FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS
There will be no national reconciliation without releasing all political prisoners
Ko Mya Aye, Ko Pyone Cho, Ko Gin Me, Ko Ko Gye, Ko Myin Ko Naing, Ko Htay Kyaw, Ko Ant Dwal Kyaw
There are 88 student leaders

BURMESE OPPOSITION GROUPS, DEMONSTRATING IN FRONT OF BURMESE EMBASSY IN LONDON TO FREE ALL POLITICAL PRISONERS IN BURMA

Burmesse comedian and political dissident Zarganar is welcomed at the Rangoon air.

Su Su Nway, NLD Leader and reception of John Humphrey Freedom Award
The Etymology of Arakan

Arakan is Arakan, call a spade a spade.

The term Arakan is of Arabic or Persian origin having the same meaning in both these languages. It is a slight variation of the word Arkan plural of the word ‘Rukn’ meaning a pillar. The fundamental tenets of Islam are called ‘five pillars of Islam’. Thus the word Arakan signifies the land of Islam or peace. The name might be given by the early Arab traders or by the Arakanese kings while Persian was the official language of Arakan up to 1845. One of the coins found in Arakan and preserved in the Museum of Kolkata, minted by Sultan Bahadur Shah dated (1557-58 C.E.) is inscribed in Persian with Kalimah on the obverse side and name Arakan on the reverse side.

The name Arakan did not appear as a solitary instance in the above languages. Different important places, rivers and mountains in Arakan also bear names of Persian or Arabic. For example: the name of the capital city of Arakan is Akyab (Ek-ab) meaning ‘one water’ in Persian like Panjab (Panj-ab) meaning ‘land of five water’. Chadubu Island meaning ‘Right angular Island’. Kaladan (intellectuals), Kulapanj (fifty learned men) are also of either Persian or Arabic origin. The Naf (nagi), meaning ‘center’ in Rohingya and Mayu (Mayur) meaning ‘peacock’. in Rohingya testify to the fact of Islamic sway over the region now known as Arakan.

According to the historian Magasthenes, the Greeks named the present day Barisal, Chittagong division of Bangladesh and Arakan as Ahgree meaning ‘the land of silver’. The bullion originated in Namzha of Yunan province of China and Bawzaing area of the Shan State. It was shipped through the Irrawaddy river to Sada (Sandoway) in the silver land from where it was dispatched to India. It is noteworthy that only the Rohingya people call Sandoway as Sada. Rambree Island is derived from Raham Boree Island (God Blessed Land) in Arabic word.

During Chandra Gupta Muraya’s rule the name ‘Kalamukha’ was used in the 6th century B.C. From 300 A.D. until 700 A.D. it was known as ‘Kanaras’. During the period of sultans of Delhi, the name of Arakan was ‘Maghar’. The existence of wild animals like elephants and rhinoceroses the production of the fine cotton fabrics, the use of kauri as medium of exchange, the growing of aloe wood etc. point to the fact that the Arab geographers explored that part of the territory of Rumi where these objects could be seen. Elliot and Dowsob are probably correct in locating this place ‘on the Bay of Bengal about Dhaka and Arakan’. The Arabs mention a seaport called Samandar, which has been identified by Dr. Abdul Karim with Chittagong.

Cont. P. 3
On October 12, 2011, Myanmar freed at least 300 political prisoners including several prominent dissidents, leaving an estimated 1,800 behind bars, as one of the world’s most reclusive states begins to open up after half a century of iron-fisted rule.

US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton, speaking to Reuters before a general amnesty for 6,359 prisoners including political detainees, said she was encouraged by “promising signals” of reform but that it was too early to announce steps Washington might take in response.

A senior prison official told Reuters about 300 dissidents were freed on Wednesday. “We hope many more will be released,” said Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, herself freed from 15 years of house arrest last year. “I’m really thankful for the release of political prisoners,” she told supporters.

After weeks of rare overtures, including a loosening of some media controls and more dialogue with Suu Kyi, the number was less than many had expected, raising questions over how soon and how fast the former British colony is willing to open up, under pressure for change on multiple fronts, including popular resentment at China’s new influence.

“It is disappointing,” said Benjamin Zawacki, Amnesty International’s Myanmar researcher based in Bangkok. “We had reason to expect, given the rather fast and qualitative steps that have taken place over the past several months, that today’s release would be more substantial numerically.” Myanmar, also known as Burma, has released dissidents only to detain them again, with more freed than in the past, there was reason to believe this time would be different.

The army nominally handed over power in March to civilians after the first elections in two decades in November, a process mocked at the time as a scripted sham to seal authoritarian rule behind a democratic facade.

Despite promises, until now, President Thein Sein, a retired general but the first civilian head of state in half a century, has done very little significant changes.

The United States, Europe and Australia have said freeing Myanmar’s political prisoners is essential to even considering lifting sanctions that have crippled the pariah state and, over years, driven it closer to China.

Several prominent dissidents included in the early releases are the brothers Thet Swe Win and Thet Swe Lynn, prominent figures in the 1988 student uprising, as well as U Tin Oo, a leading member of the National Democratic Force and one of the signatories of the 1988 charter, and U Hla Myint, a former NLD youth officer.

The most prominent freed dissident appeared to be Zarganar, Cont. P. 4
From P. 3 a comedian sentenced in 2008 to 59 years in a remote prison after criticising the then-ruling generals for their sluggish response to Cyclone Nargis, which killed more than 140,000 people when it slammed into the Irrawaddy delta a month earlier.

Also freed was Sai Say Htan, a leader of the Shan State Army. The ethnic rebel group fought successive military regimes that ruled following a 1962 coup. He was sentenced to 104 years in prison in 2005 for refusing to help draft a new constitution.

Many more remained in jail, including a group of activists who led a failed 1988 uprising. Diplomats in Yangon said other dissidents may well be freed in weeks ahead after state media published on Tuesday an open letter by a new government-appointed rights body urging the president to free those not posing “a threat to stability”.

Myanmar faces mounting pressure to end a half-century of isolation, in part to find alternatives to fast-growing trade with China and to pacify Southeast Asian concerns as the region seeks to become an EU-style Asian community in 2015.

Its infrastructure is in shambles and its sanctions-hit economy has few sources of growth beyond investment from China, a historic rival whose expanding influence in the country has stoked popular resentment.

CONCILIATORY GESTURE

Myanmar also appears to be trying to convince the 10-member Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) to allow it to take its rotating presidency in 2014, two years ahead of schedule and a year before the next general election.

"The prisoner release is a conciliatory gesture at a time when the government feels more secure about its position," said Joseph Cheng, a Myanmar analyst and professor of political science at the University of Hong Kong. "It’s aim is to boost its relationship and acceptance from ASEAN and for this government and this new system to be considered legitimate."

Hosting ASEAN would give Myanmar a degree of international recognition and help to convince the World Bank and other multilateral institutions to return to the impoverished nation -- steps that could benefit state-linked firms and a powerful business elite that includes former senior generals.

