ANGELINA JOLIE UN (UNHCR) GOODWILL AMBASSADORS SAID THAT THE THAI GOVT. SHOULD "RESPECT THE RIGHTS OF ROHINGYA PEOPLE.".

The first public appearance upon release from house arrest, Aung San Suu Kyi greets thousands of cheering, chanting, happy supporters in front of her home on University Avenue in Rangoon, on November 13, 2010.
A political tsunami has hit Egypt, the giant of the Arab world. The place of its origin is Tunisia. Razi Azmi rightly called it Tunisami, which sent shockwaves not only to several Arab capitals but also in Washington and Tel Aviv, but for very different reasons. Mohammed Bouazizi, a young jobless university graduate of Tunisia while selling vegetable the police impounded his cart. The aggrieved Bouazizi poured petrol over his body and set on fire on 17 December 2010. He died three weeks later in a hospital but the fire that he had lit engulfed the whole of Tunisia. Though Ben Ali’s departure calmed the people of Tunisia for the time being but it inspired the people in other Arab countries to rise in protest against their regimes. The mass agitation has already spread to Egypt, Yemen, Jordan, Algeria and more. The problems, basically common to the Arab world, are unemployment, rising prices of essentials items, corruption, political repression and the widening gap between the rich and the poor. In Burma the problems are worse than Arab countries. People power will take place in Burma when the people wish. Though the tsunami of politics is still far away from Burma, the Rohingyas are rolling with the tsunami from long since.

A Burmese Rohingya Refugee in Australia set himself on fire at night on 31 December 2010 at the Northern Immigration Detention Centre in Darwin on Sunday but indicated the person was unhurt. Advocates from the Asylum Seekers Resource Centre said the inmate was a Burmese Rohingya and had “set himself on fire in desperation” after eight months of uncertainty about his application. According to a fellow detainee, Ahmed (not his real name) went back to his cell in despair. Later he collected all of his clothes, piled them in the centre of the room, covered himself with a blanket and set himself on fire. Fortunately, Ahmed was rescued and survived with some burns. But since that time he has been isolated in a protective cell. Ahmed’s suicide attempt was a result of extreme frustration and despair over his extended,
NEWS AND ANALYSIS OF THE ARAKAN ROHINGYA NATIONAL ORGANISATION, ARAKAN (BURMA)  www.rohingya.org

Asylum seekers and committed by status. Abuses against Rohingya taking so long to check their security

Chris Brown to explain why ASIO is

have asked Immigration Minister

being held in Darwin Detention Centre

Sixteen Rohingya asylum seekers

rejected and he is utterly puzzled.

Shoef Mohammed does not have the

security clearance had been rejected.

notice from the ASIO that his

sixteen months in detention, he received

On November 19, 2010, after

Detention Centre.

languishing in Sydney's Villawood

asylum seekers currently

Detention Centre. It is

a threat to Australia's security which is a

lengthy, secret and non-transparent proc-

ess. Many Rohingya refugees are for more than a year waiting decision from ASIO. Shoef Mohammed is one of the

asylum seekers currently languishing in Sydney's Villawood Detention Centre.

On November 19, 2010, after sixteen months in detention, he received notice from the ASIO that his security clearance had been rejected. Shoef Mohammed does not have the right to know why his application is rejected and he is utterly puzzled. Sixteen Rohingya asylum seekers being held in Darwin Detention Centre have asked Immigration Minister Chris Brown to explain why ASIO is taking so long to check their security status. Abuses against Rohingya asylum seekers and committed by the Thai Navy. Again a drifted Rohingya

refugees by the Thai Forces are rescued by the Indian Navy at Andaman and Nicobar islands. Rohingyas are the most persecuted people on earth. They are the worst victims of human rights violations, including denial of citizenship right, severe restrictions on freedom of movement, marriage, education, religion, forced labour, rape, land confiscation, refugees are well documented in Burma and other countries in the region where they have sought refuge.

In Malaysia, refugees recognized by the UNHCR are routinely detained, caned and deported. In Thailand, boats of Rohingya asylum seekers have been push back in engineless, foodless and waterless boats to die in the sea. Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva admitted it and promised for inquiry, though anybody knows, no official investigation has taken place. The Thai government denied access to the UN officials to new arrival of Rohingya refugee boat people. The same crime is arbitrary arrest, torture, extra-judicial killing and extortion of money and taxations.

Rohingya have become increasingly landless, jobless, homeless, shelter-less handicap, no access to education and healthcare and the most illiterate and unhealthy section of Burma's population. These extreme conditions have forced them to leave their hearts and homes for various destination of the world even risking their lives through turbulent seas and ocean by rickety boats in search of better tomorrow.

Circumstance like these have pushed more than one hundred refugees to flee Malaysia by boat for Australia. The Rohingya, like scores of other refugees from Burma, are simply seeking peace and security, as is their right under international law. Ahmed’s suicide attempt was the second by a Rohingya detainee in Darwin. In December 2010, a Rohingya attempted to hang himself with a longyi in his cell. He was also rescued by fellow detainees and spent a week in hospital with injuries at his neck. Violet Cho rightly worried in his article "Australia Must End Indefinite Detention of Rohingya Refugees," February 1, 2011, how many more refugees will be forced to harm themselves before their rights are granted? ##
ROHINGYAS AND 2010 ELECTIONS IN BURMA

By SU Ahamed

Rohingyas are aborigines of Arakan. The name “Rohingya” derived from Rohang, an old name of Arakan. Arakan was an independent Kingdom until 31st December 1784 ruled by Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. It was colonized by Burmans from 1784-1823, by British from 1823-1948 and again by Burmans as a hidden colony from 1948 till today. Arakan which became one of the provinces of Burma was later called ‘Rakhine State’ -- a name adulterously attributed to the Buddhist Rakhine community only -- under the Ne Win’s 1974 constitution.

Rohingyas are indigenous to Arakan and, as such, they are one of the many ethnic races in Burma. They are a people who exercised the right to vote and to be elected in all elections held in Burma from 1936 to 2010. Before elections, the military SPDC promised them many things which are yet to be fulfilled amidst widespread doubt by many, given the regime’s previous deception and ongoing large scale persecution of Rohigyas.

Burma with an area of about 261,610 square miles and a population of about 57 millions is now made up of seven states and seven regions. The seven states are representing seven supposed major ethnic groups and regions are representing majority.

