Artistic view of the killing of innocent Rohingyas in 1994 by Major-Gen. Win Myint, Commander of the Western Regional Command on the order of Senior Gen. Than Shwe.

In Burma, Ethnic Rohingya Muslims continue to be denied full citizenship and equal opportunity for education, employment and travel.

HILLARY CLINTON, RATHENAU PRIZE CEREMONY IN BERLIN ON APRIL 15, 2011
EDITORIAL AND COVER STORY

"THAN SHWE HAD KILLED 400 ROHINGYAS"

Almost all of the 400 Rohingyas killed in 1994 with the order of Gen. Than Shwe were civilians. Only a rebel commander surrendered with about 20 followers might be involved in this group of 400 unfortunate Rohingyas.

Other rebels captured were killed on the spot. As a matter of fact Than Shwe`s army killed more than 3,000 people in this tragedy. But only about 60 were rebels. Alas!!! the rest were all Rohingya civilians. Recently, Aung Lynn Htut, a former Burmese intelligence officer now living in the US, writes that when it was reported to Than Shwe about the arrest of 400 Rohingyas who were arrested in connection with the Rohingya rebellion, Than Shwe ordered to kill saying "Eliminate them! Don't even leave an infant alive! They are just Kala (degrading term for people of Indian descent), not humans! Sentence them to the maximum imprisonment!"

"In April 1993, (it was 1994-editor) Than Shwe, who is also the commander in chief of the Burmese army, ordered Gen. Win Myint, the then commander of the Western Regional Command (and later the regime's Secretary 3 and adjutant general) to kill over 400 ethnic Rohingyas in Arakan State's Buthidaung and Maungdaw Townships in retaliation for attacks by Rohingya rebels who detonated 18 mines in one day in an assault on the Burmese army. The army rounded up more than 400 people, including civilians, and as soon as they received their orders from the GHQ office, they killed them all."

From May 1994, North Arakan had become a new killing field. At SLORC death camps of Maungdaw and Buthidaung Townships, Rohingyas were tortured, shot or slaughtered, more chilling is that the people were to dig their own grave before being killed or buried alive. Alleging as insurgents sympathizers, Rohingyas were taken late at night from their homes and were tortured to death or buried alive. Under the pretext of looking for insurgents random killing in the
From P. 2 EDITORIAL

Villages was a regular routine action of the SLORC brute forces. About 60,000 troops had been deployed in North Arakan who used hundred's and thousands of Rohingyas as human shields. Thousands of porters were carried to unknown places in the jungles most of whom never come back.

Under false and imaginary charges thousands of Rohingyas had been gunned down and slaughtered. They were forced, at gun point, to kill each other by slaughtering or striking with spades on the heads. There are instances that the brother had to kill his own brother, and both the father and son were killed together before the very eyes of the family members.

In the first week of May, 1996, a group of wood cutters while cutting a big tree at Chowdhury Valley in the west of Tamyang Khali village spotted a pile of skeletons believed to be a mass grave of Rohingyas and inform the local Chairman. They estimated that no less than four hundred human remains were in the mass grave. On information army personnel removed the skulls and bones to unknown places. It might be the mass grave of the 400 Rohingyas killed by Than Shwe.

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POEM ON ROHINGYA’S LIFE OF TODAY

The Dream that Never Fulfilled

Our land has abandoned us;
Our neighbors have disowned us,
Our brothers have rejected us;
Our soul has betrayed us,
And our mind has declined us.
We’re dying, but there’s no death in sight.

We’re crying, there’s no tear in the eyes. There’s no light at the end of the tunnel.

There’s no fish in the pond,
There’s no bird in the forest,
There’s no fruit in the trees,
There’s no grains in the barn. There’s no bread on the plate.

Mountains have evicted us;
Rivers have excluded us;
Stars have eluded us; Moon has deflected us, The sun has engulfed us.

We’ve been dreaming, trying, struggling ever since, Oh God, show us the way, give us the means and will, To save ourselves, and to be alive again.

Ibn Kyapuri, Arakan

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ROHINGYA HOSTS MEETING OF BURMESE ETHNIC GROUPS IN UK

By Our Reporter, 26 April 2011

London: In April, the regular meeting of Burmese ethnic groups living in the UK was hosted by the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) on April 23, according to Mr. Tun Khin, the president of BROUK.

“The Kachin, Chin, Karen, and Rohingya ethnic groups attended the regular meeting, and it was held at No 10 Station Road, Walthamstow, London.”

“All the ethnic groups updated the others on the current situations of their area inside Burma and the positions outside Burma.”

In the meeting, a program was held to discuss future activities and events in order to deliver a unified message to international communities and the rulers of Burma that all ethnic groups stand together in their commitment for a genuine federal union of Burma, Tun Khin said. “The ethnic situations are still in the same positions in their areas after the sham election which was held on 7 November 2010. There are neither improvements nor changes, and in some areas the situations are even getting worse.”

“Human rights violations and discriminations against ethnic minorities are occurring continuously.”

“All participants harmoniously decided to work together harder and to play critical roles in fighting their common enemy, dictatorship, by all means, and also highlighted that it is very important for the ethnic people of Burma to work in unison as Daw Aung San Suu Kyi recommended after her release,” said the organizing secretary of BROUK.

“The meeting was started at 16:00 and successfully finished by 19:00, along with some vital meeting resolutions.”

“Finally, all ethnic brothers and sisters enjoyed a traditional Rohingya dinner served by members of the Rohingya ethnic community in the UK.”

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Source: Kaladan News
The Mayu valley sits on the traditional Rohingya homeland of North Arakan between the Kaladan river and the Naf. Some people say it is called Mayu because once upon a time it was a place of free heaven for the peacocks where various kinds of wild animals are found in this range. The commonest wild animals found in these mountains are elephants. The highly revered white elephants by the Buddhists are often found in these mountains near Maungdaw. Tigers, gauyals (gaurs), the wild goats, wild cattle, Malay deers and various kinds of deers and birds are common fauna in this majestic Mayu. Mayu is a land of mountains, thick tropical forests, rivers and creeks. Its 70 percent of the land is covered with forest. Teak, Pyinkado, Kamaung, Kayin, canes and bamboos are found in the forest of Mayu. Mayu river is famous for its beautiful natural Saindaung water-fall at the height of 220ft. There is a very beautiful beach lies between Aalaysangyaw (Hashorata) and Ahngumaw.

