Rohingya has a ‘historic right’
The right of the FIRST INHABITANT OF ARAKAN

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EDITORIAL: ROHINGYA HAS A ‘HISTORIC RIGHT,’ THE RIGHT OF THE FIRST INHABITANT OF ARAKAN

To avoid its gross human rights violations, the accusation of the international community and rights groups regarding the hellish tragic inferno of the boatpeople, SPDC, the ruling junta of Burma, doing a great blunder and a wrong statement by denying the existence of Rohingya as an ethnic group in Burma and claims the boat people are Bangladeshis – is like taking shelter of lightning and thunder bolt with palm leaves or fronds. The SPDC is not a legal government, so its statement cannot be a legal one.

In 1795, Francis Buchanan met Rohingyas in Ava, the then capital of Burma who were taken by Burmese king Bodaw. He was attached as surgeon, to Captain Michael Symes’ Embassy to Ava, Burma. He wrote in his account” A comparative vocabulary of some of the language, spoken in the Burma Empier,” Asiatic Researches, Vol. 5 page 219-242about the language of Burma proper and Arakan. Francis Buchanan “the first is that spoken by the Mohammedans, who have long settled in Arakan, and who called themselves Rooinga, or natives of Arakan.

A Phayre, G E Harvey, D G E Hall, M. Collis and other historians who wrote Burmese history wrote that the people of Arakan were Indian till Mongolian invasion in 957 A.C. They were similar to today’s Rohingyas. It is a gross lie to say that Rohingya has no ‘historic right,’ the right of the first occupier of Arakan. SPDC is an illegal government. It has no mandate of the people of Burma. Statement of the illegal government is illegal itself. The legal governments of Burma had recognized Rohingyas as an indigenous ethnic group of Burma. For example; on 25 September 1954, at 8 am Prime Minister U Nu declared Rohingya as an indigenous race of Burma in his radio speech. Rohingya language was aired by the official Burmese Broadcasting Service from 15 May 1961 to 1st October 1965 from the indigenous programme. The SPDC has no legal authority to alter the decision of the previous democratic government nor it has authority to decide the fate of Rohingyas.
In SLORC [late name of SPDC] publication “Myanmar Politics 1958 to 1962 – The True History “also mentioned Rohingyas several times which denote the Burmese proverb – hiding front side while the back side is kept open(ABSDF Statement1992). In Myanmar Swe Zon Kyan [Burmese encyclopedia] Vol.9 pages 89/90 it says 75% of the population of the Mayu Frontier Division are Rohingyas.

The racist SPDC discriminate Rohingyas because of their faith and their ethnicity. They are not Tibeto- Burman but Indo-Aryan. In Hasan Ali and Meher Ali vs the union of Burma the Supreme Court’s ruling is that – a person descended from ancestors who for two generations have made Burma their permanent home, and whose parents and himself were born in Burma, is a statutory citizens. Today various parts of Burma there are people who because of their origin and isolated way of life, are totally unlike the Burmese in appearance or speak of events which has occurred outside the limits of their habitation. They nevertheless are statutory citizens under the Union Citizenship Act. Their Lordships reminded – to order the expulsion of a Burmese citizen was a serious matter and was like sentencing him to the death penalty.[No.155 and 156 of 1959, the Supreme Court. BLR [SC] 187.]

Brigadier Aung Gyi, Vice Chief of Staff said,’ So, today I will declare openly that from this very time we will regard [the people of] Mayu District as an indigenous race of Burma, I do declare it clearly. The people of this region must also regard themselves as an indigenous minority of Burma. [ 8-7-61-Myanmar Alin page 5-6]

Major Htun Gyaw Oo wrote three books on Rohingyas. He said both Rakhine and Rohingyas are the same Aryan people. He is a Rakhine and ardent supporter of Rohingyas and president of Rohingya National Party. He is a native of Buthidaung town and neighbour to Maung Aye Chan the racist author of virus. Dr Than Tun, the rector of Mandalay University, wrote that ‘In the “Kyaukza” serial No.963/20-23-804-Burmese Era 1442, C.E., there is indication of Muslim kings’ reign of Arakan in 14th century’. The two maps in the “Time Atlas of the World History” edited in 1979 by Geoffrey Burraclough clearly indicated Arakan was a Muslim country. Bohmo Ba Shin also wrote the same. According to Journal of Burma Research Society – In 1531 Zabuk Shah ascended the throne. He was one of the strongest rulers of Arakan. With him the Arakanese graduated in their Muslim studies and the ‘Arakanese Empire’ was founded. [JBRs Vol-II, P-493]. In Mr Htoon Aung Gyaw’s collection is one of Minbin’s coins. It presents a succinct commentary on the sudden rise of ‘Arakan to importance’ in the Bay. On one side of the coin inscribed the word ‘Minbin’ and on the reverse Zabuk Shah. So ‘Arakan had turned into a Sultanate’. [JBRs VOL-11, p-494] Since the time of Salim Shah II[Thiri Thudama], 1622-1638 Portugaluese freebooters with the cooperation of the Magh raiders seized from Bengal goods and persons. Large number of the persons they captured were sold as slaves in Arakan where the rice crop was sown and reaped by them. From 1666 to 1710 the political rule of Arakan was in the hand of Muslim. They were the king makers of Arakan. They played a decisive role of not only king makers but also displacers of kings of Arakan. Ten kings were crowned and dethroned during the period. In 1672 they burnt the palace and for twenty years they roamed over the country with fire and swords whenever they went. They were being reinforced continually by fresh Afghan mercenaries from North India. The Muslim Prime Minister, Nabaraj Majlis was so important a personality that he administered the coronation oath to King Sanda Thudhama. Ashraf Khan was the chief minister of King Thiri Thudama. Knowing that, his life would
come to an end, “the great king Thiri Thudama or Salim Shah II transferred the rule of kingdom to the hands of his minister Asharaf Khan.” [Daulat Qazi wrote in his Sati Mayna O Lor Chandrani] After the death of Thado Mintra, chief minister Magan Thakur had very important roles in the administration of the state. Another minister Sulayman of King Sanda Thudama also figures very prominently in one of the Alawal’s works. Dr. Than Tun wrote the Muslim kings mentioned in the Kyaukza might be Rohingya Muslim Kings from the Mayu valley. Rohingya’s existence might be 800 years when the Muslims conquered Bengal [with reference of G.H.Luce].