From P.3 Cover Story

astrology, Than Shwe swept his enemies from key positions after taking power including purging Prime Minister Khin Nyunt in October 2004. “By barring Ms Suu Kyi from participating in the elections, they failed to get international legitimacy for the political process initiated by them. Now she has been sidelined by the junta will she just fade away into obscurity?

When she was under house arrest she was the world’s most famous political detainee. Now that she has been released the world eagerly waiting to see what she is likely to do. There is no doubt that this 64 years old lady with impeccable English and a fresh flower in her hair, remains the most feared by the generals. She is the only one who can bestowed any degree of international legitimacy to any political process in Burma. She is also the only one till today who can galvanize a new generation of youth in Burma. These are two assets which she still commands and the people of the world. She is, therefore, likely to yet write the final chapter of the story of Burma’s political emancipation,” wrote by Asfaqur Rahma ex-Ambassador of Bangladesh.

NLD, the party of Aung San Suu Kyi said that Western sanctions on the country should remain in place, arguing the embargo affected the military regime and not the broader population. Many experts see the sanctions as Suu Kyi is the best, and perhaps only, bargaining chip - one she might continue to hold to remain relevant in Burma’s changing political landscape. Soon after release she told AFP in an interview that she wanted dialogue with the junta on sanctions. Now she is calling to talk with the West to review the sanctions and to lift those which affect the people.

The NLD stressed that any end to the punitive measures should be links to an improvement in the junta’s human rights records, notably the release of political prisoners. As the major causes of sanctions are violation of human rights and lack of democratic practices, it is by dealing effectively with these issues that the removal of sanctions can best be effected," it said. But it called for discussion with the United States, the European Union and other nations “with a view to reaching agreement on when, how and under what circumstances might be modified in the interests of democracy, human rights and a healthy economic environment."

There are still 2,000 political prisoners in Burma’s jails. A 67 year-old ethnic Shan leader U Kun Htun Oo was sentenced to 93 years. The co-founder of 88Generation student group Min Ko Naing was jailed for 65 years. Prior to that Min Ko Naing served 15 years in prison. There he was tortured and was left in solitary confinement for many weeks. U Kyaw Min (a) Master Anwar, a Rohingya parliament member was sentenced to 47 years along with his family members. The junta’s treatment of ethnic activists is very inhumane. The UN special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Burma Thomas Quintana’s December 13 report was released from Geneva and it said, a political prisoner named Myo Min had died recently in prison. “He was the 145th prisoner of conscience to die in jail since 1988.” We urge the new president and government of Burma to release all the political prisoners including U kyaw Min, U Kun Htun Oo, Min Ko Naing, U Mya Aye and all prisoners of conscience.##
From P. 4

Burman (Bamar) people.

The country’s name has been changed from time to time. On 4th January 1948 it was known as Union of Burma, on 4th January 1974 as Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma, and under SPDC's 2008 constitution. The flag has often been changed for three times since independence -- first upon independence under 1947 constitution, second in 1974 by BSPP’s constitution and third on 21 October 2010 under SPDC’s 2008 constitution.

Burma Election 2010 : On 7 Nov. 2010 A young lady casting her vote in the polling station in Sittwe in Arakan

Arakan covers an area of about 20,000 square miles is situated in the western part of Burma bordering Bangladesh, India and Bay of Bengal. The Arakan Hill tracts district (5235 square miles), bordered by India, and southern most part from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan by India, and southern most part from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan by India, and southernmost part from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan by India, and southernmost part from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan from Kyauk Chaung river to Cape Negrais were partitioned from Arakan.

The Newly built Arakan (Rakhine) State Parliament by SPDC Regime in Sittwe

Kaman (Muslim), Hindu, Thet, Dinnet, Mramagyi (Barua), MrO,Khami and Burman.

The present population of Arakan is more than five millions, both inside and outside the country. It includes an estimated 1.5 million Rohingyas who have been expelled or compelled to leave their homeland since 1942 communal riot that divided Arakan into Muslim North and Buddhist South, with further ongoing demographic changes seriously affecting the Rohingyas. However, there are still areas with a mixed population of Rohingya, Rakhine, Kamans, Kami and Burman in the south.

It is worth-mentioning that the 1942 riot was a wholesale massacre of the Rohingyas during Second World War. It was machinated by ultra Rakhine nationalists with the support of the Burman extremists in order to exterminate the Rohingyas from Arakan particularly from the Kaladan and Laymrro river basins where Rohingyas were predominant and were living side by side with their Rakhine compatriots. Resultantly, about 100,000 Rohingyas were killed, more than 300 Rohingya settlements were destroyed or razed to the ground, their land and other properties were grabbed by Rakhines, while more than 50,000 of them had crossed into Bengal, present Bangladesh, to take refuge in Rangpur, where their descendents are still living.

In addition, as a consequence of King Dragon Operation in 1978 and Sabe Operations in 1991-92 there were two Rohingya mass exoduses into Bangladesh each time with nearly 300,000 Rohingya refugees. Despite repatriation, without their deliverance, the sporadic exodus into Bangladesh is still continuing. There are two UNHCR run refugee camps, one in Kutupalong and the other in Nayapara, in Cox's Bazar District of Bangladesh, which house about 28,000 documented refugees. Besides, there are about 70,000 unregistered refugees passing their life in sub-human condition. Due to widespread human rights violations against them, including movement restriction, land confiscation, forced relocation and forced labour, an estimated 50,000 Rohingyas are believed to have become internally displaced (IDPs) passing their life in abject poverty and jeopardy with more uncertain future. Today most of the Rohingyas Diasporas are living in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Thailand, Malaysia, Pakistan and some other countries.

The ruling clique is accusing that Rohingyas are not citizens of Burma as they are not included among the so called 135 ethnic peoples that the regime recognized as Burmese nationals with divide rule stratagem. Rakhine racist activists worldwide are bent on spreading politically motivated propaganda that Rohingyas are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. Despite all these onslaughts, the Rohingyas could not be barred from exercising their inherent right of franchise in all elections held in Burma from British colonial time in 1936 to SPDC held 7th November 2010 general elections, including its 2008 constitutional referendum.

A total of 37 political parties contested in 7 November 2010 elections, which included two Rohingya political parties -- National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD) and National Democratic and Peace Party (NDPP). Some independent Rohingya candidates also contested in the elections.