In 600 AD Maha Wira Min founded his kingdom at Purma (now a village in northern Maungdaw) at the east bank of the Naf river (Pamela, 1976, PP44. 45). In the "Kyaukza" serial No.963/20-23-804-Burmese Era, 1442C.E. there is indication of Muslim king's reign of Arakan in 14th century who were friends of Burmese kings and used to visit them. The kings of Arakan had Muslim titles. If they were not Muslim kings mentioned in the inscription, the Muslim kings might be Rohingya Muslim kings, from the Mayu River valley, the eastern side of the Naf River. Rohingyas claim their existence there of over thousand years. If not thousand years, their existence might be from the time of 1202 C.E. when the Muslims conquered Bengal that is 800 years. (Dr. Than Tun)

In 1942 the Muslim Rohingyas liberated all area up to Razabil [Zaydebyin] in the Rathedaung Township. The whole Mayu frontier area comprising Maungdaw, Buthi daung and most part of the Rathedaung Township were brought under the administration of the Muslim Peace Committees set up by the Rohingyas Muslims of the north Arakan. Mr. Omrah Meah became the president of the Peace Committees. In 1945 while taking power from the President of the Muslim Peace Committee, Mr. Omrah Meah, by Col. Phillip, Col. Edgerly and other British military Officers, the British promised they would make North Arakan a "Muslim National Area". The same promise was also given to Atura Raja (Abdul Majid) of TaungBazar by the British officers in Writing.

On First May 1961, the elected democratic popular government of Prime Minister U Nu created the Mayu Frontier Administration Area covering Maungdaw, Buthidaung and the western part of Rathidaung townships. Though it was a military administration, as it did not involve subordination to the Rakhine authorities the arrangement earned the support of the Rohingyas. A special police force known as' Mayu Ray" was raised with recruits from local Rohingyas and the law and order situation was improved. Economic, educational, health and cultural improvements were done by the Frontier Administration.

It was the only administration, which favoured Rohingyas during the post-independent Burma.
We, the undersigned Rohingya organisations, strongly condemn the Narinjara News Agency for its disinformation of describing the innocent Rohingya people as suspected Talibans.

According to a pre-plan to extort money from the Rohingyas, the Nasaka collaborators informed the Nasaka of the area that some insurgents had entered in North Maungdaw and held a meeting with people in Kamaung Seik village (Fokira Bazar) whereupon, taking advantage of opportunities and circumstances, the Nasaka started arresting and torturing the innocent villagers arbitrarily. So far, about 50 innocent Rohingya villagers were arrested under false and concocted allegation of having link with insurgents which Narinjara fabricated as Talibans in its news on 20 March, 2011. It has exaggerated news giving cry wolf mentioning the name of one imaginary Taliban Maulvi Harun as imparting combat and bomb making training to the villagers in the jungles. It further concocted that a seal and documents, which identified them as members of the Taliban, were seized. According to Irrawaddy news of March 22, 2011, the Narinjara editor Khaing Mrat Kyaw said, “Nasaka told us about Maulvi Harun, who entered the country from Bangladesh and had given training.” It hints his involvement in the plan of the Nasaka against the innocent Rohingya villagers.

To make the matter worse, Narinjara embroidered this false news by putting on it an unrelated picture of masked Afghan Taliban fighters holding RPG with intent to confuse them with Rohingyas and thereby to mislead the minds of the people. The head of the Thailand based Arakan Project Chris Lewa told DBV that “there was no evidence to link the group to mujahideen groups”. This is a blatant lie, without any evidence, and is a politically motivated report aims at discrediting and tarnishing the image of one of the world’s most persecuted, underrepresented and voiceless peoples – the Rohingyas – for being Muslims. We demand Narinjara to put up any evidences to substantiate its misleading report that it stage-managed by taking advantage out of the Rohingya people’s tragedy created by Nasaka and vested interest groups that resulted in the serious human rights violations by the regime.

Despite Narinjara’s callous effort, on 21 March 2011, the director of Nasaka Lt. Col. Aung Gyi, said in a public gathering of 300 people at the Maungnama Madrassa (religious school) in Maungdaw Township, which was attended by village authorities, elders, and religious leaders, that the rumour of “Taliban link” was a fake report and was a creation out of the enmity between the local members of the Union Solidarity Development Party (USDP) and the Rohingya political party of National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD) both of which had contested in 7 November 2010 national elections. He continued that all innocent people who were arrested on suspicion will be released soon on the recommendations of the village authorities, elders and religious leaders after the completion of enquiry.

Despite protests from Rohingya civil societies time after time, the Narinjara News is still actively engaged in making false news against the Rohingya people thus contributing persecution of Rohingyas by the regime’s brute forces like Nasaka, army, police and other repressive functionaries.

We are dismayed that the Burmese Section of the BBC World and other media made similar reports based on the concocted news of Narinjara. Despite concern raised with BBC about the bias report of Narinjara’s editor Khaing Mrat Kyaw, who is also a BBC correspondent in Bangladesh, BBC continues to relay sensitive news that he incorrectly reported about the Rohingya people without proper investigation.

Meanwhile, we invite the attention of the media groups, human rights and democratic organisations, including Burma News International (BNI), to the fact that the activities of the Narinjara is objectionable, particularly in matters relating to the promotion of human rights, democracy and ethnic harmony in Arakan.

National Democratic Party for Human Rights (in exile) (NDPHR (in exile))
Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)
Arakanese Rohingya Community in Thailand (ARCT)
Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRAJ)
Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia (BRCA)
Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK)
Rohingya Community in Norway (RCN)

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From P. 4 FROM THE PAGES OF HISTORY

with Burmans in the top posts and Rakhine in lower strata. Pro-Burman Rakhine who tightened the screw against the Rohingyas further dominated the Arakan State Council. In the new formation the regime once again excluded the Rohingyas from the administrative affairs and ministerial body of Arakan State. ##
COX’S BAZAR, Bangladesh:

Mahamuda Khatur remembers the fateful day three years ago. At dawn her husband had left their Kutupalong refugee camp in southern Bangladesh for the forest to fetch firewood he would sell to other refugees or local people. He never returned.

Mahamuda was told that he had drowned in a river, a claim she has never independently verified. That left her as a 27-year-old widow with two children. Now, suffering from tuberculosis for eight months, Mahamuda is too weak to work and cannot feed herself or her children.

The pallor of her face and the thinness of her arms show the unmistakable signs of severe malnutrition. Now, she has to rely on other refugees’ generosity to survive. “But there is not much that the people here can do for us,” she says. “Everybody is in the same situation.”