"This is part of a process that is aiming for international acceptance and removal of sanctions which will allow access to international financial institutions that will benefit the government and the elite," said Bertil Lintner, a Thailand-based author and expert on Myanmar. The European Union welcomed the release but said it would judge the move based on how many were eventually freed.

Nestled strategically between powerhouses India and China, Myanmar has been off the radar for most investors, its economy blighted by decades of inept military rule and starved of capital, despite rich natural resources, from gems and timber to oil and natural gas.

Last week, the government suspended a $3.6 billion, Chinese-led dam project, a victory for Suu Kyi and her allies and a sign the country could yield to popular sentiment.

These moves raised hopes the new parliament, dominated by an army-backed party, will slowly prise open a country that just over 50 years ago was one of Asia’s wealthiest -- the world’s biggest rice exporter and a major energy producer.

"We’re encouraged by the steps we see the government taking ... we’re going to take them at their word," Clinton said in an interview with Reuters in Washington. "But we want to see actions. And if they are going to release political prisoners, that would be a very positive sign."

BURMA’S STAR POLITICAL PRISONERS

There is no definitive number for those detained in Burma on political charges but estimates range from 1,000 to 2,100. The government is expected to stagger the release of such detainees over the coming weeks with observers watching closely for both the number of those released and their identities to measure how serious a move this is by the government.

Among the key figures are:

Zarganar – A popular film actor and satirical comedian, Zarganar used his fame and popularity to help organise food, mosquito nets, clothing, medicine and other relief supplies for the victims of Burma’s devastating 2008 Cyclone Nargis, which left about 140,000 people dead and destroyed 800,000 homes. He was highly critical of the government’s response to the disaster, giving interviews to Burmese and international media, denouncing the regime’s inadequate relief efforts and speaking eloquently about the physical hardships and psychological trauma of the survivors. He was arrested in June 2008, about a month after the disaster.

Su Su Nway – A loyalist member of the National League for Democracy, Su Su Nway has been in and out of prison over the years. She has been involved in pressing charges over forced labour, through the International Labour Organisation, and organising care for people living with HIV/ Aids in Buddhist monasteries. She joined the 1988 student protests against the fuel price hikes. She was awarded John Humphrey Freedom Award.

Min Ko Naing, Ko Ko Yi, Ko Mya Aye, Htay Kywe, Nilar Thein and Phone Cho – University students during the dramatic 1988 mass uprising against long-time dictator Gen, Ne Win, these committed political activists mostly spent more than a decade each in prison – including many years in solitary confinement – for their involvement in the large-scale protests of that era. Released mostly in the last decade, they began small marches against a sharp 2007 increase in fuel prices, protests that escalated into the dramatic Burmese Monks Uprising, sometimes known as the “Saffron Revolution.” Most of the 88 Generation Students were rearrested before the protests really gained momentum, though Htay Kywe, was on the run, hiding underground for weeks, using his charisma to give interviews on widely-followed exile-based radio stations and urging citizens to support the monks’ uprising.

Nilar Thein was on the run for several weeks, hiding with her young baby until she was arrested. The 88 Generation Student leaders were mostly sentenced to 65 years in prison.
From P. 4 Khun Tun Oo, General Hsal Tin
— Top leaders of the Shan National League for Democracy, which represents the Shan ethnic minority and has had close ties with Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy.

Burmesse Monks – U Gambira, one of the charismatic monks who helped lead the Burmese uprising in 2007. More than 200 monks, who were key organisers of the protests, were imprisoned after the uprising.

Journalists – Around 27 journalists have been in prison. They are mainly video journalists who were associated with the Norway-based Democratic Voice of Burma and involved in recording, and sending out images, of the 2007 Burmese monks uprising, helping the events to be seen around the world on international channels such as CNN and BBC.

U KYAW MIN (MP), A ROHINGYA POLITICAL PRISONERS NOT YET RELEASED — The Rohingya prominent politician U Kyaw Min alias Master Shamsul Anowarul Hoque and his family members were not included in the prisoners released under the recent presidential amnesty.

"U Kyaw Min (age 64), the representative-elect (MP) of Buthidaung Township constituency (1), belongs to the National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPHR) and a member of the CRPP, was detained on 17 March 2005. A statement was released by CRPP on last Union Day, in which U Kyaw Min took an active part. Besides, he met with ILO delegation, which visited Burma on 21st to 23rd of February 2005.

It may be mentioned here that, after he joined the CRPP (Committee Representing the People’s Parliament) in 1998 at the invitation of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi to represent the Rohingya ethnic minority, the main pro-regime party “NUP” (National Unity Party) also invited him to join NUP to support military backed national convention and to resign from CRPP. But he did not agree and this has caused serious wrath of the military rulers and the ultimate consequence was the handing of 47 years imprisonment, according to U Kyaw Min.

The junta banned the NDPHR under order No. 8/92 on 18 March 1992, and at that time U Kyaw Min was a member of the party’s Central Executive Committee. U Kyaw Min received a Bachelor of Economics degree from the Rangoon Institute of Economics in 1968, and in 1969 he began working as a teacher. In 1983, he received a Diploma in Education and served as the Deputy Head of Buthidaung Township Educational Department. In 1985 he became a middle school principal but was dismissed from the position in 1989 because of his involvement in the August 1988 uprising. U Kyaw Min received 30,997 valid votes or 74 % in the 1990 elections, according to the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) which is serving as a government in exile with its headquarters in Washington D.C.

U Kyaw Min explained to the court, in which he was not represented by a lawyer, that his family is Rohingya but because this is not an officially recognized ethnic group that they had gone along with whatever the officials had put down for the purposes of ethnicity in the past. However, the court rejected this argument and found them guilty of lying about their identity. Under the citizenship law, the maximum penalty for this offence is ten years imprisonment, which is already vastly excessive by international standards. However, in order to penalize U Kyaw Min and his family far beyond this, the police lodged four identical separate cases for different members of the family even though the offence was the same and they should have been lodged as a single case. All four were brought against Kyaw Min, even though there is nothing in the section of law under which they were charged to penalize someone giving false information concerning someone else, i.e. for his family members. They were also accused of "spread false news", even though the section was completely irrelevant to the case, but for which they each received a seven-year penalty.

"U Kyaw Min was sentenced to 47 years imprisonment and at the same time his wife Daw Tiza, his two daughters Kin Kin Nu and Way Way Nu and his son Maung Aung Naing were also sentenced to 17 years imprisonment each."

Take Action to Free Political Prisoners

Despite some small reforms and the release of just under 300 political prisoners, most political prisoners, more than 1,000, remain in jail. Most are kept in appalling conditions, some on death row or solitary confinement, in tiny dirty bare concrete cells with just as bucket as a toilet. They are not given proper food to stay healthy, and when they get sick they don’t get proper medical care. Some have been moved to remote prisons to make it very hard for their families to visit, and even if families to travel for days to see them, they are only allowed 15-20 minutes to talk. Torture is still being used against political prisoners.