The Wissali state was established by Mahawira Min(600-612) of the west of the Naf River at PURMA of present day Maungdaw town. Purma was at that time a sea port in accordance to the records of the tourists in 2nd century C.E. From Purma, the Wassali state was established by conquering small states adjacent to Purma (Pamela, 1979, 44-45). King Mahawira and his subjects were similar to Rohingyas. For one hundred years (1430-1530) Arakan was under the political influence of Bengal as a vassal state. For nearly one hundred years (1582-1666) the Chittagong division was under Arakanese rule. The court language of Arakan had been Persian till 1845, 22 years further beyond British occupation. Coins are considered the most perfect, authentic and informative source and the most important source for the study of history and cultures. The coins of Mrauk-U dynasty are Muslims. The Mrauk-U rulers inscribed their coins and state emblems with ‘Kalima’ Muslim Profession of faith, and Muslim name of the kings in Arabic script.

Western writer like Manrique used the Muslim name Salim Shah only. Half of the reining monarchs for more than two hundred years used the Muslim names and inscribed the same in the coins. The military Junta’s policy of ethnic cleansing and genocide forced half of the total population Rohingya to leave their hearths and homes. The Rakhine called Aucktha to Burman which they would never accept it. Historically the Rakhine are known as Magh which they never accept it. The Mon will be angry if one calls him Taline. Rohingya also dislike to be called Bengalee as the intention of the government is to deprive the indigenous right of Rohingyas by branding them Bangalees. Indeed the dire effort of the regime is removing the Rohingyas from Arakan, history, geography – and therefore identity.

**DR. ABDUL RAHIM (EX-MP) PASSED AWAY**

Dr. Abdul Rahim (Ex-MP), son of late Mr. Nowzu Meah Chowdury, who hailed from Nurula Para of Maungdaw, Arakan, Burma passed away due to a cardiac arrest on March 4, at around 2:00 am. He was 72.

He studied at Maungdaw High school and acquired his MBBS degree from the Rangoon Medical Institute Number 1 in 1969. After obtaining his MBBS, he went to his native town and opened a private clinic and served the local people. He was a very cooperative and kind-hearted man.

In 1974, he was elected a Member of Parliament (MP), from the constituency No. 2 of Maungdaw South during the reign of the Burmese Socialist Program Party (BSPP), under Gen. Ne Win till 1978.

He left his homeland for Bangladesh in 1978, when the military junta accused him with a fabricated political case, when Operation Nagamin (King Dragon) started.

The family of Dr. A. Rahim stayed for three years in Bangladesh and then went to Saudi Arabia. The family stayed there for a few years and came back to Bangladesh and has been living here till his death.

It is an irreparable loss for the Rohingya community. The body was buried at Chittagong on February 4, at about 2:00 pm.

He left his wife, a daughter, two sons, relatives and Rohingya community to mourn his death.
THE BURMESE DEMOCRACY
By AFK JILANI

The junta promise election in 2010 which will be a sham election, merely change of uniform as did by Gen.NeWin. Now democracy in Burma is like a daylight dream. The detention of the main opposition leader the democracy icon Aung San Suu Kyi was extended for one year more. UN special envoy Ibrahim Gambari was “wasting his time” in Myanmar because he did nothing to end the Political stalemate in the country, the opposition party of Aung San Suu Kyi [NLD] charged on 24 August, 2008. The unusually harsh criticism comes a day after Gambari ended his six-day mission to Myanmar without meeting Suu Kyi nor the country’s top general. She seemed to be dissatisfied with the UN thus far unsuccessful efforts to bring about change in the military-ruled nation. It is also reported that she is on hunger strike. Gambari failed even to release Suu kyi.

Spokesman for NLD party could not confirm it. But he said that bags of food delivered to outside her house were not picked up. Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for 13 years of the past 19 years, and she relies on the NLD’s food deliveries for survival. It remained unclear whether Suu Kyi had launched a hunger strike since her supporters are not allowed to meet her. The news comes after Suu Kyi repeatedly canceled meetings with Gambari. She has grown more frustrated with the United Nations failure to bring about change in the military ruled nation. Burma has been in a political deadlock since 1990, when her party won the elections, but was not allowed to take power by the military.

The world largest democratic country, India, is now friendly with the junta for trade, gas and outlet through the Kaladan river of Arakan state of Burma. But Burma never sell gas to India instead Burma is selling gas to China. She should turn back to the democratic opposition and help for the change of the regime. The International community should do more if they are sincere for the restoration of democracy in Burma. China and the ASEAN countries should adopt the policy of African leaders as they do in Kenya and Zimbabwe. Appeasement policy should be applied between the generals and the opposition by the ASEAN with the help of China. General Than Shwe fiddled while the people of lower Burma were ranged by the cyclone Nargis. About one fifty thousand people were died and two million were made homeless. Relief goods were immediately shipped by USA, France, British and Canada. But the dictator did not allow them to deliver it to the needy, hungry, thirsty, suffering and hapless victims of the cyclone. The dictator believes himself as the reincarnation of King Anawratha. But he should remember that the king was killed by a mad buffalo. The people of Burma are actually suffering since 1962 military coup. Since then they are groaning under the iron heels of the army. No body cared the suffering of the people of Burma. She kept herself isolated from the outside world. Even China was not friendly with her. In 1967, the Burmese government instigated attacks on Chinese community in Rangoon to divert attention from internal social economic woes without considering the wrath of the government of China. For reasons which seemed similar there were widespread anti-Muslim riot in June and July 1984 when there were shortage of goods and local prizes went up. Mobs stormed Muslim wards, looted houses and shops and brunt down a number of mosques. Muslims became convenient scapegoats. The 1988 democratic uprising was suppressed brutally by the army. In 1989 the Chinese government did the same. Then only the two became strong allies. On 21 December 1991, the Burmese forces crossed the international boundary, attacked a Bangladeshi border out post, killed some soldiers and carried away all arms and ammunitions. As the tension mounted along the border following the unprovoked attack the junta geared up barbarous atrocities upon the Rohingyas forcing them to leave the country. Their identity cards were seized by the army. Their lands, houses and livestock were confiscated and distributed to non-Muslims.