Mahamuda is an ethnic Rohingya, a Sunni Muslim community that has fled persecution in its native Myanmar to neighboring Bangladesh and other countries. Throughout this region, on a narrow strip of beach, sparse forest or sandy land squeezed between the Bay of Bengal and the Myanmar border, Rohingya exiles can be seen carrying heavy bags of salt, bundles of firewood, stacks of bricks, baskets of fish, blocks of ice. Above all, they carry the weight of being one of the largest stateless populations on the planet. Out of an estimated 1.5 to 2 million population, only the 48,800 Rohingya registered as refugees with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Bangladesh and Malaysia have legal status. The one million or so Rohingya living in Myanmar’s western Arakan State are not recognized as citizens and the 500,000 to one million others who have chosen exile in other countries are mostly considered illegal migrants.

The Rohingya were not always a known as Burma. Although they have been a constant victim of a chauvinist Buddhist regime animated by anti-Muslim and anti-Indian sentiment dating back to the British colonial occupation, the Rohingya had citizen status in Myanmar until 1982. That year, then dictator Ne Win promulgated a citizenship law that stripped them of their nationality. It was the epilogue of one of the darkest chapters in the country’s recent history, the Naga Min Operation (“Operation Dragon King”) launched in 1978 in the west Arakan State.

In the name of a crackdown on “illegal migrants”, the army killed, raped and arrested scores of people, mostly Rohingya. Villages were burned and looted. Mosques and other religious sites were particularly targeted. That operation forced some 200,000 Rohingya to flee to neighboring Bangladesh. Most of them were repatriated by the end of 1979. In 1991-1992, fleeing the junta’s widespread use of forced labor, summary executions, torture and rape, another wave of 250,000 Rohingya left the country. Currently the regime continues repressive practices, although on a lesser scale.

During a discrete visit in a large Rohingya village in Arakan State last year, in the relative safety of an old mosque, an elder detailed the numerous restrictions imposed by Myanmar authorities on the local population. “Even though we have been living here for many generations, we need a special authorization for almost everything: to move out of our area, send our children to the university, marry them, run a business. And, as everyone else in the state, we are constantly submitted to forced labor, arbitrary arrest, land confiscation and other abuses by the authorities.”

Rohingya also complain of being targeted by the Rakhine, the predominant Buddhist group in Myanmar’s Arakan State. It’s a bitter irony considering that the Rakhine themselves are subject to the junta’s systematic oppression against ethnic minorities. Violent incidents such as attacks on mosques by Buddhist radicals and retaliation by Rohingya are regularly reported. To justify their stance, both communities have traded endless arguments often founded on biased or reconstructed historical facts.

Xenophobia, fueled by extremists from both sides but also by the ruling junta, which has masterfully used divide and rule tactics to maintain its control, has submerged any hope of a passionate debate. Still, arguments forwarded by the Rakhine community, such as the “fear that the Rohingyas occupy our land because of their high birth rate and rapidly increasing population”, as a Rakhine journalist exiled in Bangladesh put it, have some basis and will eventually need to be properly addressed.

The dramatic situation of Rohingya exiles in Bangladesh, a country more accessible than Myanmar to outside observers, has become the show case for the minority’s stateless plight. Some 29,000 Rohingya live as refugees in Kutupalong and

Cont. P. 7
From P. 6 a booming beach resort in Bangladesh. These camps are under the UNHCR’s supervision and benefit from the presence of a few international non-governmental organizations (NGOs). With properly built houses, schools, playgrounds and a sewage system, they look like any other adequately administered refugee camps in the world.

But the largest facility, Kutupalong, has a twin brother with a much less amiable face. "Kutupalong makeshift", as it’s commonly known, is literally stuck to "Kutupalong registered". Thousands of adobe huts covered with plastic sheets, branches and dried leaves cluster together over a succession of bare hills, sheltering a population of 20,000, according to the latest count by a NGO active in the area.

Here, there is not a single trace of shade. Nor are there latrines or a proper sewage system. Only a few pumps installed by the French NGO Solidarites International provide for basic water needs. In the summer season, the heat inside the huts is sweltering. During the monsoon season, water often dissolves the huts’ walls and transforms steep alleys into muddy torrents. In any season, day and night, disease-carrying insects are ubiquitous.

We don’t have enough mosquito nets," laments Karim, the community leader of one of the six blocks dividing the camp. "Many diseases are endemic here, malaria, diarrhoea and tuberculosis. And now we have to face an epidemic of chicken pox and measles."

Almost like an indecent exhibit, mothers show the faces of their infants and children marked with chicken pox pustules. More worrisome is the 30% rate of acute malnutrition reported in the camp by the European Commission Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO). Only the NGO Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) Holland, in a clinic set out of the camp along the main road, and the French Action Contre la Faim (ACF), has the right to provide medical treatment to the "Kutupalong makeshift" population.

A few kilometers to the south, Leda, the other non-official camp with a population of 13,700, offers a relatively less desperate face. Rattan-built houses are properly aligned along paved alleys, here and there embellished with flowers and greenery. Yet restrictions imposed by Bangladeshi authorities in the makeshift camps are drastic. Food distribution and education are sharply curtailed. Still, if these rules were strictly enforced then "Kutupalong makeshift" and Leda would have turned into full-blown death camps.

Despite the appalling conditions, refugees manage to bypass these interdictions and organize their survival. In Kutupalong, for instance, as a substitute to a proper schooling establishment, community leaders with the help of outside sympathizers have set up a network of 30 classes inside huts with locally trained teachers.

The restriction on wandering outside the makeshift camps is perhaps the least observed of the restraints. "Many refugees leave them for a few days or a week to work in brick or dried fish factories, salt pans, as nickshaw drivers," says Karim, the Kutupalong community leader. "They usually work for 100 taka a day [about US$1.4], which is not enough to feed a family so often both parents have to work. This population of illegal workers is particularly vulnerable to abuse and is constantly at the local authorities’ and people’s mercy. Rapes, beatings, thefts and other abuses against Rohingya have been well-documented over the years. There are an estimated 250,000 to 350,000 other Rohingyas who live outside of the camps and are scattered all over the country who are equally at risk without legal status."

There is an ethnic irony to their situation. The Rohingyas have similar origins with the predominant Bengali from southeast Bangladesh and share the same language spoken in Chittagong, the country’s largest seaport, and its surrounding areas. They mix easily within a dense and already impoverished local population but are likewise seen as taking jobs and encroaching on scarce land.

"A deep tension between the two communities has developed over time, particularly the last two or three years," comments Chris Lewa, coordinator of The Arakan Project, a human-rights group monitoring the Rohingyas’ situation. In Ukhiya, a small town near Kutupalong, local people have created "anti-Rohingya committees". "They organize meetings, publish documents denouncing how the Rohingyas take over their work and ask for their deportation," says a journalist from Kaladan, a Rohingya news agency based in Chittagong.