Burma’s government is using political prisoners as human bargaining chips, releasing small numbers to gain positive publicity in an attempt to get sanctions lifted without making fundamental democratic reforms.

Burma’s Prisoner Release Concluded

On 13 October 2011, the Burmese Ministry of Home Affairs said that all of the 6,359 prisoners subject to the amnesty program announced this week by President Thein Sein were released. The prisoners released included 220 political prisoners, which activists say is a small number compared to the around 2,000 political prisoners being held in Burmese prisons at the time of the release. Only four members of the 88 Generation Students group were included in the release: Ko Ko Gyi (aka) Thein Than Tun, Zaw Htet Ko Ko, Lay Lay Mon and Myint Lwin Oo (aka) Thar Gyi. ##
The early people in Arakan were descended from Aryans. They were Indians resembling the people of Bengal. “The area now known as North Arakan had been for many years before the 8th century the seat of Hindu dynasties. In 788 A.D. a new dynasty, known as the Chandras, founded the city of Wesali; this city became a noted trade port to which as many as a thousand ships came annually;... their territory extended as far north as Chittagong; ... Wesali was an easterly Hindu kingdom of Bengal following the Mahayanist form of Buddhism and that both government and people were Indian.”

The Burmese do not seem to have settled in Arakan until possibly as late as the tenth century AD.2 The Rakhines were the last significant group to come to Arakan.3 They appear to have been an advance guard of Burmans who began to cross the Arakan Yoma in 9th century.4 And they “could not be genealogically the same as to the people of Danny Waddy and Wethali dynasties.”5 In old Burmese the name Rakhine first appeared in slave names in the inscriptions of 12th century.6 Dr. S.B. Kanango, said the name Rakhine was given by Burman and it was found in 12th to 15th century stone inscriptions of Tuparon, Sagaing. In early days not a single inscription was found in present day speaking Rakhine language. “The scripture of those early days found in Arakan indicate that they were in early Bengali script and thence the culture there also was Bengali.”7

Hence earlier dynasties are thought to have been Indians, ruling over a population similar to that of Bengal.8 But in medieval times there was a reorientation eastward; the area fell under Pagan’s dominance, and Arakanese people began to speak a dialect of Burmese, something that continues to this day. With Burmese influence came ties to Ceylon and the gradual prominence of Theravada Buddhism.9

Arabs were the earliest people to travel to the east by sea. They were in contact with Arakan even during the pre-Islamic days. The Arakanese first received the message of Islam from the ship wrecked Arabs in 788 A.D. Such ship-wrecks were occurred over and over in the coasts of Arakan and Chittagong. This Arab presence, with the message of Islam, made up the nucleus of Muslim society in Arakan. Thus in Wesali the Arakanese practised Hinduism, Mahayanist form of Buddhism and Islam. The Burmese military regime affirmed in its official book Sasana Ronwas Htunzeapho, published in 1997, “Islam spread and deeply rooted in Arakan since 8th century from where it further spread into interior Burma”. Meanwhile, “the Arab influence increased to such a large extent in Chittagong during mid 10th century AD that a small Muslim kingdom was established in this region, and the ruler of the kingdom was called Sultan. Possibly the area from the east bank of the Meghna River to the Naf was under this Sultan.”10 Islam developed slowly but surely in natural way. After the advent of Muslim rule in Bengal in 1203, the Muslim population of Arakan increased. Their number grew fast during the Mrauk-U dynasty. There was large scale conversion of Buddhists to Islam during 15th to 18th centuries. When the Dutch industrialists were ordered by the king to quit Arakan they were afraid of leaving behind their offspring through local wives for fear of their conversion to Islam. “It had been reported at Batavia that these children were being brought up as Muslims, and the pious Dutch Calvinists were extremely horrified.”11

The relations between Arakan and Chittagong were based on historical, geo-political and ethnological considerations. “The Chittagong region was under the Vesali kingdom of Arakan during the 6th to 8th centuries and under the Mrauk-U kingdom of Arakan in the 16th and 17th centuries.”12 Because of the political, cultural and commercial links between those two territories, Arakan used to be called ‘extended Chittagong.’ 13 The 15th century was a great turning point in the history of Arakan; during this time a large contingent of Muslims entered Arakan from Bengal and they went there by invitation of the ruling princes. The cause was political.14 Here the history of Arakan intersects with the history of India and especially with Bengal. An age old intercourse between Bengal and Arakan has left distinctive marks on various aspects of society, culture and administration of both countries. The Muslims were an integral part in the political entity of Arakan. They were rulers, administrators and kingmakers in Arakan for more than 350 years.

In 1430, after nearly three decades in exile in the Bengali Royal city of Gaur, king Narameikhla also known as Min Saw-Mun (1404-1434) returned to Arakan at the head of a formidable force largely made up of Afghan adventurers, who swiftly overcame local oppositions and drove off the Burmans and Mons.

This was the start of a new golden age for this country – a period of power and prosperity – and creation of a remarkably hybrid Buddhist-Islamic court, fusing tradition from Persia and India as well as the Buddhist worlds to the east. ...This cosmopolitan court became great patrons of Bengali as well as Arakanese literature. Poet Dulat Qazi, author of the first Bengali romance, and Shah Alaol, who was considered the greatest of 17th century Bengali poets, were among the eminent courtiers of Arakan. Mr.-K-U kings adopted Muslim titles, appeared in Persian-inspired dress and the conical hats of Isfahan and Mughal Delhi, minted coins and medallions inscribing kalima (Islamic declaration of faith) in Persian and Arabic scripts, spoke several languages.
From 1430 to 1645, for a period of more than two hundred years, the Arakanese kings took Muslim titles and used Muslim names in their coins. They followed Muslim traditions and culture at home, even when there were no good relations with Muslim Bengal. Arakan was turned into a sultanate. Col. Ba Shin, the then Chairman of the Burma Historical Commission states, “Arakan was virtually ruled by Muslim from 1430 to 1531.”

It was depicted as an Islamic State in the map of The Times Complete History of the World, showing cultural division of Southeast Asia (distribution of major religions) in 1500. (Edited by Richard Overy, Eighth edition 2010, page 148.)

Thus the Rohingya with bona fide historical roots in the region have evolved with distinct ethnic characteristics in Arakan from peoples of different ethnic backgrounds over the past several centuries. Genealogically Rohingya are Indo-Aryan descendants. Genetically they are an ethnic mix of Bengalis, Indians, Moghuls, Pathans, Arabs, Persians, Turks, Moors and central Asians, and have developed a separate culture and a mixed language, which is absolutely unique to the region. “Dr. Swapna Bhattacharya called this mixed language “Rohingya Bengal”. The picture of the Muslim influence on the King’s Court of Arakan portrayed in the Bengali literature has been presented below:
FROM P. 7 “Navaraj” [Nawa-raja] was in the King’s Court. It seems that the civil and criminal courts were run by the Muslim Qazis [judges]. It is known that during that period a man by the name of Saud Shah was a Qazi of Roshang.