In November 1991, the trickle became a flood, and by March 1992 there were over 270,000 refugees crossed to Bangladesh. During the 1988 democratic uprising of Burma, all national and political groups joined hands for a common cause. Communal frictions and old grudges were forgotten. In the words of Bertil Lintner, “In Arakan state in the west, where tensions between Rakhines and Rohingyas have long been
prevalent, they marched hand in hand chanting anti-government slogans. The yellow banners of Buddhism fluttered besides Islam's green flags with the crescent moon.” Following the military crackdown, the spirit of united movement against the junta is waning down. In September 2007, a sea of monks in their yellow robes surrounded by the people of all ranks and files staged demonstration through the streets of Rangoon. With Buddhist monks arriving on the scene to lead the demonstration, the overwhelming impact was that of a “Saffron Revolution.” Ghu lam Mursed wrote that, it all started over burning issues of bread and butter. Enraged by a doubling of the fuel price and soaring food costs, thousands of Burmese people took to the streets. The country’s exalted monks led the demonstration in pouring monsoon rain, demanding a return to democracy. Since 1962 the country has been like a tinned-sardine or in a pressure cooker situation under hot iron heels of the army. Several thousand people were arrested in the crackdown. On September 26 and 27 troop opened fire on unarmed demonstrators. Among the dead was a Japanese television cameraman, Kenji Nagai of APF news agency. On October 2, head of the APF, Toru Yamaji, laid white chrysanthemums at the site where Nagai was gunned down. He then kneeled at the site and prayed. Hundreds of detained demonstrators including monks dragged out of monasteries were reportedly held in makeshift prison later to other unknown places. Activists inside Burma believe the international community must act if change is to come about. They have long called for the UN Security Council to take up the cause of Burmese pro-democracy movement, calls that have been blocked by Russia and China. Bertil Lintner in his book “Burma in Revolt” notes, in 1948 Burma was a promising democracy with a vigorous market economy and a higher standard of living than virtually all of Asian neighbors. Today, it is one of the very poorest of the world least developed nations ruled by a “medieval military dictatorship that has been in power since 1962.” Aung San Suu Kyi was expected to stop shunning food deliveries after the junta approved several requests, including the right to receive regular mail deliveries and certain foreign news publications. The apparent concessions came amid growing concerns that Suu Kyi was on a hunger strike to protest her ongoing detention. She has refused daily food delivery to her for three weeks. “She will most probably accept her food deliveries as some of the conditions she had asked for were smoothed out,” her lawyer, Kyi Win, told the news agency. The United Nations, Western nations and Human Rights groups expressed concern after sentences of 65 years each were given to 14 activists on 9 November 2008. They included members of the 88 Generation Students group who played prominent roles ahead of mass pro-democracy protests that were violently crushed in 2008.”It’s no secret that Burma’s military rulers show no respect for law, these lengthy prison terms clearly show that the junta aimed at intimidating the public,” said Elaine Pear-son of Human Rights Watch[NY]. In mid March 2008 about 10 Rohingyas were arrested at Maungdaw township of Arakan State, Burma for not accurate reason. They were sentenced to 10 years and 13 years though they were innocent only to frightened the Rohingyas of Arakan. One of them is a member of NLD. The rest are members of Myanmar Muslim Organization, a registered organization of Burma. Nirmal Ghosh, a correspondent of Straits Times, wrote that, “Rohingya do not figure in Myanmar’s official list of ethnic groups; they are at the bottom of the heap, stateless, and virtually anonymous. They are not allowed to have government jobs. They must pay taxes and fines at the whim of local authorities including Na Sa Ka, the border force. Rohingyas need government permission to marry, and travel out of their villages. A bitter joke among them is that cows that wander from village to village have more rights than Rohingyas. Rohingyas girls and women live in fear of abuse and rape by local police and NaSaKa. Men are made to do hard labour without being paid. Bangladeshis do not see Rohingyas as Bengalis because they have indisputably been living in Arakan for generations. In fact, most local Bangladeshis – who refer to north Arakan as a place of ‘Magher molluk’ or ‘Might [of the Rakhine] is right’ - distrust and despise the Rohingyas, spawning a low-level tension that some say may ignite into violence some day. Many leave, selling everything they own to pay human smugglers in the border town of Teknaf between 15,000 taka and 100,000 taka – depending on the destination of a danger-
ous journey out on the open sea for days and weeks, in fishing boats. Today, there are around a million left in northern Arakan. There are more outside Myanmar – in Saudi Arabia, Pakistan, Malaysia, Bangladesh, Thailand, India and other countries. Rohingya were too busy with their own survival to link up with foreign radical groups. 14 years of democracy ended when the dictator, General Ne Win, seized power in 1962, following which the marginalization of the Rohingya, based on racial chauvinism, became institutionalized”. Shimul Chaudhury wrote that the blood of Muslims is cheapest on earth. If some body kills some animals or birds or destroys some trees the animal rights activists and the environmentalists coming forward to protest those. License is needed to kill a cow. But no license is needed to kill a Muslim or Rohingya. In Thailand thousand of ROHINGYAS WERE PUSHED back without food or water in engineless boats after inhumane torture. About 5000 are languishing in Thai’s jails. Thais are also Buddhists like Burmese people. They hate Muslims. International community, ASEAN, neighboring countries, especially, China and India, and NGOs should help to establish a Federal Union of Burma and a permanent solution of the Rohingya problem guaranteeing all basic human rights and social justice.

Q: The alleged mistreatment of Rohingya boat people by the Thai navy has hurt Thailand’s reputation and has become a serious concern in other countries in the region. What practical solutions to this problem would you like to see emerge from the Asean summit?