Abuses by the local authorities had become so egregious that in February 2010 MSF stirred up a hornet’s nest by strongly denouncing "a violent crackdown against stateless Rohingyas in Bangladesh forcing thousands of people to flee in fear" to refugee camps. The campaign had an at least temporary positive impact on the Rohingyas, seen in fewer cases of arrest and harassment from the police.

However, MSF’s outburst, which some critics said "only developed an unconstructive approach towards the Bangladesh government," later triggered a strong reaction from the authorities. Work permits for NGOs active in the camps were suspended, putting them in the uneasy position of having to work on a day-to-day basis under...
From P. 7 the constant threat of expulsion. "It appears to be a government strategy to silence the NGOs," said Lewa.

The presence in both Myanmar and Bangladesh of a large population of young destitute Rohingya men regularly raises the concern of their potential exploitation by Islamic extremist groups. Although a few cases of recruitment by Islamic terrorist movements in Bangladesh were reported in the 1990s, there is no evidence today showing any link with this kind of organization, say aid workers.

In Myanmar, the omnipresence of the junta's vast surveillance apparatus acts to dissuade any recruitment efforts by outsiders. "These accusations result more from a fantasy," says a MSF staffer in Yangon who used to work in the Arakan State. "The Rohingya are surely orthodox Islamic, conservative people but it does not mean that they are terrorists." In Bangladesh, meanwhile, a massive crackdown launched by the authorities in 2005 has practically decimated local Islamic terrorist outfits.

Instead, thousands of Rohingya exiles are opting to leave Bangladesh for other supposedly more accommodating countries. Many attempt the dangerous and costly trip by boat across the Indian Ocean to more prosperous destinations in Southeast Asia. About 25,000 Rohingya now live in Malaysia, including 19,800 who are under the UNHCR's care. Over the past two years, another 420 or so have reached Indonesia.

In Thailand, authorities have been embroiled in controversy about their treatment of Rohingya boat people. In 2009, the Thai army was accused of pushing back to sea about 1,000 Rohingya boat people without a working engine and with little food or water. According to human rights organizations, more than half of them drowned. Thai Prime Minister Abhisit Vejjajiva last month reaffirmed to a meeting of foreign journalists his government's policy to deport Rohingya, who he considers "economic migrants" rather than political refugees.

Among themselves, Rohingya often denounce the lack of solidarity from other Muslim communities. "There is no religious consideration, no Muslim brotherhood," laments a leader of the exile group Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO). A large community of Rohingya has settled in Saudi Arabia, a predominantly Sunni Muslim country.

The Saudi Embassy in Yangon claims that there are 120,000 there, though many of them arrived in the country with Bangladeshi passports. Another estimated 300,000 Rohingya have lived for years in Pakistan, mostly in the Karachi area where they are reportedly well integrated into the local community.

Repatriation of Rohingya from Bangladesh to Myanmar, meanwhile, has been on hold for several years because the political situation there offers few guarantees for a safe return. According to Kitty McKinsey, UNHCR's spokesperson in Asia, "Between 1992 and the end of 2005, when the last repatriation took place, 236,599 Rohingya refugees went back to Myanmar from Bangladesh."

She adds: "There are indications that as many as half of the 200,000 to 400,000 undocumented Rohingya that the Bangladesh government says are in the country now may have been registered as refugees in 1991, gone home to Myanmar, and come back to Bangladesh again." That, McKinsey says, means many have thus lost their previous refugee status.

Resettlement in third countries remains an exceptional outcome despite a program initiated in the refugee camps in 2006. According to a spokesman of the International Office for Migration (IOM), the program's implementing agency, "926 Rohingya have been resettled mostly in United Kingdom, Canada and Australia. Another 500 people are expected to be resettled this year but we have to wait for the conclusions of a program review currently done by the Bangladesh government."

Any mass repatriation of Rohingya will remain wishful thinking as long as a comprehensive political settlement that purposefully addresses the fate of Myanmar's numerous ethnic minorities remains elusive. The newly appointed cabinet in Naypyidaw has so far demonstrated no sign of interest in reaching such an accommodation. Myanmar's Rohingya will thus be condemned to survive many more years in a stateless existence.##

Source: Asia Times Online
When a problem becomes chronic, the need to solve it also seems to lose urgency. The issue of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, like that of the stranded Pakistanis, is not only old but one that seems to have been relegated to limbo. The Rohingyas are victims of the ethnic cleansing policy of their government and since the late seventies they have been pouring into the Bangladesh in waves to escape the periodic anti-Muslim persecution, thinking perhaps that they would be safe in this side of the river Naf among their fellow Muslims. As a further misfortune for both Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, what was their shelter in an emergency is becoming their permanent habitat. Although the contemporary world is violently denouncing racism, and zero tolerance to racism is often heard as a slogan in international forums, on the question of Myanmar the world's leaders has adopted a strangely acquiescent attitude. Of course, some kind of international sanctions were imposed against Myanmar but not for persecuting the Rohingyas. Far from twisting the arm of Myanmar the world’s leaders are pressing Bangladesh to adopt a more accommodative policy towards the Rohingyas – another sign of twisted value judgement in an unjust world order.

Although in the past a number of refugees were repatriated with the help of UNHCR, that process is now stalled and according to media reports, early return of the rest is unlikely. The Myanmar government shows no enthusiasm in this regard and the visit of foreign minister Dipu Moni to Myanmar last January did not yield any result in this area of bilateral relations. What is further disturbing is that infiltration is still reportedly continuing. The registered refugees number 24,331 but there are many times more unregistered ones – 400,000 or more. Because of this influx poverty in Cox’s Bazar district is escalating at the rate of three percent per year, according to a study report of UNICEF. It was also known that many Rohingyas are involved in drug trafficking and other crimes. We are not suggesting that Rohingyas are by nature more criminally disposed or less criminally disposed than any other people in the world (we are not racist like the Myanmar junta) but the unsettled condition of these hapless refugees destabilising society and vitiating the environment. This kind of environment even breeds terrorism. A positive way to fight terrorism is to prevent the creation of environment that promotes terrorism. Bangladesh government would be expected to take up the Rohingya cause more vigorously with the Myanmar government as well as the UNHCR and other world agencies. ##


The World Food Program reported that food security in the two-thirds of the population going hungry.

Giving a graphic description of the plight of the Rohingyas, Refugees International said Rohingyas there are often arrested while collecting firewood in the nearby national forest or while working. If they are unable to pay a bribe or obtain a guarantee from a Bangladesh national for their immediate release, refugees are often charged with illegal entry and sent to jail. Refugees International said that detained Rohingyas routinely have to pay a bribe of between $110 and $400 for their release, forcing many families into heavy debt.##

Courtesy: Irrawaddy Online
ROHINGYAS FACE ‘SILENT CRISIS’ IN BANGLADESH – RIGHTS GROUP (RI)

AlterNet, April 20, 2011

Bangkok/Delhi – Tens of thousands of stateless Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh face abuse, starvation, and detention in a “silent crisis” that could lead to a humanitarian emergency if the authorities do not do more to protect them, a report by Refugees International (RI) said.