Cont. P. 6
In Arakan State there were a total of 21 People’s Parliament seats (17 elected and 4 appointed military), 16 Nationalities Parliament seats (12 elected and 4 appointed military) and 44 State Parliament seats (34 elected seats, additional one elected seat for minority and 9 military appointee seats). Of the 17 elected seats for People’s Parliament in Arakan, RNDP won 9 seats, USDP 8 seats and USDP 8 seats. Amyotha Hlut-taw (upper house) constituencies were formed by combining townships into a single constituency or splitting a township into two constituencies to form 12 per region/state. Of the 12 elected seats in Arakan, RNDP won 7 seats, USDP 5 seats. Out of the 34 elected and one additional elected minority seats of the Arakan State Parliament, RNDP won 18 seats, USDP 13 seats, NDPD 2 seats, NUP 1 seat, Minority (Chin) 1 seat.

Following are the political parties contested in Arakan State:
1. Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) – SPDC backed party;
2. Mro or Khami National Solidarity Organization (MKNSO);
3. National Unity Party (NUP) -- a former BSPP backed party;
4. Rakhine Nationals Progressive Party (RNPP)-- Rakhine community based party;
5. Rakhine State National Force (RSNF) -- Rakhine community based party;
6. National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD) -- Rohingya political party;
7. National Development and Peace Party (NDPP) -- Rakhine political party but proxy of local SPDC;

Out of the total of 33 Rohingyas contested in the polls, 21 contested with NDPD ticket, 6 with USDP ticket, 3 with NDPP ticket and 3 independent candidates. The winners are:

1. U Zahidur Rahman (a) U Htay Win, USDP-- Amyotha Hlut-taw, Maungdaw;
2. U Aung Zaw Win (a) Zakir Husein, USDP-- Pyithu Hlut-taw, Maungdaw;
3. U Shwe Maung (a) Abdu Razak, USDP-- Pyithu Hlut-taw, Buthidaung;
4. Jahan Giri (a) U Aung Myo Myint, USDP-- State Hlut-taw, Maungdaw-1;
5. Aung Myint (a) Zaidul, NDPD -- State Hlut-taw, Buthidaung-1;

Despite formation of a Regional Development Association (RDA) in Maungdaw, no development works have been initiated yet. The sincerity from the part of the regime is very much questionable. Indeed all the election promises made to the Rohingyas are very easy for the regime to fulfill, although still no sign of their implementation is visible. The only thing they need is to be sincere in their pledge with a ‘will to do’.

##

### Whole Burma’s Political Make-up of the Parliaments in %

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>People’s Assembly</th>
<th>National Assembly</th>
<th>State/Reg. Parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USDP</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>58%</td>
<td>59%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military-appointed representatives</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic parties</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUP</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDF</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Arakan State Political make-up of the Parliaments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Political Parties</th>
<th>People’s Assembly</th>
<th>National Assembly</th>
<th>State Parliament</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USDP</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military-appointed representatives</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RNPP</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NDPD</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NUP</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minority Chin</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL SEATS</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Burma’s President and Vice-Presidents

By SU Ahamed

This is the first time in 22 years that a national parliament (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) has convened in Burma on 31st January 2011. The new parliament has met with widespread skepticism and disinterest from many in Burma because an overwhelming majority of MPs have a military background and are from the junta backed Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

Burma’s new Parliament (Pyidaungsu Hluttaw) meeting in Naypyidaw elected the ruling military junta’s State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) Prime Minister Thein Sein to serve as national President. Thein Sein is now Burma’s eighth president. He is regarded by many observers as heavily influenced by Senior General Than Shwe. The new president and the vice-presidents represent the same party, the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP).

Lt. Gen. Thein Sein, a 65 year old retired general, is also head of the military backed USDP was elected with 408 votes, Thein Sein was chosen with a wide margin over two other candidates put forward by the USDP, the SPDC’s First Secretary Lt-Gen. Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo and Dr. Sai Mauk Kham. Thein Sein was graduated from Defense Service Academy (DSA) of Burma. He served general staff officer at the War Office in Rangoon in 1992 and then head of the Triangle Regional Command and considered one of the most vital persons in the Burmese military in 2001. Later that year, he became Adjutant-General of the War Office. His rapid rise to the third-highest post in the SPDC comprising only 12 of Burma’s top military leaders is a sure sign that he is Than Shwe’s “inside man.”

Lt.Gen.Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo, who received 171 votes, will serve as vice president number one, while vice president number two will go to Dr. Sai Mauk Kham, a 61-year old retired general, is also head of the military backed USDP was elected with 408 votes, Thein Sein was chosen with a wide margin over two other candidates put forward by the USDP, the SPDC’s First Secretary Lt-Gen. Thiha Thura Tin Aung Myint Oo and Dr. Sai Mauk Kham. Thein Sein was graduated from Defense Service Academy (DSA) of Burma. He served general staff officer at the War Office in Rangoon in 1992 and then head of the Triangle Regional Command and considered one of the most vital persons in the Burmese military in 2001. Later that year, he became Adjutant-General of the War Office. His rapid rise to the third-highest post in the SPDC comprising only 12 of Burma’s top military leaders is a sure sign that he is Than Shwe’s “inside man.”

Dr. Sai Mauk Kham was born in 1950 in Muse, a town located on the Sino-Burmese border in Shan State. He had graduated in 1968 from Mandalay Medical Institute. He was supported for medical study by a rich Shan and later he married his daughter Nang Shwe Hmone. In 2010 election Dr. Sai Mauk

ARAKAN ROHINGYA NATIONAL ORGANISATION
ARAKAN, BURMA

Press Release

Burma Rubber Stamp Parliament is Hopeless

Following the 7 November 2010 general elections, the SPDC, on 31 January 2011, for the first time convenes new national and regional parliaments in Burma, which were filled with serving and ex-military personnel, corrupt businessmen and dishonest persons and the buddies and lackeys of the military, with small number of pro-democratic representatives.

Now the military dominated national Parliament keeps itself occupied to choose a soldier President and Vice-presidents so as to form a civilized military government which will not be jointly or severally responsible to the Parliament. With the formation of an autocratic regime the SPDC completes its 7 step- roadmap glorifying or rewarding the military itself while frustrating and provoking the entire people of Burma.

It may be mentioned that, after the general elections, the persecution of the Rohingya people in northern Arakan takes an ugly turn with increased human rights violations and abuses, which amount to crimes against humanity, resulting in the outflows of Rohingyas to other countries, including to Southeast Asian nations by rickety boats risking their lives through seas, in search of shelters and protection.