A: Assisting refugees is one of the top strategic priorities of the US Mission in Thailand and one to which I am fully committed. Thailand is home to approximately 140,000 recognized refugees from Burma living in camps along the Thai-Burma border. The United States has resettled more than 33,000 Burmese refugees in our country. Let me also point out that in fiscal year 2008, the Refugee and Migration Affairs office of the US Embassy in Bangkok resettled more refugees to the United States than any other US Embassy office in the world. We will have one of the world’s largest resettlement programs again this fiscal year.

Now, speaking specifically to the Rohingya issue, media coverage over recent months has put a spotlight on the plight of Rohingya refugees, particularly those who have allegedly been mistreated in Thailand.

We must recognize that the root of the problem lies in the situation in Burma. The Rohingya are systematically persecuted for their religion and ethnicity by the Burmese regime, which does not recognize them as citizens despite their centuries-long presence within the modern day boundaries of Burma. They are fleeing a situation of severe persecution, which includes strict limits on their ability to find livelihoods in their own villages, in order to seek opportunities in other countries to feed themselves and their families.

Without improvements in their treatment in Northern Rakhine State, and verifiable guarantees by authorities that they won’t be punished for departing, the United States strictly opposes the forced repatriation of the Rohingya into the hands of Burmese officials. We welcome efforts by concerned governments, particularly those in the Asean region, to work together on a common regional approach for the Rohingya. We are encouraged by reports that the governments of Thailand and Indonesia discussed the issue of Rohingya refugees at the Asean summit that took place in February, as well plans to address a regional approach at the Bali Process forum to be held in Indonesia in early March. We support efforts by Asean nations to develop viable solutions that will ensure that the rights of these individuals are protected and look forward to seeing what concrete plans of action come out of the sideline meetings held at the Asean summit held recently in Thailand.

NB: This is part of the Interview of US Ambassador in Thailand with Irrawaddy on 6 March 2009.
WHO ELSE INDIGENOUS IF NOT ROHINGYA
A R Arakani

Burma renamed as Myanmar is home to multi-racial and multi-religious people with the population of more than fifty millions. The first president of the Union of Burma Mr. Sao Shwe Theik firmly mentioned: “Muslims of Arakan certainly belong to one of the indigenous races of Burma. In fact, there is no pure indigenous race in Burma, if they do not belong to indigenous races of Burma, we also cannot be taken as indigenous races of Burma”. Thus, all races have been evidently developed from admixture of different groups of people ranging from dark-skin to whitish-skin.

The denial of Rohingya Muslims minority as a bonafide ethnic group of present Burma is surely not mirrored through historical perspective. Rather it is purely fascism and racism. The renowned holy sites viz. Badr Moqum Mosque(Akyab) found in 7th century, Sandhi Khan Mosque(Mrohaung) and Musa Mosque(Mrohaung) constructed in 14th century, Akyab Jamey Mosque(Akyab) built in 17th century besides monetary coins inscribed with Islamic title in 14th century have been ample physical evidences of early Muslim settlements long before Burmese and British occupation of Arakan in late 17th century and first quarter of 18th century respectively. These historical facts have been documented not only by Rohingyas themselves but mostly western and eastern scholars from different parts of the world.

It is not the time to chitchat about the existence of Rohingya whether infiltrators from neighboring Bangladesh, India and Pakistan but critical moment to focus on their plight which has been beyond tolerable under the iron-fist and tyrannical rule of military regime. People from this universe regardless of color, race, faith, and region should collectively oppose the crime against humanity being social creature with sense of mankind. Most importantly, the fascist Burmans and racist Rakhines should take off their colored spectacles from their eyes to view the natural scene and be able to realize the real color of the nature. Distortion and destruction of glorious history of Rohingya can not eliminate them from Arakan soil and world history.

It is likelihood that the Rohingya crisis is not by their existence and ethnicity but by overwhelmingly their religious belief being minority. Mentionably, Christians have also been extremely suffering from cruelties and atrocities of junta as well. Regrettably, both ultranationalist Burmans and Maghs have been going through Rohingya-Phobia as Rohingyas are true believers of Islam who possess high standard of irreversible religious values and practices. Hence, the ongoing persecution against minority Rohingya is the direct result of the failure of Burmanization, the official policy of successive Burmese regime.

Eventually it is humanitarian responsibility of especially Burmese citizens regardless of flat-nose or long-nose, fair-skin or dark-brown-skin, short-height or tall-height, small-eyes or large-eyes, thin-lips or thick-lips, silky-hair or curly-hair to stand against injustice committed by joint forces of local Rakhines and harsh Burmese upon your sister community “Rohingya” within your boundary. Research about the existence or infiltration of Rohingya can be further conducted in endless future that will actually prove they were people of Arakan, they are people of Arakan, the will be people of Arakan. They have been indigenous people of Arakan under union of Burma for hundred and hundred of years.

Now:
Protect Rohingya;
Provide Rohingya;
Place Rohingya in Union of Burma.

THE PLIGHT OF THE ROHINGYA
By Anwar Ibrahim

Petaling Jaya, 12th February 2009

Today we witness once again the unfolding of the consequences of the oppression of men by men. Oppressed peoples have the misfortune of being arbitrarily isolated from their own societies and rendered into minorities by a stroke of the pen in the hands of their erstwhile political overlords, the military junta. The Muslims of Rohingya are stark reminders of this unfortunate twist of historical fate. With their plight ignored and their pleas for help falling on deaf ears, the Rohingya Muslims brave the high seas in search of a new tomorrow. The doors of Myanmar, their own homeland, are shut on them, the harbours are closed and their women are raped.

On this occasion, let us step
back and reflect on the suffering of Rohingya. We call on the powers that be to take quick and decisive action to help alleviate their plight. Countries in Asean, neighbours of Myanmar as well as multilateral institutions can no longer remain oblivious to the humanitarian tragedy that is unfolding before their very eyes.
ANWAR IBRAHIM

U.S. WANTS MYANMAR TO STOP PERSECUTION OF ROHINGYAS
Sun Feb 8, 2009 8:18pm IST
By Nizam Ahmed

DHAKA, Feb 8 (Reuters) - The United States wants Myanmar to stop hounding Rohingya Muslims, a stateless minority from the former Burma’s northwest region, Assistant Secretary of State Richard Boucher said on Sunday.