The Rohingyas are a Muslim minority from Rakhine State in the west of the predominantly Buddhist Myanmar. Rights groups say they face some of the worst discrimination in the world and accuse the Myanmar government of denying them citizenship, free movement, education and employment.

But those who have fled to Bangladesh also face discrimination - they receive limited aid and are subject to arrest, extortion and detention, the report Bangladesh: The Silent Crisis, released on Tuesday by U.S.-based rights group RI, said.

“The situation is desperate for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh,” Lynn Yoshikawa, a co-author of the report who recently returned from visiting the refugee camps, said. “They live in squalor and are forced to suffer a litany of abuses because the government doesn’t recognise them as refugees.”

Bangladesh’s Rohingya repatriate commissioner, Firoz Salahuddin, dismissed RI’s claims. He told AlertNet the report was “disappointing” and the Rohingyas were in fact being treated well. The Bangladesh government classes the majority of Rohingyas as illegal migrants and says they should return to Myanmar. Last year the authorities forcibly evicted thousands from a makeshift camp, prompting an outcry from aid and rights groups.

Since then, Bangladesh has increased restrictions on aid agencies working with the refugees, the RI report said. Despite worrying levels of malnutrition at the largest makeshift camp housing about 20,000 people, “the government has denied permits for aid agencies to assist unregistered refugees and host communities,” RI said. “Shelters are falling apart and are unlikely to resist the upcoming monsoons.” RI is calling on donor governments, particularly Australia, Canada, the United States and Britain, to help the Rohingyas by providing humanitarian aid, a new country to live in and funding. The rights group also wants donors to encourage Bangladesh to set up a system to register vulnerable and undocumented refugees to protect them.

“The plight of the Rohingyas has been neglected for decades by the international community and Burma (Myanmar’s former name) advocacy groups, despite the scale and severity of abuses they face both as stateless Burmese minorities and refugees,” Yoshikawa told AlertNet.

UNREGISTERED AND UNPROTECTED

According to Bangladeshi officials, there are almost 25,000 Rohingyas who have refugee status and who receive food rations and other aid from the United Nations. They are housed in two camps in the country’s southeastern Cox’s Bazaar region. Officials say there are also between 200,000 and 300,000 Rohingyas who term as “undocumented" - with no refugee status and no legal rights - who are living outside the camps, dependent on local Bangladeshi for work and sustenance.

Of this group, the lucky ones are in local villages while others end up in unofficial settlements where mud huts covered in plastic sheets and tree branches provide poor protection from monsoon rains that cause mudslides and expose them to waterborne diseases. Unregistered Rohingyas have for decades lacked "basic protection from violence, exploitation and arrest" in Bangladesh, Yoshikawa said. "(They) have exhausted their coping mechanisms and are forced into begging, prostitution and trafficking to survive." Women and girls are particularly vulnerable, and reports of sexual violence against unregistered refugees have increased in the last year. He U.N. Refugee Agency UNHCR does not have access to these Rohingyas and few aid agencies – if any – are officially allowed to provide assistance. "NO ONE HAS DIED"

Bangladesh’s Salahuddin dismissed RI’s claims of abuses and poor living conditions, saying there had been no reports of this. “Those that are living outside the camps are surviving well because of the hospitality of our people in the area. No one has died or starved due to a shortage of food in that area,” he told AlertNet by phone from Cox’s Bazaar. Salahuddin also denied claims made in the report that authorities in Dhaka were repeatedly delaying finalising a policy on the Rohingyas and intentionally preventing relief groups from aiding them. “The government is actually very serious about dealing with the undocumented persons and we are making a policy on the better treatment of these people,” he said.

"This is a transitional time - we are trying to formulate our policy which I am hopeful will be done soon. And, after all that, these issues will be settled and their lives will be better," he said.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS INEVITABLE

Yoshikawa, however, said a humanitarian crisis is "inevitable," if the Bangladeshi government does not address the issues facing the refugees and said there are concerns even for the officially recognised Rohingyas. The U.N.’s World Food Programme (WFP), which provides food assistance to the official camps, is facing a $2 million shortfall in funding. It only has support to cover food needs until the end of June. Christa Rader, WFP’s country director for Bangladesh, told AlertNet the situation is "critical because the people living in the camps depend 100 percent on the food we provide”.

And, despite the food aid, malnutrition levels in the camps are around 15 percent and the rate of chronic undernutrition is about 60 percent - which is considered severe. This has prompted WFP to start feeding programmes for hundreds of children under two years of age. “What is more critical is the situation in the makeshift camps,” Rader said. The malnutrition rate in these camps is twice as high, according to RI. The numbers are a concern even in Bangladesh which has one of the highest malnutrition rates in South Asia. 

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Rohingya Donate for Tsunami Victims in Japan

Tuesday, 12 April 2011

Rohingya who are living in Japan donated relief goods for the tsunami victims in Japan on April 4, 2011 according to an organizer from a Rohingya group. The program was organized by the Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRAJ).

“We are very happy to have a chance to donate for the tsunami victims on behalf of all Rohingya.”

“We donated several items of goods worth $4000. They are immediately usable items for the victims according to the instructions of centre officials, such as blankets, warm clothes, jackets, warming plaster, baby milk, towels, adult and child diapers, instant foods, etc.”

“On April 4 at about 10 a.m, we hand-over all the goods at the Tatebayashi City Office, where the local government have opened a donation and relief goods receiving centre.”

“The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh have been receiving aid from Japan since 1993. Now, it is our turn to help Japanese people when they are in a desperate situation after the recent powerful earthquake and tsunami. We, Rohingya around the world are praying for the victims,” Zaw Min Htut, the president of BRAJ, told the city officials who received the relief goods with thanks to the Rohingya people. ## Source: Kaladan News

WATER CRISIS IN LEDA REFUGEE CAMP AGAIN

By Our Reporter, 12 April 2011
Teknaf, Bangladesh: The refugees of Leda unofficial camps have been facing an acute water crisis again since the first week of April said a refugee leader from the camp who prefers not to be named. Solidarity, an NGO from the United Kingdom, has not been supplying water to the camp since April. The reason is unknown. When refugees asked about the water crisis, the concerned authorities did not reply to their questions, said a refugee leader. There are two NGOs, Muslim Aid (UK) and Solidarity (UK), that have been working in the Leda camp. Muslim Aid works for management and medical treatment in the camp, while Solidarity is working to improve unhygienic issues, such as latrines, drainage systems, and supplying water to the camp.