We reiterate that the new autocratic regime will not bring democratic reform nor will it solve the country’s constitutional and political problems. Again we repeat that a negotiated settlement of crisis brooks no delay. For this, the new regime must release all political prisoners without further delay, and engage in tripartite dialogue for a comprehensive national accord. In this trying situation, all peoples of Burma need to work in unison to achieve the common goal. Meanwhile, we urge upon the United Nations with the international community, ASEAN, EU, USA and concerned governments to put pressure on the regime so as to enable the people of Burma to establish and uphold federal democracy and human rights in Burma.

For further information, please contact:
Nurul Islam: + 44 07947854652
AFK Jilani: + 880 1674811079
Email: info@rohingya.org
Website: www.rohingya.org
By AFP, Friday, 18 February, 2011

BANGKOK — Thailand should swiftly investigate the treatment of almost a hundred Rohingya boat people amid claims the group was set adrift in a vessel without an engine, rights organisations said Friday. Thai authorities have said 91 asylum seekers from the Myanmar’s Bengali-speaking Rohingya ethnic group were returned to Myanmar in end January soon after they washed up on the country’s shore, Amnesty International said.

But 91 people believed to be Rohingya landed in India’s Andaman islands in early February and said the Thai navy pushed them out to sea “in an engineless boat with limited food and water”, the rights group said. "Amnesty International called on the government of Thailand to institute a prompt, independent and transparent investigation into how Thai authorities treated this group,” it said.

Thailand’s handling of the Rohingya -- described by the UN as one of the world’s most persecuted minorities -- has caused controversy in the past. Security forces towed hundreds of people from the Rohingya Muslim community out to sea in "unseaworthy boats" and cast them adrift in late 2008 and early 2009 and some "subsequently died at sea", Amnesty said. New York-based Human Rights Watch also urged the Thai authorities to investigate.

From P. 7 Kham competed against Sai Kham Leng from the White Tiger Party in Shan State constituency 3. The election commission announced that Sai Mauk Kham won the seat with 43,641 votes to Sai Kham Leng’s 29,132. He is a Shan national taking the high office in the history of Burmese government after Sao Shwe Thaik, the first president of Burma.

Than Shwe will eventually handover power to trusted loyalists, either because of age, ill health or to protect his family and legacy under a future administration and expected to retain absolute control of the country until his death.

Lt-Gen Thein Sein visited Buthidaung Township before the election and held meetings with Rohingyas where he promised many things including to issue National ID cards, freedom of movement, and freedom of education, remove marriage restriction and many things. Now for the Rohingyas to wait and see how far the new president of Burma keeps his promises.##

"If the Thai government wants the world to believe that quick-draw denial and launch a full public investigation into these very serious allegations," said Asia deputy director Phil Robertson. Mainly Buddhist Myanmar effectively denies citizenship and property rights to the Rohingya, and India to give the Rohingya access to refugee procedures and stressed that members of the group "would be at risk of human rights violations if returned to Myanmar".##

UN Goodwill Ambassador Angelina Jolie Visits Burmese Refugee Camps in Thailand

Angelina Jolie 33, as a goodwill ambassador for the U.N. High Commissioner of Refugees, she is trying to leverage her celebrity status to put the spotlight on refugees from military-ruled Myanmar, including boat-people from that country’s Rohingya minority.

The Rohingya, denied citizenship in their native land, recently drew the world’s attention when boatloads who tried to land in Thailand after a treacherous sea journey were towed back to sea and cast adrift by the Thai Navy. Indian officials, who rescued some, believe hundreds perished. "I also hope the Rohingya situation stabilizes and their life in Burma improves so the people do not feel the desperate need to flee, especially considering how dangerous their journey has become," she added. "She urge Thai Govt. to respect the rights of Rohingya people as they deserve to have their human rights respected."##
Bridegroom Arrested for Visiting Fiancée’s Home

Fri. 11 February 2011, Kaladan News

Maungdaw, Arakan State: A young man and woman were arrested and detained by Burma’s Border Security Force (Nasaka) on February 8 over the allegation that the young man was visiting the house of his fiancée in Maungdaw Township, said a close relative of the victims.

The arrestees were identified as Osman (20), son of Abdullah, and Noor Asha (19), daughter of Abdu Salam. Both of them hail from Kunsi Pyin Village of Maungdaw Township. On February 8 at around 1:00 am a group of Nasaka officials from Nan Tha Daung Village Nasaka camp of Maungdaw Township led by Commander U Hla Sin went to the village and arrested the two youth over the accusation that they had intimate or sexual contact.

Following arrest, the two youth were brought to the Nasaka camp and detained there. Their legs were put into stocks in a room. After that, they were beaten severely while being asked whether they had engaged in sexual contact or not. The couple denied that they had ever had sexual contact, said a friend of Osman.

The couple’s engagement had already been announced earlier, with agreement from both sides of parents. Previously, the couple was preparing for their marriage ceremony after getting permission from the authorities. During that time, it is Rohingya custom for the bridegroom to visit his future father-in-law’s house. However, this tradition is a crime under the SPDC authority, said a friend of victim’s father. The following day, on February 9 at 5:00 pm, the couple was released after paying a fine of 100,000 kyat.

“The commander U Hla was swollen with pride for finding some of our people to punish,” said a local elder on condition of anonymity. A local businessman said, “This case is an example that shows the Nasaka treats the Rohingya people as less than human beings. Is it a crime that a bridegroom would visit the house of his future father-in-law?”

Previously, a Rohingya woman was arrested by the Nasaka for allegedly having a love affair, without receiving permission to do so from the concerned authorities. Young unmarried boys and girls who meet are always at risk of being accused of violating related orders. The Nasaka relies on a local group of informers who report non-compliant behavior. The Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) chairman must also keep a list of couples living together without marriage authorizations, said a local trader. In Burma, Buddhists and other ethnic groups can marry following their own customs, religions, or traditions, as marriage is considered a private affair, with no need for official endorsement. However, the situation is completely different for the Rohingyas.

The authorities have deliberately imposed regulations against Rohingyas in order to control birth rates and limit the expansion of the Rohingya population. The marriage restrictions are one of the reasons for the Rohingyas’ decision to flee their motherland, said an ex-teacher who declined to be named.