“It’s a matter of concern and the U.S wants that Myanmar stops the persecution of Rohingyas,” Boucher said during a visit to Bangladesh.

He said attention had been drawn to the plight of the boat people landing in Thailand and Indonesia over the past weeks.

“The U.S. was aware of the fleeing of Rohingyas from Myanmar for persecution and economic reasons,” Boucher told a news conference before leaving Bangladesh after a two-day visit.

The plight of Myanmar’s estimated 800,000 Rohingya, has been in the headlines since reports of serial abuse of the migrants by the Thai military.

According to the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 230,000 Rohingya now live a precarious, stateless existence in Bangladesh, having fled decades of abuse and harassment at the hands of Myanmar’s military rulers.

Indonesia last week detained 198 Rohingyas after finding them floating in a boat off the coast of Aceh. They had been at sea for 21 days.

Last month the Thai army admitted towing hundreds far out to sea before abandoning them, but insisted they had food and water and denied reports the boats’ engines were sabotaged.

Of 1,000 Rohingya given such treatment since early December, 550 are thought to have drowned.

Boucher said he visited Dhaka to see how the new U.S. administration could work with the new government and opposition in Bangladesh.

He met Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina, several ministers and Begum Khaleda Zia, former prime minister and now leader of the opposition.

“The U.S. wants to work with Bangladesh against terrorism and corruption,” he said. “We also want to see regional response to Bangladesh proposal to form a South Asian task force to fight terrorism.”

Hasina assumed power on Jan. 6 following a landslide win in the Dec. 29 election. She had floated the idea of a regional task force after the terror attacks in Mumbai in November, in which 179 people were killed.

Boucher said the U.S. wanted democracy to flourish in this south Asian country with parliament as a pivot. (Reporting by Nizam Ahmed; Editing by Anis Ahmed and Matthew Jones)
PRESS RELEASE:  
ARNO WELCOMES MOTION ON ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN BRITISH PARLIAMENT  
Thursday, 05 February 2009

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation welcomes the Early Day Motion on Rohingya Refugees in British Parliament The Motion (EDM670) dated 3/2/09 states: “That the House is appalled that Thailand’s navy has left around 1,000 Rohingya refugees adrift in the ocean in boats without engine or food or water; is deeply concerned that hundreds may have died as a result; notes that the Rohingya people face severe persecution in Burma, including denial of citizenship, a ban on marriage without government permission, severe restrictions of movement, religious persecution, extortion, land confiscation and restrictions on access to education; and calls on Thailand to grant UNHCR access to Rohingya refugees in Thailand, to end forced repatriation and to allow Rohingya and other refugees in Thailand to claim asylum and be given sanctuary.”

We are grateful to the Members of the British Parliament for this timely motion, which is counted upon as a great encouragement for the oppressed and persecuted Rohingya people of Arakan, Burma.

PRESS RELEASE:  
THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE HAVE THE ‘RIGHT TO EXIST’ IN ARAKAN  
Monday, 02 February 2009

The Rohingya people have the ‘right to exist’ in Arakan, illegitimate SPDC has no authority to decide their fate.

It is terrible that State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) again starts making false and concocted propaganda against the Rohingya people’s ‘right to exist’ in Arakan, a clear sign of ‘ethnic cleansing’. The regime is pretending not to hear the Rohingya’s outcry and international reactions to stop systematic persecution of this ethnic Muslim community.

As appeared in the “New Light of Myanmar” dated 30 January, 2009 the SPDC has admitted to have launched series of operations over the decades against the Rohingyas under the pretext “to scrutinize the Bengali immigrants illegally immigrated into Rakhine region of Myanmar”.

Under the pretext of scrutinizing so-called illegal immigrants, the regime has already killed, drowned and driven hundreds and thousands of Rohingya over the decades, which are well documented rousing international condemnations calling for actions. An estimated 1.5 million of Rohingya population are in Diaspora particularly in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Thailand and Malaysia. Let there be an independent international investigation team to determine the status of Rohingyas inside and outside the country. Human rights are universal and the SPDC cannot continue to deny us the ‘right to exist’ in our historical homeland. This is crime against humanity, an international crime with international jurisdiction.

To accuse the Rohingya Arakanese as Bangladeshi illegal immigrants is a clear indication of SPDC’s hostility towards Bangladesh and is a provocative act against her. Being a country overburdened by the Rohingya influxes for nearly 60 years, and to nip it on the bud, Bangladesh should urgently protest and take up the issue in the world forums.

The SPDC’s accusations are rebutted as follows:

1. Arakan found itself at the crossroads of two worlds: South Asia and Southeast Asia, between Muslim-Hindu Asia and Buddhist Asia, and amidst the Indo-Aryan and Mongoloid races. During its days as an independent kingdom until 1784, Arakan encompassed at times the Chittagong region in the southern part of today’s Bangladesh.

2. History testifies that till 10th century the rulers and the ruled in Arakan were Indians similar to that of Bengal. Rohingya is the only race in Arakan who are similar to Bengalis. The independent kingdom of Arakan was ruled by Buddhists and Muslims in share and share a like.

3. Bengal ruled and influenced Arakan for centuries while Chittagong was under uninterrupted rule of the Arakanese for more than two hundred years. So, the presence and existence of Rohingya in Arakan, who look like Chittagongians cannot be taken unusual.
Similarly it is not strange that there is existence of Rakhine, Marma, Chakma, in Chittagong region of Bangladesh.

4. Rohingya are a people whose settlement in Arakan dates back to 7th century A.D. They have developed from different stocks of people living en bloc in a common geographical location in Arakan well before the Burman’s invasion in 1784. The area between Kaladan river and Naf river emerged as the “Traditional Homeland of Rohingya” before the British occupation of Arakan in 1824. During colonial period, the British Military Administration recognized the separate identity of Rohingya and declared the northern part of Arakan as the “Muslim National Area” vide publication Notice No. 11-OA-CC/42 dated 31 December 1942.