There are over 12,000 refugees who have been living in Leda camp without any support or rations from any quarter. At present, the refugees are not able to cook their food; they are even unable to take baths or to wash their clothes. In addition, they have very little drinking water. The local people neighboring the camp disturb the refugee women and girls when they go to streams to fetch water, said a mother of three children from Leda camp.

“Most of the children are facing various skin diseases because of the water crisis and the overall unhygienic situation.” “The weather is very hot, if we don’t get enough water or pure water from Solidarity NGO, our children will be affected by more diseases,” said another community member. ##

Source: Kaladan News
RNDP Objects to Appointment of USDP's Muslim MP in Arakan's Legislature

Tuesday, 08 March 2011

Sittwe: The Rakhine Nationalities Development Party, or RNDP, has objected to the appointment of a Muslim lawmaker as secretary of the legislative committee of the Arakan State Parliament on the charge that the lawmaker is not a citizen of Burma.

U Khine Pray Soe, secretary of the RNDP, told Narinjara that his party has objected to the appointment of U Zarhivir, aka U Aung Myo Min, from the Union Solidarity and Development Party. He was elected in the first constituency in Maungdaw Township in accordance with the 2008 constitution.

"The legislative role is very important and it is not appropriate at all to appoint one who bears debatable citizen status as the secretary of the legislative committee of the state parliament. We have to object to the appointment of U Zarhivir because it is not in accordance with the 2008 constitution," said U Khine Pray Soe.

The 2008 constitution, drafted by the current regime, has a clause stating a member of parliament must be a citizen who was born to parents who were citizens of Burma. The legislative committee of the Arakan State Parliament was formed at the parliamentary session on 1 March and consists of five appointed members, of whom three are elected lawmakers and two are outside scholars.

U Aung Naing, another MP from the USDP elected in the second constituency in Thandwe Township was appointed as president of the committee while Zarhivir was appointed as secretary. U Phoe Min, an MP from the RNDP in Rathidaung Township's second constituency is a member of the committee along with outside scholars U Kyaw Tha, retired assistant director of the high court, and U Maung Tha Hla, a retired law officer of the state. U Khine Pray Soe, however, said that their submission of the objection was rejected without any discussion in the parliament.

"We submitted our objection to the parliament on 2 March, and it was rejected on 3 March. We were merely told that the appointment came after step-by-step examinations by the higher authorities and the Arakan State Parliament does not have the authority to withdraw the appointment," he said.

U Zarhivir has been unavailable for comments despite attempts to reach him. According to a source close to Zarhivir, he is one of the few Muslims who hold a national ID card and his identity number is Ak-195265, although his other relatives hold only the white ID cards that bear the remark, "by this card, the holder must not claim citizenship of any country."##

Source: Narinjara News

Arakan Rebels Abduct Christian Preacher for Ransom in Paletwa

Thursday, 24 March 2011, Khonumthung News.

A Christian preacher U Aung Law was abducted in the second week of February from the western Burma border by the Indo-Myanmar-Bangladesh based Arakan (Rakhai) armed group demanding a ransom of Kyat 40 lakhs.

U Aung Law is a member of the Anglican Church and was serving Duchuangwa village in Paletwa township, Chin state.

"Captain Mint Soe and his six rebels belonging to the armed group took away U Aung Law and demanded a ransom of Kyat 40 lakhs from the villagers," said a local.

Arakan (Rakhine ) Rebels in Paletwa Township Area, Photo: ALP Website

Liberation Party (ALP) is active in the area and the party extorts money from the villagers. The group is fighting for freedom of Arakan state.

"The Burmese Army and the ALP are on either side, so people live in fear. It is unfortunate that the church leader was kidnapped," said a school teacher. Although Khonumthung News tried to get information about this, details were not available till date.

The people in western Chin state and northern Arakan (Rakhine) face detention, rape and killing by unknown armed groups. Besides, people are suffering the effects of famine due to bamboo flowering. ##
By Our correspondent, 06 April 2011

Maungdaw: 143 families brought in from Burma proper were settled last week in model villages that are being established in Maungdaw Township in Northern Arakan State by the Burmese military regime. The families were brought from Rangoon Division and they are the 19th round of settlers since the villages were set up in Northern Arakan State.

All the families are brought from Rangoon Division. Among them, 61 families are of retired prison department officials, 14 are of police, and the rest are of the general population from four districts in Rangoon. They include 422 people in total and this was the 19th settlement since the model villages were established in Northern Arakan State.

The families were brought from Rangoon to (Akyab) Sittwe by sea on 28 March and arrived in Maungdaw on 1 April. They were temporarily accommodated in Maungdaw’s Ka Nyin Tan Ward and later sent to different model villages in Maungdaw.

40 of them were sent to Taungbro and the rest were sent to Nyaung Chaung and Kharee Myaing model villages in Maungdaw, added the official. The Burmese regime started to establish the model villages in the border townships of Rathidaung, Buthidaung, and Maungdaw in Arakan State since 1999.

According to the official record, 50 model villages had already been set up in those townships and 1,952 families, with 6,655 people, were settled in the villages. The settlers are being brought mainly from Burma proper and they are mostly ethnic Burmese. They are provided by the regime with free houses, free arable land, and equipment to earn livelihoods.

According to local residents, there is dissatisfaction with the settlers because most of them are criminals, homeless, or transient people from Burma proper and they often engage in anti-social activities in Northern Arakan.

By Our correspondent, 08 April 2011

A 19-member delegation comprised of diplomats from western countries has recently visited the Rohingya refugee camps in southeastern Cox’s Bazar District in Bangladesh.

The delegations from 12 countries are including U.S. Ambassador James F. Moriarty, UNHCR Country Representative Mr. Craig Sandar, EU Ambassador Uliaam Hanna, French Ambassador Sarli Kosart, German Ambassador Holgar Mycle, Dutch Ambassador Jee Heuical, Dutch Deputy Head of Mission Dorish Burbarak, Norwegian Ambassador Reque Brit Lound, Swedish Ambassadors Aneli Lindal Keni and Kerin Ohaman, Australian High Commissioner Dr. Jastin Lee, UK High Commissioner Head of Political and Global Issues Zequelin Deli, Canadian High Commissioner Robert Magdangul, Swiss Embassy Deputy Head Gaberial Gary Gud, American Embassy Political Officer Kuiria Graham, and Spanish Embassy Deputy Head Adorwadu.

