.
To invite Union Minister of Ministry of State Counsellor's Office to Bangladesh
- (2) To facilitate a visit of Minister of Home Affairs of Bangladesh to Myanmar
- (3) To continue implementation process of Border Liaison Office
- (4) To convene 9th Foreign Office Consultation meeting between Myanmar and Bangladesh
- (5) At the invitation of Bangladesh's Foreign Minister, the Union Minister for Office of the State Counsellor will visit Bangladesh in few days.

Myanmar's Right of Reply at the UNGA

Myanmar Permanent Representative to the United Nations , H.E. U Hau Do Suan had made a Right of Reply on 25 September, 2017 whose statement covers the elements in question.

His speech is attached herewith for easy reference.

**Right of Reply by H.E. Mr. Hau Do Suan, Permanent Representative of
the Republic of the Union of Myanmar to the United Nations,
at the General Debate of
the 72nd Session of the United Nations General Assembly
(New York, 25 September 2017)**

Mr President,

My delegation has asked for the floor to exercise our right of reply to the irresponsible remarks made by some delegations with regard to my country during the course of the General Debate in the last few days.

It is deeply regrettable that unsubstantiated allegations have been repeated in these chambers likening the situation in Rakhine State to “ethnic cleansing”. Nothing is further from the truth.

Terms such as “atrocities”, “ethnic cleansing”, and “genocide” must not be used lightly. The use of such terms should be considered only after there is solid evidence. “Atrocities”, “ethnic cleansing”, and “genocide” are very serious charges that required legal review and judicial determination. They should not be bandied about and used loosely.

Myanmar objects in the strongest terms the use of such words as atrocities and ethnic cleansing by the delegations concerned in their statements in reference to the situation in Myanmar. I would like to urge these delegations and the international community as well to see the situation in northern Rakhine objectively and in an unbiased manner.

Let me be clear. There is no ethnic cleansing. There is no genocide. The leaders of Myanmar who have long been striving for freedom and human rights will not espouse such policies. We will do everything to prevent ethnic cleansing and genocide.

Mr. President,

The issue of Rakhine State is extremely complex. I will not dwell on the details since our Vice-President has already addressed the issue at length on 20 September 2017.

It is the responsibility of every government to fight against terrorism and to protect innocent civilians. We condemn all human rights violations and violent acts. As you are aware, within hours of the release of the report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, a series of coordinated attacks were carried out on 30 police outposts in Northern Rakhine State on 25 August. The so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) has claimed responsibility for the attacks. The Government of Myanmar subsequently declared ARSA as a terrorist group. The highest Islamic organization in Myanmar, All Myanmar Islamic Religious Organization has also issued a statement early condemning the terrorist attacks in Rakhine State.

These vicious attacks have resulted in the loss of life and property and displacement of peoples.

Those who have had to abandon their hearth and home are many – not just Muslim and Rakhine, but also small minority groups such as Daingnet, Mro, Thet, Mramagyi and Hindus. Most of the world has been unaware of the existence and plight of these small groups.

In the affected area of northern Rakhine, Muslim community is not a minority as widely reported. In reality, they are a majority as their population has increased. They now constitute 95% of the total population in the area.

Whence the threat to peace and stability?

The evil nature of the ARSA terrorist group has once again been revealed yesterday. A mass grave of 28 Hindu villagers including women and children, who were cruelly and brutally killed by the ARSA, was discovered by the authorities

yesterday. Today, another 17 bodies have been unearthed. They are among the 93 Hindu villagers who have been reported missing since the attacks on 25 August.

When it comes to terrorism, there can be no choices. The world cannot condone terrorism in any form or manifestation for whatever reason. We must stand together to remove the scourge of terrorism.

Mr. President,

What of the **exodus**? You may ask.

There are several reasons for the exodus.

Prominent among them is the fear factor. Following the terrorist attacks and the security operation, most of the women and children were forced to flee. The men were conscripted to join the ARSA in fighting the security forces. Many villages had been intimidated to flee to Bangladesh side so that they can attract international attention.

The scorched-earth policy employed by the terrorists is another factor.

Seeds of terror were meticulously sown long before the attack. Villagers who were considered to be collaborating with the government were brutally murdered. The terrorists planted IEDs everywhere, blew up bridges and committed arson.

The Government is striving to restore normalcy. The situation has improved. Since 5 September, there have been no armed clashes.

Mr. President,

At present, humanitarian assistance is our top priority. We are committed to ensuring that aid is received by all those in need, without discrimination. We have already dedicated significant national funds and resources to humanitarian relief operations. Relief aid and assistance is provided immediately after the attacks.

Now more effective measures are being put in place by the Government. A new government-led mechanism, established in cooperation with the Red Cross Movement has also started its humanitarian assistance to all those displaced inhabitants.

We are also discussing with our fellow ASEAN countries the possibility to utilize the ASEAN Humanitarian Assistance (AHA) Centre to provide much needed humanitarian assistance to all affected communities in Rakhine State.

Mr. President,

The Government Myanmar is fully committed to solving the issue of Rakhine State. The recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State provide us with a clear roadmap. Recently formed ministerial level Implementation Committee has already begun its work.

On 22 September 2017, State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi met with the Committee and set out the immediate tasks.

I would like to reiterate that the refugees who had fled to Bangladesh would be repatriated to Myanmar based on the experience of 1993. A working group for verification will be set up expeditiously to conduct systematic verification process.

The Government is organizing a visit for the diplomatic corps to the affected areas in the northern Rakhine State on 28 September in Myanmar so that they will have the opportunity to witness the firsthand situation on the ground.

We are also reaching out to Bangladesh side to find the way to solve the problem of refugees.

I thank you, Mr. President.