Followings are some of the developments that reflect Muslim’s influence in Arakan particularly during the glorious period of Mrauk-U dynasty (1430-1784).

1. The Mrauk-U dynasty was a new golden age of power and prosperity with hybrid Buddhist-Islamic court, fusing tradition from Persia and India as well as the Buddhist worlds to the east.
2. Muslim etiquettes and manners, system of administration copying the imperial courts of Delhi and Guar had been practiced. Taslim or Muslim solution was performed in the king’s palace.
3. The Muslim played the phenomenal role of kingmakers with Muslim Prime Ministers, Lashkar Wizirs (Defence Ministers), and Ministers, Qazis, other administrators and large contingents of Muslim army.
4. The kings had involuntarily as well as voluntarily to adopt Muslim names and titles “Shah” in addition to Buddhists names and titles. Mrauk-U kings appeared in Persian-inspired dress and the conical hats of Isfahan and Mughal Delhi.
5. Some aristocratic Buddhists, including members of the royal families and class of persons enjoying superior intellectual or social or economic status also willingly adopted Muslim names.
6. Muslim Qazi courts had been set up throughout the kingdom.
7. Persian and Bengali languages were patronized and used as the official and court languages of Arakan.
8. Coins and medallions had been struck and issued inscribing “Kalima”, the profession of faith in Islam in Arabic.
9. The people followed the Muslim tradition at home. Buddhist women of those days practice “purda”.
10. Muslim missionary works hit the highest point. People converted into Islam in groups.
11. Muslims were in the control of trade and business. They were the main forces of agriculture. Particularly the alluvial rice-growing valleys of Kaladan River were populated by captives Muslims from Bengal.
12. Minted coins and medallions inscribing kalima (Islamic declaration of faith) in Persian and Arabic scripts.

Notes and References :-

3. Towards Understanding Arakan History, unpublished; In Pamela Gutman; Ancient Arakan, pp. 16-17
5. Towards Understanding Arakan History, unpublished in Chapter XIII
6. Towards Understanding Arakan History, unpublished; In Pamela Gutman; Ancient Arakan, pp. 16-17
7. Towards Understanding Arakan History, unpublished in Chapter XIII
17. Ibid. p.11
20. Ibid. p.6.
21. Indians in Burmese History by Dr. Ko Ko Gyi (From Wikipedia, the free encyclopaedia, “Indians in Burmese History”);
   In A.P. Phayre, History of Burma 1853, p.78
22. Ibid; In A.P. Phayre, Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1846
23. Pandittha U Oo Tha Aung; great History of Arakan, p.74.
An array of topics were discussed; ARU expressed great appreciation for the support from His Excellency

New York. October 11, 2011. The Ambassador of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) to the United Nations, His Excellency Ufuk Gokcen, warmly received the Director General of Arakan Rohingya Union, Prof. Dr. Wakar Uddin, at the OIC Mission at New York on October 11, 2011. The ambassador and the Director General had an hour and a half long discussion on various issues facing the Rohingya ethnic minority in Burma (Myanmar), and Rohingya refugee issues in many countries. The ambassador showed deep interest in the history of Rohingya in Arakan, Burma, and how the political and human right problems arrived at the current level in Arakan.

A significant part of the conversation was focused on the present political and human rights crisis faced by the Rohingya community in Arakan. The Director General outlined the details of the political and human rights violations by the Burmese government against Rohingya, including: (1) revoking of their citizenship by Burmese military and refusal to reinstate; (2) restriction of travel (even between villages); (3) denial of marriage permits; (4) denial of education; (5) confiscation of lands and settlement of homeless and jobless people from mainland Burma; (6) forced labor; and (7) rapes, extortion, intimidation, and many other violations.

His Excellency asked the Director General how the OIC Mission at the United Nations can help to alleviate the suffering of Rohingya. The director general presented a list of proposals. The ambassador also suggested the director general further explore the support from additional establishments and the Muslim community at large in the United States. The ambassador personally connected the director general to Ambassador Prof. Dr. Akbar Ahmed at the School of International Service, American University, in Washington, D.C. Ambassador Dr. Akbar Ahmed is devoting a section on Rohingya in his upcoming book. The director general will attend an event on November 3, 2011, in Bethesda, MD, and will give a presentation at the School of International Service on Rohingya political and human rights issues in Burma. Source: ARU Secretariat.

THE ROHINGYA AND THEIR CITIZENSHIP ISSUE

BY AMANULLAH

Citizenship or Nationality is a “right to have right.” According to Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, “everyone has the right to a nationality,” and “no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality.” As a member of the United Nations, Burma is legally obliged to take action to promote “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.”

The Rohingya people living in Arakan generation after generation for centuries and their arrival in Arakan has predated the arrival of many other peoples and races now residing in Arakan and other parts of Burma. Under the article 3 of Aung San-Atlee Treaty (1947) and the First Schedule to the Burma Independence Act, 1947, the Rohingyas are the citizens of the Union of Burma. They are also one of the indigenous races of Burma under section (I) (II) and (III) of the Constitution of the Union of Burma of 24 September 1947, enacted 4 January 1948.

Being one of the worthy citizens of Burma, the Rohingya Muslim of Arakan also enjoyed the same rights and privileges as the other nationals of Burma regardless of their religious beliefs or ethnic background. Their homes were secure, their roads were safe, their properties were protected and their justices never denied at the court. Their religious lessons were included in the school’s curriculum of their children. They were enfranchised in all the national and local elections of Burma. Their representatives were in the Legislative Assembly, in the Constituent Assembly and in the Parliament. As members of the new Parliament, their representatives took the oath of allegiance to the Union of Burma on the 4th January 1948. Their representatives were appointed as cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries. They had their own political, cultural, social organizations and had their programme in their own language in the official Burma Broadcasting Services (BSS).

In spite of that, today, by a stroke of the pen in the hands of SPDC, the entire Rohingya people of Arakan lost all their right and privileges. The SPDC is treating them as temporary residents. They are not only denied their nationality but also their citizenships rights. They are not tolerated and are systematically excluded and rendered ‘stateless’ in their own homeland because of their religious belief and ethnicity. They were not among the so-called 135 ethnic nationalities of the country, recorded by the junta; with an ulterior motive or make them “stateless”.

They are subjected to severe restrictions on movement, marriage and access to education, and suffer grave violations of human rights, including forced labour, extortion, exploitation, discrimination, abuse, rape, and religious persecution. Campaigns of terrer, crimes against humanity and extermination have been perpetrated against them in a systematic, widespread and planned way.

Expelling the Rohingyas from their ancestral land and properties has become almost a recurring phenomenon since 1948. About 1.5 million uprooted Rohingyas have taken shelters in many countries of the world since the anti-Muslim pogrom of 1942 in Arakan.