5. SPDC also states, “Around 1948, the illegal immigrants demanded that Myanmar designate Buthidaung and Maungtaw [Maungdaw] as their province”. Of course, the Rohingya, like many other ethnic groups of Burma, demanded a state, under Burmese federation, in their ‘Traditional Homeland’ in between the Kaladan river and Naf river measuring about 4000 square miles, where Rohingya still predominate. They rose in arms when their peaceful legitimate demand was met with persecution and injustice. This was nothing wrong in a country where civil war is continuing till today.

In the statement the SPDC threatens that it will continue launching operation against so-called illegal immigrants. It is a clear signal that the regime will exterminate the remaining Rohingya population by forcibly dispossessing them of their land and their expulsion in the most inhuman manner.

We, therefore, appeal to the international community, United Nations, OIC, neighbouring countries, regional organisations, NGOs, human rights and humanitarian organisations to pressurise the SPDC to stop its systematic persecution of the Rohingyas and to respect their ‘right to exist’ in Arakan.

Press Release:
ROHINGYA ARE IN-DIGENOUS TO BURMA
Saturday, 31 January 2009

We strongly protest and condemn SPDC for its lie in ‘New Light of Myanmar’ dated 29th January 2009 – “Rohinja is not included in over 100 national races of the Union of Myanmar”. This is an evil design to deny us of our rights, and we rebut as follows:

1. The Rohingya are a people characterized by objective criteria, such as historical continuity, and subjective factors including self-identification, which need to define an indigenous people. They are a people having supporting history, separate culture, civilization, language and literature, historically settled territory and reasonable size of population and area in Arakan – they consider themselves distinct from other sector of the society.

2. Arakan was virtually ruled by Muslims from 1430 to 1531. The heyday of Arakan began with the influence and spread of Muslim civilization in Arakan. Coins and medallion were issued inscribing Kalema (the profession of faith in Islam) in Arabic script. Besides, practice of Muslim etiquettes and manners in the court of Arakan, the adoption of Muslim titles by the kings of Arakan and system of governance, the Muslim Quazi courts and literary activities, use of Bengali and Persian as court and official languages, etc. are the evidences of Muslim rule in Arakan.

3. The first President of Burma Sao Shwe Theik stated: “Muslims of Arakan certainly belong to one of the indigenous races of Burma....In fact, there is no pure indigenous race in Burma, if they do not belong to indigenous races of Burma, we also cannot be taken as indigenous races of Burma”.

4. Under Article 3 of the Nu-Attlee Treaty of 17 October 1947, and under Section 11(i)(ii)(iii) the Constitution of the Union of Burma 1947, effect 4 January 1948, the Rohingyas are citizens of Burma.

5. Being one of the indigenous communities of Burma, the Rohingya were enfranchised in all national elections – during the later colonial period (1935-1948), democratic period (1948-1962), Ne Win’s Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) period (1974-1988) and the last multi-party general election of 1990 held by the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), the previous name for the ruling SPDC. In their exercise of franchise, the Rohingyas elected their representatives to the Legislative Assembly, Constituent Assembly, the Parlia-
ment, People’s Assembly and People’s Council of different levels. Their representatives were appointed as cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

6. Recognizing Rohingya as an indigenous ethnic group, the previous parliamentary government (1948-1962) of Burma stated, “the Rohingya is as the same par in the status of nationality with Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Rakhine and Shan”. As such, Rohingyas participated as State Guests in the Union Day Celebration held in Rangoon on 12 February every year. Rohingya language was also relayed twice a week from the official Burma Broadcasting service (BBS) Rangoon, in its ‘Indigenous Races’ Broadcasting Programme from 15 May 1961 to 30 October 1965. The Rangoon University Rohingya Students Association was one of the ethnic student associations that functioned from 1959 to 1961 under the registration numbers 113/99 December 1959 and 7/60 September 1960 respectively. In addition, the military regime affirmed in its official book Sasana Ronwa Htunzepho published in 1997, “Islam spread and deeply rooted in Arakan since 8th century from where it further spread into interior Burma”. “Myanmar Swezon Kyan” Vol.9, page 89/90 mentions that 75% of the population in Mayu Frontier is Rohingya. Francis Buchanan stated that he met Rohingya in 1795 at Ava.


* Muslim Rohingyas have lived in Arakan for centuries,
* Muslim Rohingyas are Burmese citizens,
* Muslim Rohingyas have the same rights and privileges as other citizens of Burma regardless of their ethnic beliefs or ethnic background.

The above evidences confirm that the Rohingya is a Burma’s ethnic nationality. Yet they are not tolerated and are systematically excluded and rendered ‘stateless’ in their own homeland because of their religious belief and ethnicity.

They are dying alive facing ‘slow-burning genocide’, which has international jurisdiction with ‘individual responsibility’ of the perpetrators. Last not the least, the Rohingya need international protection.

**WHY BANGALI, WHY NOT ROHINGYA**
By A Nizam

The Rohingya Muslims of Arakan, Burma (Myanmar) have been living in their homeland for thousands of years. Before the advent of Islam in Arakan, the original peoples were derived from believers of Hinduism. Later these aborigines turned mostly to Islam and some became Buddhists. Thus, today’s Muslims of Arakan are undoubtedly the descendants of the aborigines. After 7 century AD, Islam took its root and Muslim population grew up rapidly and spread over Arakan. The Muslims of Arakan were called Mohammadans, Arakanese Muslims and later Rohingya Muslims. The Buddhists were called Magh and later Rakhine. So, today’s inhabitants of Arakan are comprised of mainly Rohingyas and Rakhines. There are other negligible numbers of tribal peoples. Rakhines and other tribal peoples are accepted as origins of Arakan and Rohingyas are not treated like this by the successive military regimes of Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) led by Gen.Ne Win (1962-1988), State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) led by Gen.Saw Maung (1988-1996) and presently State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) led by Gen. Than Shwe (1966 onwards).