The team visited the Kutupalong and Nayapara official refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar on 6 April, 2011, and assessed the living conditions, health, and education of the refugees. There are 28,000 Rohingya refugees sheltering in two officially registered refugee camps and about 70,000 refugees are living in two makeshift unregistered camps.

A UNHCR representative said that if the refugees will get citizenship rights or the political situation is favorable for them, they will be sent to Burma. It is good if Burma receives the refugees. If so, we will also help the repatriation process.

Monday, 11 April 2011
Yangon – Myanmar has detained 146 boat people from Bangladesh after they were dumped on a beach by traffickers who told them they were in Thailand, an official said Monday.

“They are in the Irrawaddy region under investigation,” said the Myanmar government official, who asked not to be named. He said more than 80 of the detainees were Rohingyas, a Muslim group living primarily in Myanmar’s western Rakhine state who are described by the United Nations as one of the world’s most persecuted minorities. The group, found on a beach in late March, said they had paid to be taken from Bangladesh by boat to Bangkok and were told they had arrived in the Thai capital, he said.

“They will be charged under the immigration act. For the Rohingyas they will be sent back to Maungdaw in Rakhine State. The others will be sent back to Bangladesh,” the official said.

As many as 300,000 Rohingya have fled Myanmar to neighbouring Bangladesh, where they live in “primitive and squalid conditions” in both official and makeshift refugee camps, according to US-based Human Rights Watch. The rights group said in a February report that authorities in Myanmar have...
By Our Reporter, 09 April 2011
Maungdaw, Arakan State:
The National Security Personnel (Sarapa) have been harassing only members of the Rohingya community to extort money in Maungdaw since the last week of March, said a businessman from Maungdaw.

“One member of the National Security Agency, Win Hla Htun, is going around Maungdaw where Arakanese Rohingya are sitting in their shops and business centers to check the position of Arakanese Rohingya businessmen.

“He started harassing Arakanese Rohingya businessman on April 5 in the Maungdaw municipal area. The National Security personnel had already been harassing the people of rural area while they were in the town for business or other purposes Win Hla Htun summoned Rohingya businessman Akaram, and went to his shop to pick up with his motorbike on April 5. After he picked up Akaram, who has shop on Master Munaf shopping line, he was accused by the agency that he is dealing in Yaba (methamphetamine) drug business. So, the agency asked for 500,000 Kyats. If victims fail to pay the demanded money, the National Security personnel will torture the detainees physically and mentally in their camp, said an aide from the agency.

Later Akaram was released after paying the demanded money to the agency.

Similarly, on 8 April, Farook Sha, another Arakanese Rohingya businessman, was picked up by Win Hla Htun and taken to an office where he was also accused by the agency in the same manner as Akaram. It is still not known when Farook Sha will be released from detention.

“This is a method for the Burmese authorities to extort money from the Arakanese Rohingya community with false allegations and physical and mental harassment in order to coerce people to fulfill their demands,” said a school-teacher from Maungdaw.

“The harassment was started again after the national elections on November 7, and all the authorities are going to harass the Rohingya community. We don’t know if the new government will handle the situation of northern Arakan with peace.”

Source: Kaladan News

Authorities transfers large arms shipment to Nasaka headquarters
By Our Reporter, 28 February 2011
Maungdaw, Arakan State: The Burmese authorities transferred a huge arms shipment to the Burma Border Security Force (Nasaka) Headquarters of Maungdaw from Buthidaung on February 25, according to an officer from the Buthidaung port. On February 25, a ship from Rangoon carried arms to Buthidaung without entering Akyab, the officer said.

“The Nasaka personnel were watching the ship after it reached the Buthidaung port. The Nasaka had complete control of the port until they unloaded all of the arms and loaded them into trucks. Nobody else was allowed to enter the port.”

The Nasaka used eight trucks to transport the arms from Buthidaung to the Nasaka Headquarters of Kyikanprin in Maungdaw, said a transporter from Buthidaung.

“We had to park the trucks inside the port compound, and then we were ordered to leave the trucks,” said a driver who was involved in the action. “The Nasaka reloaded the arms into the trucks themselves during the night so nobody could see what was going on.”

“We drove the trucks at night. When we reached the Nasaka Headquarters, the Nasaka personnel ordered us to leave the trucks inside the Nasaka Headquarters.” “The Nasaka personnel didn’t use local laborers or port laborers to load or unload the arms.”

Similarly, the Nasaka personnel transferred the arms during the night from its headquarters to the north of Maungdaw where a detainee was seen last month loading wooden boxes which are usually used to hold arms, said a local from northern Maungdaw. ""The border line is lands," said a local from northern Maungdaw."

Source: Kaladan News

From P. 13
“systematically persecuted” the Rohingya for more than three decades.
In the past human rights activists have condemned the Thai navy for sending Rohingya asylum seekers back to sea. The UN Refugee Agency in Bangkok said it had confirmed that more than 140 people had been put ashore in the Irrawaddy Delta and was trying to find out more information about them.

“Sometimes, the smugglers take people out in boats and sail them around and tell the people they have reached Thailand or Indonesia and these poor people find out they are in Myanmar,” said spokeswoman Kitty McKinsey."

TRADITIONAL ROHINGYA BOLIKALA
(WRESTLING COMPETITION)
Rohingya Face Difficulties with New Maungdaw Settlement Program

By Our Reporter, 02 March 2011
Maungdaw, Arakan State: The Rohingya community in Maungdaw is facing difficulties from the Burmese authorities’ new resettlement program in Maungdaw. Kyaw Aye, a Rakhine community member who hails from block no. 3 of Maungdaw, is a resettlement program agent. He oversees the building of new homes and the repair of old homes in model villages (locally called ‘Natala Villages’). The agent is now forcing the Rohingya community to build houses for newcomers to Maungdaw. The agent gave orders to the village authorities concerning where model villages had to be built. A new model village in Shweza Village for 200 families who will come this month is being set up.