Today, this group is increasingly rights less, jobless, homeless, landless and the most illiterate section of Burma’s population. They are now people without a country dying alive and facing ‘slow-burning genocide’.

(Author’s note: I feel, we need to understand all the essential legal facts of our issue, particularly our young generation need to understand those facts more. This article was first written in Burmese in 1994 and it is a summary of it in English.)

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Nasima is sitting on the floor of her neighbours’ hut, helping out to grind chilli. If there is enough food, she will get some in exchange for her effort. If not, it is at least an opportunity to leave her home for a little while. Between the empty clay walls in her own hut, the memories are too vivid. And further away, towards the village or in her own hut, the memories are too vivid. A little while. Between the empty clay walls least an opportunity to leave her home for

If there is enough food, she will get some from her neighbours’ hut, helping out to grind chilli. Neighbours’ hut, helping out to grind chilli. Nasima is sitting on the floor of her

Noor Nahar escaped to Bangladesh with her husband nine years ago. Not able to find a job, he found himself a seat on a refugee boat to Malaysia. Since then, Noor has not heard from her husband, and tries to take care of their six children on her own. (Photo: Per Liljas)

FACT BOX

- Rohingya is a Muslim ethnicity with at least partial heritage in what nowadays is Bangladesh. One reason why Burma’s government, and also parts of the population, disapprove of the Rohingya is because they supported the British colonial rule back in the days.
- Cox’s Bazar, where most of the refugees arrive and where Kutupalong is situated, is one of Bangladesh’ poorest provinces.
- When Thai authorities in January 2009 towed out and left boats filled with Rohingya refugees at open sea, it was breaking news all over the world.
- Burma’s parliamentary election this year is meant to be the fifth step in a seven step way from military dictatorship to democracy. International analysts already deem the election to become un-free.

After the exodus in 1992, China persuaded the rest of the world that the Rohingya question was an internal business between Burma and Bangladesh. Then they negotiated a deal where Bangladesh could send back the majority of the refugees that had just arrived.

The problem was just that many of the involuntary returnees came back to see their houses taken over by the military or even their names scratched from the population registers. A tough situation indeed, since Rohingya are not allowed to build new structures and unregistered individuals are considered as outlaws.

Nasima Begum’s father was arrested when she was ten years old, accused of housing returning refugees. “They sent us his bloody clothes from the prison, one by one,” she says. “My mother was forced to sell everything to set him free. Land, house, cattle, clothes. But when he was finally released, he was already dying.”

In 2008, Nasima and her sister followed the stream of Rohingya who returned to Bangladesh. Their first year was calm – they got homes, got married, had children. But in September, policemen came to their homes, arrested them and drove them to the border river Naaf. “I cried and asked the ferryman to show us a way back,” says Nasima. “I thought my last moment had arrived. If the border police had spotted us, it would have been through with us.”

In the end, the ferryman pointed out a road, and all night they ran through the jungle – Nasima with her five days old son in her arms, her husband, her sister and her sister’s husband. “At dawn, the jungle started clearing up and we knew we were back in Bangladesh,” she says. “But when I looked down I saw that my son was dead. I hadn’t even noticed it happening. I buried him with my hands underneath a tree.”

Nasima and her relatives did not return to the community where they were living before, but found their way to the refugee camp Kutupalong. With the help of other refugees they managed to survive and build a house. The men started working as wage laborers in the surroundings. However, one day, they did not return. “Allah knows where they are now,” says Nasima. “Maybe they’re dead, maybe they’re arrested.”

Only a month later, her sister disappeared after going to the village to beg. Now Nasima has neither relatives nor income left. Many Rohingya provide for themselves by gathering firewood in the forest, but Nasima does not dare to. Gatherers have been assaulted and raped by villagers at several occasions. The villagers are frustrated because it has become more difficult for them to find firewood and because their wages have been pressed down.

Local politicians have cashed in on the dissatisfaction and agitated

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Cox’s Bazar, Tuesday, 11 October 2011:

Myanmar (Burma) yesterday assured Bangladesh of postponing the construction of a road close to the zero line of Tambru frontier under Ghumdhum union of Naikkhongchhari upozila in Bandarban Dist of Bangladesh.

The neighboring country has also pledged to relocate the barbed wire fence from two places along the zero line of this frontier.

The assurance came from Myanmar border force Nasaka at a battalion level flag meeting with Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) at Dakhin Ghumdhum Govt Primary School.

Local sources said tension was growing between the two border forces when Nasaka was constructing the road, but it defused after they stopped the construction last week following protest by BGB.

A joint border survey by the two countries this year detected around 150 feet long barbed wire fence within 40 feet from the zero line at one place. It also found around 300 feet fence within 140 feet from the zero line, according to BGB.

As per international border law, erecting barbed wire fence or any structure within 150 yards of the zero line is prohibited. Nasaka joined yesterday’s meeting in response to BGB’s October 4 letter requesting them for holding a flag meeting.

Commander of 17 BGB Battalion of Cox’s Bazar Lt Col Md Khalequzzaman led the BGB delegation, while the Nasaka side was led by its sector 3 commander.

The BGB official said Myanmar did not erect the fence intentionally. It happened as the Tambru canal, which determines the zero line, moved into Bangladesh territory due to a landslide in 2009. Myanmar erected the fence assuming the canal as the zero line.

During border patrol BGB noticed the road construction within the said distance from the zero line, but Myanmar stopped the work after BGB protested it a few days back.

“Nasaka said they were constructing the road temporarily to carry materials for barbed wire fencing and asked Bangladesh to allow them, but we didn’t agree,” mentioned Khalequzzaman.

Earlier, the district judge of Cox’s Bazar sent a letter to BGB informing that 60 Myanmar nationals have been languishing in jail despite their jail terms are over.

Nasaka agreed to take back 19 of the Myanmarese, who have been identified by the Myanmar embassy in Dhaka, said the BGB commander. The border force has handed over the corrected list and photo graphs of 41 others.

The Myanmar team chief assured BGB of taking necessary steps if the list is sent through their embassy in Dhaka.

The BGB official also pointed out smuggling of huge amount of Yaba tablets and narcotics from Myanmar into Bangladesh. The Nasaka commander said they are sincere about stopping the smuggling. #

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STATELESS ROHINGYA REFUGEE MOTHERS FALL THROUGH THE CRACKS IN BANGLADESH

By Misha Hussain – Women News Network

(WNN) DHAKA, Bangladesh: Mothering in the Kutupalong makeshift refugee camp in the southwest of Bangladesh is about as tough as it gets. Without the right to work or receive humanitarian aid, women and children bear the brunt of the international community’s unwillingness to tackle a 20-year-old issue. Some mothers are as young as the age of 16. Many suffer, along with their children, from acute malnutrition, hunger and starvation. Many have little access to education or healthcare.