The Burma military regime (SPDC) does not accept Rohingya Muslims as citizens of Myanmar. The SPDC and Rakhine communalist brand Rohingyas as Bangalis. This position is taken on the ground of religion and ethnicity. Rohingyas are Muslims and they have different cultural trends. The intolerance starts from this point. The SPDC and Rakhine fanatics have become more communalists and racist in recent times. They hesitate to accept the plight of Rohingya boat people as humanitarian crisis. Even they deny accepting any responsibility of this issue. They reject any international condemnation that this humanitarian problem is caused by the brutal and discriminatory treatments. They
claim that Rohingya is non-existent in Arakan and the word itself is null and void. They try to alter the demographic trends of Arakan and give it the shape to suit their whims.

Bangali and Rohingya are two different names. The implications of the two names are also different. Bangalis live in the land of Bangal (east and west Bangal). Bangalis are the originated in the land of Bangal. Bangalis are to enjoy their nationality rights only in Bangal. To enjoy the rights of citizenship, any Bangali living outside of Bangal should go back to the original land. They are not going to get equal rights with other national peoples of another land or country. This hypothesis is instrumental for the Burma military in formulating the policy towards Rohingyas. This is a ploy to infringe the rights and privileges of Rohingyas in their own land. The tactic is that any Bangali living in Arakan is not entitled to get citizenship rights. The status-quo of Rohingyas of Arakan can never be changed and their living condition will not be improved under such conditions. They are to remain like stateless people under the name of Bangali. Arakan (Rakhine state) is a territory of Burma and only Rakhines and other tribal peoples are considered as indigenous community and Rohingya Muslims are to be excluded as Bangali people.

On 21st of February, 2009, the deputy home minister of SPDC Brig-Gen Phone Swe held a meeting in Maungdaw where some Rohingya and Rakhine ward and village level chairman were invited who were asked to bring with them some more Muslim elders. In his speech, the deputy minister asserted that those Muslims living in northern Rakhine state is accepted as Bangali people living as residents. These Bangalis are here before the independence of Myanmar in 1948 but after the colonization of Myanmar by the British in 1824. They will continue to live here side by side the indigenous Rakhine population. His assertion was that a bulk of Bangali people live in Arakan and Arakan is not a part of Bangal. So the Muslim population is not linked with the soil of Arakan. This is a gross distortion of Arakan history to deny citizenship rights to the entire Muslim population of Arakan. After the deployment of Nasaka in northern Arakan, use of Bangali while mentioning Muslims have increased and today in all government related forms, the term Bangali is used in the column of race without any question. The SPDC is very much content to mention Rohingyas as Bangalis to deprive them of political rights as citizens of Burma.

On the other hand, accepting as Rohingyas by SPDC will have far reaching implications with regards to the denial of citizenship rights. Rohingya characterizes a distinct ethnic community with its own culture and civilization. Rohang is another name of Arakan. The ancient people of Arakan and even the people of Bangal called Arakan as Rohang. Topographically Arakan and the land of Bangal are located in very close proximity. There are no natural barriers between Arakan and Bangal. It was natural that the ancient peoples of Arakan and Bangal had been keeping close touch and it had great effects culturally and religiously between the two peoples. During the Chandra Hindu period of early centuries, after the introduction of the faith of Islam in Arakan during 7 and 8 century A.D and during the reign of Arakan kingdom from 1430 to 1784 A.D and even later all along the British rule, The peoples of Arakan and Bangal were going to and fro as access was very easy and the two land were like to be one. All along the history, the people of Bangal mentioned Arakan as Rohang while they go for trade and visit. During the rule of Arakan kings, Maghs (later Rakhines) and Muslim Rohingyas and People of Bangal worked very closely and helped each other in political matters. The entire Arakan history is replete with full facts of the existence of Rohingyas. These historical facts cannot be obliterated and any attempts to alter it will be doomed. The denial of the existence of Rohingyas in old Arakan should be seriously scrutinized and rejected. Rohingya means sons of the soil and indigenous status is automatically guaranteed as a separate ethnic race. The SPDC wants to erase Rohingyas from the list of indigenous peoples. They deny that Rohingya was accepted during the legitimate and democratic government of Burma before 1962 military rule. Even after 1962 through out the rule of BSPP ending 1988, Muslims of Arakan expressed themselves as Rohingyas while filling all governmental forms like travel documents and applications of all kinds. All Rohingya students while applying for admission of the schools and colleges put Rohingya as ethnic race which was accepted by the then regime. No threat of retribution was felt and
every one expressed Rohingya without fear. Lastly during the SLORC era, in 1989 a nationwide campaign was launched to issue new national scrutiny cards (pink cards) to those who were eligible as citizens of Burma. All those who were living in Arakan were asked to fill up forms issued by the immigration department. The forms were designed to show the lineage of the ancestry of every individual. All Muslims of Arakan filled and put up this form to the immigration where each and every one put Rohingya in the column of race. This was a clear indication of the wish and aspiration of the entire Muslim mass of Arakan. Later, only Rakhines were issued those pink cards and Rohingyas were denied it. A conspiracy was hatched to downgrade Rohingyas from citizens to mere residents. While Rakhines and Rohingyas were holding the same kind of nationality cards, this status quo had not remained and Rohingyas were treated as alien Bangali people. Any kind of national identity cards were not issued to them in the following years. In the mean time, all previously issued National Registration Cards (NRC) were systematically seized rendering Rohingyas without any cards. When Nasaka rule was launched in 1995, Muslims were issued Temporary Identification Cards (TIC) also called White Cards. These white cards were forced upon Muslims totally in disregards of the previously established status of citizenship. With regards to race, Bangali is widely used and Rohingya is prohibited and outlawed.

Minister orders reduction in the percentage of Rohingya population
Kaladan News
March 8, 2009

Maungdaw, Arakan State: The Deputy Home Minister Brig-General Phone Swe has ordered Nasaka Commanders to reduce the population of Rohingya community by 75 percent to 25 percent on the Burma-Bangladesh border areas when the minister visited Taungbro Sub-town of Maungdaw Township on February 22, said a close Nasaka aide on condition of anonymity.