More than 90 Rohingya refugees have been found by police in India’s Andaman and Nicobar islands. All of them were starving and seriously dehydrated, police said; 25 have been admitted to hospital.

The refugees told police they had been set adrift with little food and water in a boat without an engine by the Thai navy. Thailand has denied the charge. Thousands of Rohingyas - a Muslim minority group in Burma - have fled to the country to escape persecution.

An estimated 200,000 Rohingyas live in refugee camps in Bangladesh. Many of them - especially those living in unofficial camps - attempt to escape poor conditions by attempting to get to south-east Asia by sea. "We found them in villages in the Car Nicobar islands, where they were desperately searching for food and water," police officer George Lalu told the BBC in a telephone interview from the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The Rohingyas said they were trying to enter Malaysia illegally through Thailand with the help of "agents" before they were caught by the Thai navy, he said. Doctors at the hospital told the BBC they had been at sea without food and water for more than a week.

In a statement recorded by the police in Car Nicobar, one of the arrests said: "We found them in villages in the Car Nicobar islands, where they were desperately searching for food and water," police officer George Lalu told the BBC in a telephone interview from the Andaman and Nicobar islands. The Rohingyas said they were trying to enter Malaysia illegally through Thailand with the help of "agents" before they were caught by the Thai navy, he said. Doctors at the hospital told the BBC they had been at sea without food and water for more than a week.

The commando U Hla was swollen with pride for finding some of our people to punish,” said a local elder on condition of anonymity. A local businessman said, “This case is an example that shows the Nasaka treats the Rohingya people as less than human beings. Is it a crime that a bridegroom would visit the house of his future father-in-law?”

Previously, a Rohingya woman was arrested by the Nasaka for allegedly having a love affair, without receiving permission to do so from the concerned authorities. Young unmarried boys and girls who meet are always at risk of being accused of violating related orders. The Nasaka relies on a local group of informers who report non-compliant behavior. The Village Peace and Development Council (VPDC) chairman must also keep a list of couples living together without marriage authorizations, said a local trader. In Burma, Buddhists and other ethnic groups can marry following their own customs, religions, or traditions, as marriage is considered a private affair, with no need for official endorsement. However, the situation is completely different for the Rohingyas.

The authorities have deliberately imposed regulations against Rohingyas in order to control birth rates and limit the expansion of the Rohingya population. The marriage restrictions are one of the reasons for the Rohingyas’ decision to flee their motherland, said an ex-teacher who declined to be named.
Ahmed’s suicide attempt was a result of extreme frustration and despair over his extended, indefinite detention, and the inability of the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) to determine whether he and the other detained Rohingya are a security risk. Ahmed’s anxiety is not only about getting into Australia, but also over the future of his family, who are suffering in unstable circumstances in Malaysia. Ahmed left for Australia alone, leaving his wife and three children with little support. His dream was to claim asylum in Australia and then bring the rest of his family there so they could finally have legal status, peace and security.

On December 22, 2009, Ahmed arrived in Australia in one of four boats carrying approximately 40 Rohingya asylum seekers from Malaysia that had been intercepted by Australian authorities. Ahmed and the other Rohingyas traveling with him were then detained on Christmas Island for four months, before being moved to the Northern Immigration Detention Centre in Darwin. While all have had their refugee claims approved by Australian immigration, more than twenty are being held for extended periods awaiting security clearance from ASIO.

ASIO, perhaps comparable to Burma’s Special Branch, is charged with determining whether asylum seekers are a threat to Australia’s security. This is a secretive, non-transparent and lengthy process. Many Rohingya refugees have been languishing in detention for more than a year awaiting a decision from ASIO. Ahmed has now been in detention for 13 months. Weighing on the minds of these detainees is the case of Shoef Mohammed, one of their compatriots who is currently languishing in Sydney’s Villawood Detention Center. On November 19, 2010, after sixteen months in detention, he received notice from the ASIO that his security clearance had been rejected. This means he is in a period of indefinite detention – he cannot be deported to Burma because he is a refugee, but he cannot be released into Australia because he is a “threat.”

Alarminglly, Shoef Mohammed does not have the right to know why an adverse decision was made in his case and he is utterly puzzled, not able to think of any reason for it. His fate might partly depend on a test case being brought against ASIO in the Australian Federal Court this month by three Tamil Sri Lankan refugees who have also had adverse security assessments against them.

Rohingya are not “terrorists.” Abuses against Rohingya asylum seekers and refugees are well documented in Burma and countries in the region where they have sought refuge. In Malaysia, refugees recognized by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees are denied basic rights, including citizenship.

Refugees are routinely detained, caned and deported. In Thailand, boats of Rohingya asylum seekers have been pushed back out to sea, causing death. In Burma, many circumstance like these have pushed more than one hundred refugees to flee Malaysia by boat for Australia. The Rohingyas, like scores of other refugees from Burma, are simply seeking peace and security, as is their right under international law. One Rohingya friend told me that he wished he had a prison sentence – then at least he would know his future. It is the uncertainty, he said, that is torturous.

The Australian Government must guarantee the Rohingya refugees their rights and grant their visas promptly. The role of ASIO in Australia’s refugee program is shameful and must be reformed so security assessments are quick and transparent. Refugees must have the right to know what they are being charged with, so they can respond.

Ahmed’s suicide attempt was the second by a Rohingya detainee in Darwin. In December 2010, a man attempted to hang himself with a longyi in his cell. He was also rescued by fellow detainees and subsequently spent a week in hospital with neck injuries. How many more refugees will be forced to harm themselves before their rights are granted? 

## Sources: Irrawaddy
Press Release

ARAKAN ROHINGYA NATIONAL ORGANISATION
ARAKAN, BURMA

14 February 2011

ARNO condemns Thailand’s deadly action against distress Rohingya boat people

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) strongly denounces Thailand’s continual deadly treatment of the Rohingya boat people who were either caught in Thai territorial waters or reached its shore with boat engines troubles.

According to BBC news relayed on 10th February, followed by other creditable information and statements of Indian authorities, 91 starving Rohingya boat people were found by police in India's Andaman and Nicobar islands, who were “pushed out” into peril on the open sea by the Thai military with little ration and water in a engineless boat. This action of Thai military reveals that they wanted these distress boat people to be drowned as did in January 2009. Nonetheless, we appreciate the Indian government with its police and concerned authorities for providing them with medical treatment and other humanitarian needs.