Burmese Rohingya refugees are in a growing state of crisis in Bangladesh as authorities prevent international aid measures to help them. Relief agencies such as MSF – Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) and Physicians for Human Rights are now facing their lowest ebb with cooperation from Bangladesh government authorities as they attempt to bring medical aid and higher food nutrition into Kutupalong camp. Another aid organization, Islamic Relief Worldwide, has recently pulled out due to inability to receive required permits to assist those in need inside camp.

As aid programs and program funding to help the Rohingya are now being discontinued by the Bangladesh government, Burmese refugee mothers are falling through the cracks.

“Bangladesh has increased restrictions on aid agencies working with the refugees,” says a recent Refugees International report. As Médecins Sans Frontières faces one wall after another with on-the-ground outreach inside Bangladesh, Rohingya women suffer from a decreased and critical extinction in the little medical programs left for them.

“Life is difficult, but whose isn’t? You take the rough with the smooth and pray that things will get better.” – Khushida Begum, mother of one at the Kutupalong camp.

Marriage rights too have been an issue for many women and girls, but not in Bangladesh. In Myanmar permission for girls over the age of eighteen to marry is not permitted, whereas in Bangladesh marriage, traveling beyond their village and find clean potable water along with wood for cooking and heating their home. Dangers for women who often walk hours to gather basic necessities cause an ongoing, and serious, safety dilemma. Cases of rape are not uncommon.

“When a child calls you mother, that's the greatest joy in the world.” – Rashida Begum, mother of four children, seven months pregnant.

At the very bottom of Rohingya society are women and girls who live unprotected lives as stateless unrecognized members of Bangladesh society. Deprived of many human rights including the right to work, as well as the rights of citizenship, in both Bangladesh and their original home north of the Myanmar/Burma border, they struggle to keep their lives intact. The original home for the ethnic Rohingya in Burma dates as far back as the 7th Century A.D.

While Rohingyas are not officially recognized in Bangladesh as refugees, legal recognition for them is vital to their survival and their ability to gain, and keep, asylum. Even the ethnic identity of the Rohingyas has been questioned in Myanmar, as well as neighboring Bangladesh.

Life is far from easy. In the Kutupalong makeshift camp, Rohingya women are forced to accept lives that continue to harshly limit them. Today they receive little to no access to employment education, proper or safe shelter, maternal health services or protection from personal violence.

As Bangladesh closes the door on aid coming into the country, lack of options for Rohingya women to receive maternal health care is now reaching a critical crisis.

“Life is difficult, but whose isn’t? You take the rough with the smooth and pray that things will get better.” – Khushida Begum, mother of one at the Kutupalong camp.

Marriage rights too have been an issue for many women and girls, but not in Bangladesh. In Myanmar permission for girls over the age of eighteen to marry is not permitted without paying a prohibitively high fee; a fee that most Rohingya families could never pay. Because of this, some families have relocated to Bangladesh to enable their daughters to marry more easily.

But even with permissions, marriage in situations of severe poverty often meet roadblocks. Numerous women are left alone caring for their children as husbands leave the camp to find work elsewhere for weeks or months at a time.

“(Rohingyas) are the only ethnic group in Burma restricted from marriage, traveling beyond their village or building or maintaining religious structures,” says international advocacy and assistance organization, Refugees International. “In addition, they are subject to frequent forced labor, arbitrary taxation, sexual violence and land confiscations by the NaSaKa (Burma military forces),” adds Refugees International.

When husbands leave for work in neighboring regions, women as heads-of-households are forced to get their family’s food rations, as well as search and find clean potable water along with wood for cooking and heating their home. Dangers for women who often walk hours to gather basic necessities cause an ongoing, and serious, safety dilemma. Cases of rape are not uncommon.

“I don’t know what I’m going to call the child, right now I just hope the child is born.” – Jahida Begum, mother of two, nine months pregnant.

Concerns at public community toilets in the camp are also a real safety issue as less than one toilet is available to women per ten families at Kutupalong.
When rape does happen women have no access to making police reports or to receiving medical help.

Protection for women and girls against domestic violence and sexual assault too is literally non-existent inside the camp.

What many now claim was an attempt at ethnic cleansing by Burma’s General Ne Win in 1978, over 200,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh following reports of widespread torture, death and atrocity called the King Dragon Operation in Arkan.

But the numbers of those who migrated are not reliable. Current reported numbers of Rohingyas living inside Bangladesh today may number over twice the reported figures. Under reporting and lack of accurate statistics mapping has contributed to a trend in deteriorating conditions.

According UNHCR – the United Nations Refugee Agency 1997 statistics, 27,400 refugees have been living in two makeshift camps: the Kutupalong and Nayapara camps on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Ten years following the UNHCR data release, the 2007 GoB – Government of Bangladesh figures show a lower 26,000 figure for both camps.

Current Bangladesh government policies of ignoring stateless members, and their growing numbers, match persistent and growing problems inside the camps where ignoring needs are part of a targeted effort to get minority migrants to permanently leave the region.

“‘If I can educate my child, I will have been a good mother.’” – Eighteen year old Rohingya mother, Anwara Begum, pregnant with no children.

In Bangladesh, people give many reasons for excluding the Rohingya minority, including their ancient language; a language which has only been officially recognized since 2007 as a “one of the world’s unique languages.” As Muslims, their brand of ethnic Sunni faith is also seen as a religious dividing line between themselves and others.

Because Burmese Rohingya refugees are undocumented ‘illegal’ immigrants, women and girls are facing many of the same problems and situations of humiliation they faced in Myanmar. Exploitation is common. Women, and their families, who live with levels of extreme poverty are in constant danger of being tricked by human traffickers in what is often realized later as labour bondage or sex-trafficking schemes. Disease and crisis conditions with food diarrhea and amoebic dysentery, often followed by severe dehydration, are found throughout the Kutupalong camp as mothers try to protect their children from camp based water; where sewage management does not exist and water is teeming with microbial pollutants from feces.

With low access to even the most simple oral re-hydration formula commonly used in Bangladesh, that includes water, salt and sugar, many Rohingya refugee mothers are forced to watch helplessly as their children’s health deteriorates due to contaminated water.

Sanitation during childbirth is also an issue. Expectant mothers run unnecessary and high risks during childbirth due to lack of medical support offered in case of complicated deliveries. While Bangladeshi mothers nationwide have shown a remarkable forty percent decrease in maternal mortality over the past nine years, minority migrant women living in makeshift camps have not been counted or included in the study.

“‘I’m scared. I didn’t want another child, but I didn’t understand how to use the pill. My two children are still very young. I’m not sure if I’ll be able to support the new baby when it arrives. As a mother, if I can’t feed my children, I feel hurt.” – Noor Kalima, eight months pregnant, two children.