When the minister visited Taungbro sub-town in Maungdaw Township of Arakan State he asked the Nasaka Commanders about the extent of the population of Buddhist and Muslims Rohingya in Nasaka areas in Maungdaw Township.
Regarding this, the Nasaka Commanders said that the existing population of the Rohingya community is 75 percent while 25 percent of the population accounts for the Buddhist community. On learning that, the deputy home minister was very angry and had asked the Nasaka commanders what they have been doing all this time. He asked the Nasaka commanders that the population ratio must be 25 percent Muslim Rohingya and 75 percent Buddhist within a short period.

After being encouraged by the higher authorities, the Nasaka commanders of Maungdaw Township have begun to step up harassment against the Rohingya community.

At present, in Nasaka area No. 3, about 40 Rohingya have been detained in the camp by registering false and fabricated cases against them. They were alleged to have roofed the houses, fenced the compound with bamboos, renovated walls (made of mud) of the houses, possessing mobile phones and have relatives in foreign countries, etc. The commander of the Nasaka area No.3 is Major Than Thay, of the Rakhine community is famous for his notorious activities. The commander was transferred to that Nasaka area on January 6, said a student requesting not to be named.

However, some of the arrestees were released after paying kyat 300,000 to 500,000 to the Nasaka officer and those who were unable to pay the demanded money are still in custody at the Nasaka camp. The arrestees are from Nasaka area No. 3. There are some Rohingyas detained in other Nasaka areas.

According to a village elder from the locality, Nasaka extorted kyat 50 million only from Nasaka area No.3 in three months. This matter had been told to the concerned higher authorities, but it has taken no action against the culprits.

The Nasaka registers false allegations and makes arbitrary arrests against the Rohingya community for money. They (Nasaka) know that if the Nasaka or police or concerned authorities harass the Rohingya community. They want the Rohingya to flee their motherland.

Some of the Rohingya people who have good relations with the Nasaka and police had asked them about the persecution against the Rohingyas, the authorities said, “If the Rohingyas are persecuted in such a way, they will flee the country. We want this, said a trader from the locality.

A businessman said, “This way if the concerned authorities continue their harassment against the Rohingya community, the existence of Rohingya community in Arakan will be at stake.”

MYEI MYO YWEI LUMYO MAPPYOUK-LU MYO MAH LUMYOH PYOUK MEI (No race faces extinction by swallow of earth but it is caused by human swallowing)
By A Nizam

Boards with this caption are widely hung in all immigration and Nasaka offices in Arakan. It is a cautionary measure to warn the national of Burma of not falling into the trap of absorption by other alien community. In Arakan there are two major communities. These are Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists. But the non-resident Bamars are absolute rulers who widely exercise powers to rule the entire Burma. These Bamars and local Rakhines are Buddhists and share identical outlook. They work in collusion for the common cause of promotion of Buddhism in Arakan. The Bamar rulers tend to remind the Rakhine community of Arakan that they should always be alert of being swallowed by the overwhelming majority population of Bangali origins as there remained constant threat of overpowering of Arakan from neighboring Bangal. So, it is imperative for the Rakhine community to seek refuge with the ruling Bamars and thwart any onslaught from Bangali population.

In fact, Rakhine community is not really facing any threat of assimilating into the Bangali population losing their racial and religious identities. For centuries, Rakhines and Rohingyas have been living together keeping own ethnic and religious trends and no danger was posed against each other. Rakhine community has been living in Bangladesh for centuries but they are keeping well their racial and religious identities.
The Bangladesh government encourages diverse ethnic, cultural and religious groups as its rich multi-cultural heritage and preserve perpetuation of all races. Bangladeshi community does not pose any threat of extinction of Rakhine community in Bangladesh. They are living amicably mostly in Cox’s Bazar, Ramu and Barisal areas and also in Patwakhali (Kuakata beach) keeping their own racial, cultural and religious identities.

The real threat of extinction of Rakhines exists within Arakan itself not from Rohingya community but from Bamar ruling class. A systematic campaign is launched against Rakhines to transform them to Bamar society. Rakhines are kept in subordinate stage in ruling the country and Bamars take the upper stage. This situation helps Bamars to swallow Rakhines easily by inter-marriages. All Bamar officials, army, Nasaka and other government job holders are finding wives from Rakhine community and it has become pride for Rakhine damsels to be wives of superior Bamars. Once Bamars were despised by Rakhines but now most Rakhines prefer becoming Bamar to Rakhine. The Bamar service holders find it very easy to have a wife in Arakan where as it difficult for them in the areas out of Arakan. Rakhines are more or less content on what is going on with the posterity as they can keep Buddhist faith while becoming the spouses of a different Bamar race. They somehow agree to lose Rakhine racial identity and amalgamate themselves in the Bamar melting pot. The Bamars point at Rohingyas as enemies of Rakhines and pretends as friends while a discreet campaign is launched to transform Arakan into a Bamar land in the long run. By this way Burmanisation of Rakhines is in full swing.

This conversion policy is not applicable on Rohingya Muslims. So, another method is practiced to exterminate them from the soil of Arakan once and for all. Muslim community of Arakan is so strong in faith and it is rarely possible for any other community to intrude into the society through matrimony. So, an ethnic cleansing program is being launched against Rohingyas by branding them Bangalis and putting numerous restrictions on their daily lives so that they choose to leave Arakan voluntarily. To-day’s Rohingya boat people problem is a product of this anti-Rohingya policy being exercised by SPDC. Nearly 2 million Rohingyas are living abroad. The Burmese military regime adopts a dual policy in Arakan on Rakhines and Rohingyas respectively. Rakhines are to be assimilated into Burmese Buddhists and Rohingyas are to be exterminated from the soil of Arakan by physical eviction thus making Arakan a safe Bamar land. By the way, a complete claim over Arakan is to be made and occupy it once and for all.

The Burmanisation of Rakhine community is going where there are Bamar service holders. Buthidaung is a garrison town where thousands of army is deployed and the bachelor army men are extensively engaged in taking Rakhine wives and it has become a daily affair leading to rapid Burmanisation. This situation is widespread in other areas of Arakan. It can be assumed that in not so distance future, Rakhines will be completely transformed in Arakan and only Bangladeshi Rakhines will remain and will be saved from extinction.