The exact number and situation of Rohingya boat people in different Thai detention centres are still mysterious. The Thai government should be much more transparent on this worrying issue and adequate protection should be provided to the children under 18.

Despite international outcries over Thailand’s fatal treatment of the Rohingya boatpeople in 2009, good sense does not prevail yet in the minds of the Thai authorities towards distress and oppressed Rohingyas. Thailand should abide by law of the seas and international humanitarian laws. As a UN body mandated by the international community, Thailand must grant the UNHCR unrestricted access to all Rohingya boat peoples in Thai detention centres to determine their status.

The Rohingyas with their boat people are defacto stateless people who have been invariably subjected to religious, ethnic and political persecution by the Burmese regime causing their constant outflows, from their homeland, across the borders to Bangladesh and other countries which need immediate regional solution, in particular, where the role of ASEAN is crucial.

We call upon the international community with UN, OIC, EU, ASEAN, USA, UK, neighbouring countries and concerned governments:
- To put pressure on the Thai government to desist “push back” or “push out” of the distress Rohingya boat people;
- To allow UNHCR staff unrestricted access to those in Thai detention camps to determine their status; and to pay compensation to the victims for the losses sustained.
- To put pressure on the Burmese regime to stop forthwith persecution of ethnic Rohingyas and to grant them citizenship and ethnic rights in their own homeland.
- To find out an immediate permanent solution to the long-standing Rohingya problem.

For more information, please contact:
Nurul Islam: +44-7947854652
Email: info@rohingya.org
AFK Jilani: +880-1674811079
Website: www.rohingya.org

129 Rohingya Rescued at Sea in Indonesia

VOA News – Wednesday, February 16, 2011

More than 100 Burmese Muslim refugees have been rescued at sea and brought ashore in Indonesia’s western Aceh province. Authorities say the 129 members of the Rohingya minority had been at sea for almost three weeks when their 14-meter wooden boat broke down. Fishermen discovered the all-male group drifting Tuesday and they were towed ashore early Wednesday. Indonesian officials say they are providing food and medical check-ups for the men, who were weak and dehydrated running out of food and water.

Human rights groups say the Rohingyas have been subject to extrajudicial killings, forced labor, restrictions on movement and religious persecution in Burma. Hundreds of them try to escape by boat every year. An Indonesian official said the government will discuss the case with international refugee authorities. ##
Chittagong, Bangladesh: Thai authorities have detained a third group of Rohingyas from Western Burma off Phuket in southern Thailand, according to a member of a Rohingya watchdog group in Thailand.

Sixty-eight Rohingyas came ashore on Phuket on February 1 and were being held by Thai police and immigration officials, the member said. “All the voyagers are under the age of 30 except one. Among them, the youngest is 12 years old.” The Rohingyas had been without food for 10 days before reaching Phuket, according to a report from the online news group Phuketwan.

“Different groups had gone in different directions after walking ashore in darkness off Laem Ka beach, a quiet cove alongside the luxury five-star Evason Six Senses Resort in Rawai, a southern village on Phuket,” the Phuketwan reported.

Some wandered the nearby main street, Viset Road, while others looked for food in groups of five or six. A second group of 33 was found later in the day, hiding in a five-star villa construction site opposite the Rawai municipal offices,” the Phuketwan report said. The boatload of Rohingyas is the third group to come ashore within the last week. The 91 men on the first boat that landed south of Phuket in Trang province on January 22 have been taken to Ranong.

The 67 men who arrived the following day were to be taken to Ranong but have now been diverted because of lack of space to be held in detention in Songkhla, a southern city. Human rights groups have expressed concern over the plight of the Rohingya boat voyagers already being detained by authorities. Thailand should immediately allow the United Nations refugee agency unhindered access to 211 detained ethnic Rohingya asylum seekers to determine whether they qualify for refugee status, Human Rights Watch said today. ##

Burma’s Air Defense Force Deploying New SAMs
By Ko Htwe, Wednesday, February 2, 2011 Irrawaddy Magazine.

Burma’s Air Defense Force intends to deploy the S-125 Neva/Pechora surface-to-air missile after Burmese army soldiers spotted an unidentified flying object assumed to be an Unmanned Aerial Vehicles (UAV) flying over eastern Shan State in early January.

From Russia, the S-125 Neva/Pechora is a kind of surface-to-air-missile (SAM) that has a shorter effective range and lower engagement than others. “Air Defense Force troops will be in training between this month and April at Burma’s Air Defense Force schools,” said Khunsa Jaiyen, the editor Thailand-based Shan Herald Agency for News (SHAN), “The training involves the UAV that was spotted in January.”

The UAV flew across Namhsan Township and was identical to a UAV spotted by government troops in the last week of December over Kengtung Township. The Burmese Air Force has reportedly been ordered to shoot the UAV down if spotted again in Burmese airspace.

Normally, Burmese Air Defense Force battalions are equipped with 57 mm and 40 mm anti-aircraft auto-cannons, 37 mm anti-aircraft guns and Russia-made IGLAs, a portable anti-aircraft missile. Burma’s military has sent junior Air Defense Force officers to Russia to be trained in portable air defense missile systems.

During the NATO air strikes in Yugoslavia, an F-117 stealth aircraft was shot down by a Serb S-125 air defense system in 1999. As of December 2008, over 200 Pechora-2M upgraded ramp-launched missiles had been ordered by Egypt, Syria, Libya, Burma, Vietnam, Venezuela and Turkmenistan, according to the website www.deagel.com.

Burma’s military has two Air Defense Force schools, one based in Meikhtila in Mandalay Division and the other in Hmawbi in Rangoon Division, and eight Air Defense Force commands. ## Sources: Irrawaddy
Fifty-three Rohingya “boat people” have been detained in isolated Thai prisons since 2009. Their crime? Fleeing brutal persecution in their homeland of Burma. In late January, Thailand nabbed another 158 Rohingya who had survived a harrowing journey on ramshackle homemade boats. Thai officials threw them directly into prison.

Despite the known mistreatment of Rohingya in Burma, the Thai government is refusing to recognize the migrants as refugees. Worse, it is blocking the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees from visiting the detained Rohingya, thus sequestering them from any legal defense or opportunity for protection.