With neither prospect of asylum in Bangladesh nor hope of returning to their native Arakan State in Myanmar, 500 miles northwest of the Burmese capital Yangon, these Rohingya mothers and children survive within the camp by taking refuge in the only thing they have left, each other. ##

Eighteen year old Anwara Begum has no children. She is nine months pregnant and has lived in Kutupalong camp for three years. Image: Misha Hussain

Anu Begum is twenty years old. She has lived in the Kutupalong makeshift camp for last one year with her only child. Image: Misha Hussain

Twenty-three year old Noor Kalima has lived in the Kutupalong makeshift camp for the past four years. She has four children and is eight months pregnant. Image: Misha Hussain
Karman's society. influence developments at all levels of obtain the same opportunities as men to lasting peace in the world unless women work. We cannot achieve democracy and rights to full participation in peace-building the safety of women and for women's hope that the prize to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, It is the Norwegian Nobel Committee's in the struggle for women's rights and for Tawakkul Karman has played a leading part both before and during the “Arab spring”, war. In the most trying circumstances, of women in West Africa during and after development, and to strengthening the position of women. Leymah Gbowee mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia, and to ensure women’s participation in elections. She has since worked to enhance the influence of women in armed conflict an international security issue.

Ellen Johnson Sirleaf is Africa’s first democratically elected female president. Since her inauguration in 2006, she has contributed to securing peace in Liberia, to promoting economic and social development, and to strengthening the position of women. Leymah Gbowee mobilized and organized women across ethnic and religious dividing lines to bring an end to the long war in Liberia, and to ensure women’s participation in elections. She has since worked to enhance the influence of women in West Africa during and after war. In the most trying circumstances, both before and during the “Arab spring”. Tawakkul Karman has played a leading part in the struggle for women’s rights and for democracy and peace in Yemen. It is the Norwegian Nobel Committee’s hope that the prize to Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Leymah Gbowee and Tawakkul Karman will help to bring an end to the suppression of women that still occurs in many countries, and to realise the great potential for democracy and peace that women can represent.

In Liberia, Mrs. Johnson Sirleaf said that she and Ms. Gbowee accepted “this honor on behalf of the Liberian people, and the credit goes to them.” “For we are now going into our ninth year of peace, and every Liberian has contributed to it,” she said. “We particularly give this credit to Liberian women, who have consistently led the struggle for peace, even under conditions of neglect.”

In Yemen, Ms. Karman, 32, a mother of three, called the prize “the victory of our peaceful revolution. I am so happy, and I give this award to all of the youth and all of the women across the Arab world, in Egypt, in Tunisia.” “We cannot build our country or any country in the world without peace,” she said.

Yemeni journalist and activist Tawakkul Karman who won the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize has become the first Arab woman to win the prize. She founded Women Journalists Without Chains in 2005 and is hailed as one of the most prominent activist and advocate of press freedom, women’s rights and human rights.

She has become the first Arab woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. She follows in the steps of late Egyptian President Anwar Al-Sadate (1978) and Palestinian President Yasser Arafat (1994) as well as former International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) director-general Dr. Mohammed Al-Baradai (2005).

ROHINGYA WITH OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS CELEBRATE MIN KO NAING BIRTHDAY

Thursday, 20 October 2011
London, U.K.: Rohingya with other ethnic groups in London celebrated Min Ko Naing’s 49th birthday by honoring his sacrifices and his unwavering dedication to the people and the country on October 18, 2011 according to Tun Khin, the President, the Burmese Rohingya Organization UK (BROUK).

“The 49th birthday anniversary of the 88 Generation Student leader Min Ko Naing aka Paw Oo Tun, who is the former chairman of the All Burma Federation of Student Unions (ABFSU), is serving a 65-year prison term in Kengtung Prison.”

“My birthday party should not be only for me; it should be a ceremony of remembrance for all. The location of a person is not important, only the doctrine the person embraces is important,” according to Ko Min Ko Naing’s family member which sent as birthday message from his prison cell.

“Many [student leaders] have still not been freed from their imprisonment. We will continue our struggle for their release,” Aung San Suu Kyi told supporters at birthday celebrations for Min Ko Naing in a monastery of Rangoon. “Why do I want the release of political prisoners? I want our country to become really free.” “I will try to visit to my friends who are still in the prisons,” the Famous satirist Zarganar who plans to organize a group of actors and comedians to visit jailed dissidents held in prisons around the country, told at the Rangoon ceremony. “I would leave parcels for political detainees if I was not allowed to see them.”

“We Rohingya are working with all ethnic groups and democratic groups in UK to restore for the human rights and democracy in Burma. We want to live with peace in our homeland in Arakan and want to restore our ethnic rights and citizenship rights.”
Burma regardless of their ethnic beliefs or are Burmese Citizens. They have the same have lived in Arakan for centuries. They (NCGUB) affirmed that Muslim Rohingyas United Nations, the National Coalition September 24, 1992, submitted to the (10) In its “Position Paper on Persecution respectively.
1959 and 7/60 September 1960
registration numbers 113/99 December 1959 and 7/60 September 1960 respectively.

(9) Recognizing Rohingya as an indigenous ethnic group, the previous Burmese parliamentary government (1948-1962) stated, “the Rohingya is as the same par in the status of nationality with Kachin, Kayah, Karen, Mon, Rakhine and Shan”. As such, Rohingyas participated as State Guests in the Union Day Celebration held in Rangoon on 12 February every year. Rohingya language was also relayed twice a week from the official Burma Broadcasting Service (BBS) Rangoon, in its ‘Indigenous Races’ Broadcasting Programme’ from 15 May 1961 to 30 October 1965. The Rangoon University Rohingya Students Association was one of the ethnic student associations that functioned from 1959 to 1961 under the registration numbers 113/99 December 1959 and 7/60 September 1960 respectively.

(10) In its “Position Paper on Persecution of Muslims in Arakan State” dated September 24, 1992, submitted to the United Nations, the National Coalition Government of the Union of Burma (NCGUB) affirmed that Muslim Rohingyas have lived in Arakan for centuries. They are Burmese Citizens. They have the same rights and privileges as other citizens of Burma regardless of their ethnic beliefs or ethnic background.

Exercise of the right to vote and right to be elected:
(11) Being one of the indigenous communities of Burma, the Rohingya exercised the right to vote and to be elected in all national elections held during the later colonial period (1935-1948), democratic period (1948-1962), Ne Win’s Socialist Programme Party (BSPP) period (1974-1988) and the last multi-party general elections of 1990 and 2010 held by the military SLORC and SPDC. They even were allowed to take part in the SPDCC held referendum in 2008 for the adoption of country’s constitution. Their representatives were appointed as cabinet ministers and parliamentary secretaries.

The regime accuses the Rohingya of aliens for having affinity with the people of Bangladesh. Is it logic?
(12) Burma is an ethnically diverse country. All ethnic peoples living along all the Burma borders have common religion, culture, appearance and language with the peoples living in the adjacent countries. For examples, Kachins in Yunnan (China) and India, Chins in India and Bangladesh Hill Tracts, Rakhine/Mrama in Bangladesh, Mon, Karen, and Shans in Thailand and Laos, etc. As such, it is not unnatural that Rohingya have common religion, culture, appearance and language with the adjacent people of Bangladesh, with whom they have centuries-old relations. Despite this why the USDP minister U Khin Yi was critical of only ethnic Rohingyas for having affinity with the people of Chittagong, which was for centuries under the rule of Arakan. This is nothing but sheer racism and racial discrimination and religious bigotry.