The agent is using the name of the Maungdaw Township Authorities to get the building materials from the Maungdaw market without paying any money. The agent takes a lot of materials from the Rohingya community’s building materials shops. However, he never takes any materials from shops with Rakhine owners. The Rohingya community has to pay for, or give freely, land, labor, food, and materials for the new model villages. As such, the model villagers harass the Rohingya villagers in many ways. “The SPDC’s policy of establishing “model villages” in northern Arakan State to be populated with Burmans from Burma Proper and Rakhine from Bangladesh and inside Arakan State has resulted in the confiscation of lands from the Rohingya community. The building of model villages reportedly intensified after the formation of the Burma Border Security Force, or Nasaka, in 1992. At present, over 100 model villages have been built in northern Arakan State. These model villages were built with the forced labor of Rohingya people. Besides, the villagers have to provide money, rations, generators, cattle, and materials for house buildings for the newcomers. Moreover, the Nasaka has seized grazing pastures belonging to the Rohingya community to distribute to model villagers. These atrocious measures have forced the Rohingya to become landless internally displaced persons (IDPs), and in some cases to face starvation forcing them out to cross the border into nearby Bangladesh for life and shelter. The Burmese authorities have plans to turn northern Arakan State into a Buddhist-majority area. They are causing a serious demographic imbalance by bringing in new settlers. ## Source: Kaladan News

Nasaka Officers Harass Students in Maungdaw

Our Reporter, 16 March 2011
Maungdaw, Arakan State: Officers of Burma’s border security force, or Nasaka, harassed Rohingya students who were on their way to sit for their matriculation examination. Anno (not his real name) is a student of class X at Maungdaw High School. He always travels to school from his village and back by trishaw or motorbike, the student said.

“He always crosses the Shweza Bridge while he goes to school, but yesterday he was stopped at the bridge for a toll while he was riding a motorbike.” The bridge security and Anno quarreled about the toll while Anno was going to school for his examination which started on March 7, 2011 according to an elder from Shweza village. “Anno’s books were spread on the road and his school bag was torn apart by the Nasaka. Finally, locals rushed to the spot, which made the officers depart.” Anno complained about the incident to his school’s authorities, who then reported the incident to U Aung Kyaw Oo, the head of Township Authority and Nasaka Headquarters. However, no action was taken against the bridge security officials, said a schoolteacher from Maungdaw.

“It is very important for students to get to the examination center on time, otherwise they will be expelled.” “The Nasaka personnel of the bridge security post always demand tolls from the students who ride motorbikes. The toll is not imposed by the authorities, but the bridge security officers forcefully take money from drivers.”

“The toll is only imposed for the Arakanese Rohingya community on the bridge, not for the Arakanese Rakhine community.” ## Source: Kaladan News

From P. 16 THAN SHWE ....
The regime’s killing of monks during the September 2007 protests is just one incident that the international community is aware of. The regime is afraid that it may one day face an international tribunal because of its misdeeds.

If the Commission of Inquiry proposed by Tomás Ojea Quintana, the special rapporteur on the human rights situation in Burma, were allowed to work inside the country, more stories would surely come out. That’s why Snr-General Than Shwe quietly included the self-amnesty law in the 2008 Constitution to secure his future.

However, I want to warn Than Shwe that as the leader of the army, he will be held accountable for violations that the army has perpetrated. Looking at other authoritarian regimes around the world, we can compare Than Shwe to the utterly despicable Muammar Al-Gaddafi of Libya. The Burmese army should not take orders from such a person, but rather follow the example of the Egyptian army, which refused to fire on unarmed civilians. It is time for Burmese army personnel to side with the
Than Shwe, the Trembling Dictator

By AUNG LINN HTUT, Saturday, March 5, 2011

Why did Snr. Gen Than Shwe insert a self-amnesty clause into Burma’s 2008 Constitution that was never discussed by the regime-sponsored National Convention, the body that drafted the charter? Why did he compel retired director-general Thaung Nyunt, his legal adviser, to write this section alone in his office without consulting others?

According to my sources in Naypyidaw, Thaung Nyunt, a devout religious person, felt ashamed of his involvement in Than Shwe’s dirty work.

Chapter 14, Section 445 of the Constitution, entitled “Transitory Provisions,” states: “All policy guidelines, laws, rules, regulations, notifications, and declarations of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and the State Peace and Development Council or actions, rights and responsibilities of the State Law and Order Restoration Council and the State Peace and Development Council shall devolve on the Republic of the Union of Myanmar. No proceeding shall be instituted against the said Councils or any member thereof or any member of the Government, in respect of any act done in the execution of their respective duties.”

I can recall one occasion when I was serving at the Burmese Embassy in Washington, D.C. A new staff member who had been transferred to the embassy in 2001 told me that he had brought urgent orders to carry out an inquiry into an important matter. The orders were to find out if the US government had any intention of bringing the Burmese generals before an international criminal tribunal. We were to report our findings as soon as possible.

I smiled to myself at the thought of Than Shwe, who was always so merciless towards others, expressing such cowardly concern about his own fate. “Eliminate them! Don’t even leave an infant alive! They are just Kala [a degrading term for people of Indian descent], not humans! Sentence them to the maximum imprisonment!” That was the Than Shwe I knew.

Slobodan Milošević of Yugoslavia, Charles Taylor of Liberia, Pol Pot of Cambodia and Omar al-Bashir of Sudan were all facing justice in different internationally sponsored tribunals at that time. So I could easily understand the cause of Than Shwe’s concern.

I reported back to them perfunctorily, informing them that the US government was busy with its own business—this was soon after the attacks on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center on Sept. 11, 2001—and had no time think about Burma. Than Shwe was delighted by the Sept. 11 attacks. He didn’t even send a state condolence letter to the US government like most other heads of state until the Burma Desk of the US State Department asked us about it.

The reason he stuck the self-amnesty clause into the Constitution is simple: He doesn’t have the courage to take responsibility for what he has done to his own people. Here are some examples of actions for which he is directly or indirectly accountable.

In April 1993, Than Shwe, who is also the commander in chief of the Burmese army, ordered Gen Win Myint, the commander of the Western Regional Command (and later the regime’s Secretary 3 and adjutant general) to kill over 400 ethnic Rohingyas in Arakan State’s Buthidaung, Maungdaw Township in retaliation for attacks by Rohingya rebels who detonated 18 mines in one day in an assault on the Burmese army. The army rounded up more than 400 people, including civilians, and as soon as they received their orders from the GHQ office, they killed them all.

In 1996, when the National League for Democracy (NLD) decided to walk out of the National Convention, Than Shwe was furious and ordered the intelligence apparatus to intimidate members of the party and necessary. In the same year, Than Shwe ordered his commanders in Shan State, Karreñni State, Pegu, Karen State, Mon State and Tenasserim Division to relocate villages and kill entire families, including infants, of anyone who defied the orders.

I have personally witnessed the Christie Island massacre, in which Than Shwe ordered Gen Kyi Min (the former navy commander), Gen Myint Swe (the former air force commander), Gen Thura Myint Aung (the former adjutant general) and Col Zaw Min (the minister of electricity) to kill 81 civilians who were found on the island.

Than Shwe also ordered Gen Soe Win (the former prime minister) and Aung Thaung (minister Industry) to assassinate NLD leader Aung San Suu Kyi. I can safely say that there are many former intelligence officers, former army officers and police officers who can verify this account. There are also many other events and incidents that I am not aware of.