Under international law, any migrant who can demonstrate a well-founded fear of persecution must be granted refugee or asylum status, which offers ongoing protection in a new land. Burma’s oppressive military regime has repeatedly cleansed its country of ethnic groups like the Rohingya — so the detainees’ eligibility for refugee status is, in all likelihood, no brainier. Yet Thailand has a horrific track record of denying basic Cont. P. 15

Joint Statement of ARNO and BROUK on the Burma Union Day

On the occasion of the 64th anniversary of Union Day Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) and Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) jointly State as follows:

1. 64 years ago the Panglong Agreement was signed between Gen. Aung San and leaders of the several ethnic groups in Panglong, Shan State, on February 12, 1947, in order to take the independence together from Britain and to build a Federal Union of Burma ensuring political equality and self-determination of ethnic nationalities.

2. Although this Agreement, based on the agreed upon principles of Unity in diversity, is known as Union Treaty and the event is recognized as the Union Day of Burma, the true spirit of the Panglong or Union Day has never been realized since independence on 4th January 1948.

3. The hastily written Constitution of 1947 was semi-federal and it failed to guarantee equal rights, autonomy and self-determination of the ethnic nationalities. Because of that resentment developed among all the ethnic peoples giving birth to civil war continuing till today.

4. To add salt to the injury, Gen. Ne Win seized the power in 1962 and ended the Union Treaty and destroyed all democratic structures while promoting the assimilation policy.

5. The SPDC military clique, through a sham election held on 7 November 2010, is establishing a civilianized military regime, and the situation is taking a turn for the worse, where there will be no democratic and political reform in the country.

6. The people of Burma have been suffering in the morass of deteriorating political, economic, educational, health and social conditions. Grave human rights violations that amount to crimes against humanity have been perpetrated across the country, particularly in the ethnic areas, and the Rohingyas are the worst victims.

7. It is high time to revitalize and translate the true spirit of Panglong, through tripartite dialogue, with inclusive political and democratic process, in order to reach an acceptable national accord for establishing genuine federal democracy that guarantees autonomy and equal rights for every people an ensures respect for and promotion of human rights in Burma.

8. We urge upon UN with the international community, ASEAN, EU, USA and neighbouring countries to put pressure on the new regime to honour the transpiration of the people of Burma.

For more information, please contact:
Nurul Islam Mobile + 44 -794 -785 -4652
Maung Tun Khin Mobile + 44 -788 - 871- 4866

Dated: 12th February 2011
Thirty-three remain detained at Phuket Immigration Detention Centre

PHUKET: The whereabouts of the 68 Rohingya refugees who were arrested on January 31 when their boat drifted to Phuket’s shores has been confirmed by the Phuket Gazette. Phuket Immigration late yesterday gave the Gazette access to 33 Rohingya men in custody at the Immigration Detention Center (IDC). The youngest in the cell was only nine years old and the oldest was 45, the detainees said.

Phuket Immigration officials originally said that the 68 men had been transferred to Phang Nga IDC. Officials now say that only 35 have been transferred to Phang Nga. An employee at Phang Nga Immigration, who declined to give her name, yesterday again said that there were no Rohingya in detention at their facilities. However, an independent source yesterday confirmed that the 35 were detained there.

Following appeals from the international community and local organizations, Senior Regional Public Information Officer Kitty McKinsey of the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR) told the Gazette that the Thai Ministry of Foreign Affairs has agreed to give that organization access to 226 Rohingya currently detained in Thailand.

Mrs McKinsey said the UNHCR was able to speak with nine teenagers on Thursday in Songkhla who were part of a group of 67 who were detained in that province on January 23. Regarding the 68 who landed in Phuket, she said, “We expect to be able to talk to those men next week. They are apparently in Phuket, but I agree that there is confusion about exactly where they are because we’re not certain whether they are in two places or one place.

“We’ve been told that all 68 are on Phuket and that we’ll have access to them. We’re going to be accompanied by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and I hope we’re going to be taken to see 68 people,” she said. The UNHCR hopes to determine where the men come from, what their protection needs may be and whether or not they are seeking refugee status. She said the UNHCR is also exploring whether 91 Rohingya who were intercepted and detained by Thai authorities on January 22 this year are the same group that arrived “starving” in the Andaman and Nicobar Islands on February 3.

Members of that group said that they were detained in Thailand then towed out to sea by Thai authorities, human rights groups said.

The 32 men, and at least one child, being held in one of Phuket IDC’s two cells which are designed to hold 30 people, told the Gazette that they are happier, healthier and better looked after in those cramped conditions than they are in Burma. On our arrival, the men crowded near the front of their cell and gave an enthusiastic greeting, all seemingly eager to share their story – and many smiling.

One man, 27-year-old Muhammad Amin, seemed to be the informal “spokesman” for the group. Mr Amin explained that they had all, 70 originally (two remain unaccounted for after landing in Phuket), had set out from Maungdaw in Arakan State, Burma, on January 20.

He said their reason for leaving was that as Muslim Rohingyas they face constant persecution and abuses at the hand of the Burmese government. When asked for examples of their hardships at home, many of the men had something to say: “We have no work – no jobs,” one said. “We’re rice farmers and need rice to survive,” another said.

“Then the government started taking us 25 kilograms of every 100kg of rice we had.” “Then they took away our land,” another added.

“We don’t have anything to eat if we stay in Burma. It’s a very difficult life,” Mr Amin said. One of the men produced an identification card he said was issued by the Burmese government. The card, a flimsy piece of white paper in a plastic sleeve, identified him as a Muslim and his home “district”. Muslims in Arakan State issued such cards are not allowed to travel outside their home districts.

All of the men in the cell said that they have similar documents and that actual Burmese citizens have a “red ID” which permits them more freedoms. Desperate for prospects of a better life, the 70 men pooled their money together and bought the wooden boat that was their home for 11 days as they headed for Malaysia.

“We wanted to go to Malaysia because it’s a Muslim country,” Mr. Amin said. However, their boat engine gave out on them and at the mercy of the winds they were blown to Phuket. “We had no food on our journey, and it’s quite dangerous – especially when we leave from Burma,” he said.

The men said that no women joined them on their journey because of the dangers. “We had to hide in fishing nets to avoid detection by the Burmese military,” one man said. When asked what would happen if they were caught trying to leave the country, many of the men responded in unison, “We would be shot dead by the military”.

The men all said they were scared of being sent back to Burma and that if that were to happen, they would face 15 years

Cont. P. 15
From P. 16 for a common purpose, for the common good, for sustainable development, and, above all, for the future of their people.