Crime against humanity against Rohingya people:
(13) Despite their glaring historicity, despite being able to vote they are now declared non-nationals and are denied “basic human freedom”, the freedom of movement, the right get married and found family and the right to education. They are not tolerated for their South Asian appearance, ethnicity and religion. As a result groups such as Refugees International describe them as “one of the most persecuted in the world”. MSF lists them as one of the ten world populations in danger of extinction. Many NGOs record them as one of the world’s most voiceless and underrepresented peoples.

(14) The statements of the USDP ministers are a threat to national and international peace and security. About 1.5 million Rohingyas who have had escaped persecution in Burma are already in diasporas. International community and UNHCR have confirmed that there is a protracted emergency in Bangladesh as result of the continued influx of Rohingya refugees from Burma. The international community has reacted that this anti-Rohingya propaganda is a ‘massive mistruth’ and is symptomatic of “systematic racism” of the Thein Sein regime. It reflects that the regime will remain committed to the cause of the Rohingya people as a member of ARNO till his death. He was well-known in Arakan State and abroad for his bravery in fighting, said a colleague from Teknaf.
He was the son of late Lal Mohamed of Kularbil village of Maungdaw Township. He left behind seven sons, three daughters and a lot of relatives and friends in Arakan and abroad to mourn his death.##

Chittagong, Bangladesh: Prominent veteran freedom fighter Abdu Khalek passed away (Inna Lilahi-Wainna illahi Rajeeon) on October 13, at about 11:00 pm, at Teknaf, Bangladesh with fever, at the age of 83, according to Salamat Ullah, a son of the deceased.

“This Namaze-e-Janaza was held at Boritoli of Teknaf, the next day after Johur Prayer.”
He hailed from Kular Bill village of Maungdaw north, Arakan State, Burma. He was a gallant fighter and served as a commander in Rohingya National Army (RNA).
He joined the Rohingya Freedom Movement in his young age and worked under Kaseim Raja and Sayed Ahmed in his various capacities. In 1986 he joined a faction of Rohingya Solidarity Organiza- tion (RSO) that latter emerged as Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO), said his elder son.

Since 2003 he had been retired from active service for his old age, but he remained committed to the cause of the Rohingya people as a member of ARNO till his death. He was well-known in Arakan State and abroad for his bravery in fighting, said a colleague from Teknaf.
He was the son of late Lai Mohamed of Kularbil village of Maungdaw Township. He left behind seven sons, three daughters and a lot of relatives and friends in Arakan and abroad to mourn his death.

immediately the citizenship rights and ethnic rights of the Rohingya people in Arakan / Burma. ##
Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all I thank all of you for your time, for coming and encouraging us. I also thank those who work hard to hold this demonstration and make it a grand success.

As you are aware, this is a part of the global protest called by the Rohingya communities across the world today against the anti-Rohingya statements made by USDP ministers in the parliament.

On 29th August and 1st September 2011, some Rohingya MPs, (they all belong to USDP) asked in the parliament to redress the issues and problems being faced by the Muslim Rohingyas such as restrictions on their freedom of movement, marriage and education. Instead of remedying such serious situation of grave human rights violations, the concerned ministers of Thein Sein regime foolishly threatened that such restrictions were necessary by accusing the Rohingya population as Bangladeshis / illegal immigrants / non-nationals. One of such irresponsible and bad-mannered ministers was former police chief U Khin Yi, the Minister of Immigration and Population.

Their statements are blatant lies, racist disdain and Muslim phobia of the new civilianized military regime, which has not the least sense of human rights, no intention to make any political and democratic reform in Burma. Above all, this concocted allegation affirms its systematic policy to annihilate the remaining Rohingya population from their ancestral homeland of Arakan. For this we strongly condemn Thein Sein Govt. The following are rebufts:

Who are Rohingyas? / Are they aliens?

(1) Rohingyas are a people inhabiting Arakan from time immemorial. They have developed in Arakan from peoples of different ethnic backgrounds over the many centuries. Their Muslim settlements in Arakan dated back to early 8th century. Their arrivals and settlements in Arakan predated the arrivals and settlements of many other peoples in Arakan and Burma.

(2) They are a people having a long supporting history, separate culture, civilization, language and literature, historically settled territory and reasonable size of population and area in Arakan – they consider themselves distinct from other sector of society.

(3) History testifies that the ancient people in Arakan were Indians similar to the people of Bengal that is Bengalis. This affirms that the Rohingyas are aborigines of Arakan.

Their Contributions in Arakan / Burma

4) Muslims were king makers in independent Arakan, nay, from 1430 to 1531, for more than one hundred years, they virtually ruled Arakan. This fact was confirmed by many foreign and indigenous historians, including the then Chairman of the Burma Historical Research Society Col. Ba Shin.

The heyday of Arakan began with the influence and spread of Muslim civilization in Arakan. Coins and medallions were issued inscribing Kalema (the profession of faith in Islam) in Arabic script. Muslim etiquettes and manners were practiced in the court of Arakan, the Buddhist kings adopted the Muslim titles and introduced Muslim system of governance copying the imperial courts of Delhi and Gaur, established Muslim Quazi courts and literary activities, adopted Bengali and Persian as court and official languages. These were evidences of Muslim rule in Arakan.

(5) Thus the Rohingyas were a settled and active community before the Burmese occupation of Arakan in 1784 A.D. They have had well defined territory in North Arakan before British colonization. They were the backbones of the Arakan’s economy and have had developed its agriculture. They have paid remarkable contribution almost in all fields.

Rohingya’s Legal Position in Arakan / Burma

(6) The Rohingyas have historical and spiritual attachments and natural allegiance to Arakan/Burma. Under article 3 of the Nu-Attlee Treaty of 17 October 1947, and under Section 11(i) (ii)(iii) of the Burma Constitution of 1947, effectuated on 4 January 1948, the Rohingyas are citizens of Burma. On top of that, by all legal standards, the Rohingyas are not only natural citizens of Burma but also one of the many indigenous peoples of Arakan, therefore, to Burma.

The regime and critics reject the existence of Rohingya in Arakan. They say that the word Rohingya is recently coined. Is their claim true?

(7) The word Rohingya derives from Rohang, an old name of Arakan. The Scottish traveller Francis Buchannan affirmed that Muslim population of Arakan was called Rohingya, and that he met Rohingya in Ava in 1795. “Myanmar Swezon Kyan” Vol.9, page 89/90 mentions that 75% of the population in Mayu Frontier is Rohingya. These reject the claims that there is no Rohingya in Burma. In addition, the military regime affirmed in its official book

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