

Statement by Members of the European Burma Network

**For Immediate Release Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2015**

**International investigation needed into human rights violations against Burma's Rohingya**

Monday 8<sup>th</sup> June marks the third anniversary of a new wave of large-scale violence against Burma's Rohingya ethnic minority. The violence left hundreds dead and displaced more than 140,000 people.

The crisis with thousands of Rohingya refugees stranded at sea as they flee Burma is a stark reminder that Burmese government policies of repression, and restrictions on international humanitarian assistance have continued since these attacks. The international community has failed to act to address the root causes of this crisis.

What began as communal violence three years ago in June 2012, with killings of members of both ethnic Rakhine and ethnic Rohingya communities, quickly evolved into widespread and systematic attacks against the Rohingya. Further violent attacks took place in October 2012. Human rights violations documented include killing of Rohingya men, women and children, rape, beheadings, stabbings, beatings, mass arrests and villages and neighbourhoods burned to the ground.

In a report released in April 2013, 'Crimes Against Humanity and Ethnic Cleansing of Rohingya Muslims in Burma's Arakan State', Human Rights Watch concluded that "the criminal acts committed against the Rohingya and Kaman Muslim communities in Arakan State beginning in June 2012 amount to crimes against humanity carried out as part of a campaign of ethnic cleansing."

In their February 2014 report, 'Policies of Persecution', Fortify Rights obtained leaked official documents which provide evidence that human rights violations against Rohingya result from official state policies and could amount to the 'crime against humanity' of persecution.

In April 2014 Tomás Ojea Quintana, at the time the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights in Burma, stated that government policies towards the Rohingya may constitute crimes against humanity:

"the pattern of widespread and systematic human rights violations in Rakhine State may constitute crimes against humanity as defined under the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. He believes that extrajudicial killing, rape and other forms of sexual violence, arbitrary detention, torture and ill-treatment in detention, denial of due process and fair trial rights, and the forcible transfer and severe deprivation of liberty of populations has taken place on a large scale and has been directed against the Rohingya Muslim population in Rakhine State."

The situation facing the Rohingya is so severe, that experts on genocide have warned that the early warning signs of genocide are present.

The overwhelming evidence indicates that human rights violations against Rohingya in Burma violate international law and may constitute crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.

The international community's response so far to the crisis facing the Rohingya has been to call on the government of Burma to investigate the situation. However, the government in Burma has taken no serious steps to investigate and bring to justice those responsible for committing crimes against

humanity. It has either failed to act or flatly refused to act. There is no indication whatsoever that this situation is likely to change.

A Burmese government committee established to investigate the violence in Rakhine State in 2012 failed to address who was responsible for the violence, and there has still not been any credible investigation. The government itself has supported policies and practices that endorse and encourage violence against the Rohingya. Those inciting anti-Rohingya violence are still allowed to operate with impunity. There remains a complete lack of justice and accountability.

Given that there is no political will or desire from the government of Burma, or from opposition political parties in Burma to address this, it is the responsibility of international governments to intervene to support an investigation, which is then established by a body of the United Nations.

It is essential that the current impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators of these most serious crimes is ended.

As a vital first step, an international investigation is needed to begin the process of applying international law and addressing both the human rights violations being committed and the laws and policies that have helped to underpin the violence and oppression of the Rohingya. The only way any credible investigation will take place is for the international community to conduct one.

We call upon European countries to publicly support the establishment of such an inquiry, and work through the United Nations and other international bodies to build support for the establishment an inquiry.

Signed by

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Burma Aktion (Germany)  
Burma Campaign UK  
Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK  
Christian Solidarity Worldwide  
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Swedish Burma Committee