“This Panglong Agreement assured the people of Burma of federal democracy, human rights, and equality. Unfortunately, a few months before Burma’s independence, General Aung San and almost all of his cabinet members were assassinated. Then, the Union of Burma was formed on the foundation of the 1947 semi-federal Constitution. And the rights the ethnic states which were granted were nominal than real. Therefore, resentments developed among all the peoples of Burma giving rise to civil war across the country continuing till today.”

On the current problem of Burma, he said, “It is important to note that the main problem in Burma is a political problem, specifically a constitutional one. Without intention to solve this issue, the military have tried to perpetuate their dictatorial military rule. Ne Win made the situation worse, enacting his so-called socialistic constitution in 1974. He hijacked the military itself at the total frustration of the people of Burma. Resultantly, the situation has now taken a deeply troubling turn. “We are not surprised that the SPDC has completed its ‘seven-point roadmap to democracy’ with a civilianized military regime. It convened parliaments, national as well as regional, on 31 January 2011. These are hopeless and are utterly unacceptable to us, to the people of Burma. Condemnation is pouring in from the UN with the international community.”

Supporting the call of Daw Aung San all of these endeavours. “On the present situation of Rohingya boat people, he said, “I am sure you are aware of our current situation. The regime has created an impossible situation for the peaceful living of our people. They are treated worse than animals with no freedom of movement, marriage, education, trade, or business. Also, there is no freedom of religion. So they have been leaving the country by sea in rickety boats, risking their lives, in recent years. Last year, the Thai navy inhumanly mistreated them and hundreds of them drowned, while many others ended up in jails in India, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, and Thailand. During recent weeks, more than two hundred Rohingya boat people reached Thai shores and were arrested. However, they are refugees with well-founded fears of persecution at home, so the Thai government should allow UNHCR staff Suu Kyi for the Second Panglong Conference, he said, “Now we are receiving calls for a Second Panglong Conferenc which Burma’s pro-democracy leader Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has called ‘Panglong for the 21st century’. There are also efforts to convene conferences status, and whether or not they deserve of ethnic nationalities on the border. We support access to determine their asylum or protection.”

In conclusion, he advised that, “The most important thing is that all of us must work in unison, as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi has called for. As such, all political and democratic processes in Burma should be all-inclusive, and the Rohingya should be part of it. Time has come to practically revive and strengthen the Panglong spirit of “unity in diversity”. We should appreciate that diversity is not weakness, but strength.”

From P. 13 rights to refugees seeking safety within its borders. When another group of of Rohingya washed up on Thai shores in 2009, Thai officials didn’t cart them off to prison but opted, instead, to just drag them back out to sea.

The Rohingya, who live in conditions that seasoned relief workers have called “the most miserable on earth,” have had bum luck for years. Rohingya refugees living in destitute camps in Bangladesh or in Malaysia’s city slums take harrowing journeys on foot and in ramshackle rafts in search of basic human rights. Enough is enough Enough for starters, Thailand should give the UN access to the detained Rohingya migrants. What are they so afraid of? ##

From P. 14 imprisonment or a very heavy fine. “We don’t care where we stay, as long as it’s not Burma,” Mr Amin said. Phuket Immigration officers said that halal food and clothing is being provided to the 33 detainees by a local Muslim foundation.

Richard Sollom, deputy director of Physicians for Human Rights, has told Radio Australia that “Rohingyas are one of the world’s most persecuted minorities.” “They’re ethnically called Rohingya, they’re of Muslim faith, and there are about two million Rohingya in Burma, but about 20 to 30 per cent of these have fled across international borders to neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand and Malaysia and even India," he said.

“The Burmese military treat them so inhumanely, there are widespread reports of routine murder, rape, torture and mass detention of innocent villagers. They’re even forbidden to marry each other, they can’t even leave their villages in Arakan State, which is in western Burma, they can’t even leave their villages without written permission," he further added. "So all ethnic minorities in Burma are greatly persecuted by the military junta, but the Rohingya even more so.”

From P. 14
By M. A. Alam

“Include Rohingya people in ethnic nationalities forums and the democratic process of Burma in the spirit of Panglong Conference,” urged Nurul Islam, the President of the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) while addressing as a guest speaker at the 50th anniversary of the Kachin Revolution Day on 5 February 2011 in London.

Mr. Islam continued, “Due to the protracted propaganda of the SPDC military regime and vested interest groups against the Rohingya people, many leaders of Burma democracy movement and other ethnic peoples are reluctant to accommodate the Rohingya in their numerous alliances. Here, I remind you that this exclusion of Rohingya cannot be done without doing injustice to democracy and the composite nature of Burmese society.”

Expressing tribute to the Kachin people, he said, “On this occasion of Kachin Revolution Day I would like to express my heartfelt felicitations to my Kachin brothers and sisters. Here I am paying my tribute to all those valiant Kachin sons and daughters who sacrificed their lives for the cause of their people. I wish this Kachin Revolution Day a grand success.”

Appreciating the Kachin people, he said, “The Kachin are a great people in Burma. They have a long history and rich culture. They have had positive contributions in Burmese politics. We very much appreciate the leaders of the KIO and KNO for their recent agreement and understanding to work together at the service of the Kachin people. It is not only a great achievement for the entire Kachin people but also a promising development towards democracy movement in Burma.”

While discussing the spirit of Panglong, he said, “As you know, Burma is a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, multi-lingual, and multi-religious county. It is like an ocean where various streamlets of culture and civilization have joined together. The Union of Burma was born on 4th January 1948 out of the joint efforts of all peoples of the country, on the basis of the Panglong Agreement signed on 12th February 1947 between General Aung San and leaders of ethnic nationalities to take independence together. The effort and contribution of every people, big or small, was equally important and great.” Thus the spirit of Panglong is very important for the perpetuation of a strong and stable Union of Burma. Here we need to remember what the Panglong Agreement was. To be brief, the Panglong Agreement was a Union Treaty to build an independent Burma—a Federal Union based on the agreed upon principle of “unity in diversity”. It is, in fact, a voluntary participation of the nationalities, particularly the Kachin, Shan, and Chin.

“Again, what is “unity in diversity”? Burma is a country with diverse ethnic, cultural, and religious characteristics. This means the people are different from one another. Their languages are different, their cultures are different, their religions are different, and their lifestyles are different. But they are all united to establish a union..."