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ORAL STATEMENT

ITEM 2: Interactive Dialogue with the High Commissioner for Human Rights on the human rights situation of Rohingya people

ONGOING DISCRIMINATION AND PERSECUTION EXACERBATED BY FRESH MILITARY VIOLATIONS IN RAKHINE STATE

UN Human Rights Council
Forty-First session
24 June – 12 July 2019

Mr. President,

We thank the High Commissioner for her update.

Crimes against humanity are ongoing against the estimated 600,000 Rohingya still living in Rakhine State, in the form of the systematic denial of their rights, including to equality, to a nationality, to freedom of movement, and access to adequate healthcare, education, and work opportunities. Their rights to participate in public life and to manifest religious beliefs continue to be routinely violated in what amounts to a system of apartheid.¹

We are appalled that seven years after they were forced from their homes some 128,000 people – mostly Rohingya – remain confined to squalid detention camps within Rakhine State, reliant on humanitarian assistance for their survival.

The Myanmar authorities have not engaged in genuine efforts to implement recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, led by the late Dr. Kofi Annan. The authorities claim to be implementing 81 of the report's 88 recommendations, however the reality on the ground is very different. Humanitarian access and access for independent journalists and human rights monitors remains severely restricted, and Rohingya and other Muslim communities are systematically discriminated against and do not have freedom of movement. There has been no progress in restoring Rohingya's citizenship rights or reviewing the deeply discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Law.

¹ For more information, see Amnesty International, *"Caged without a Roof": Apartheid in Myanmar's Rakhine State* (Index: ASA 16/7484/2017), 21 November 2017, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/7484/2017/en/>.

Mr. President,

Since the start of 2019 there has been major escalation in fighting between the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army, an ethnic Rakhine armed group, in Rakhine State. Amnesty International has documented serious violations – including war crimes – by the military against civilians from all communities, including the Rohingya.²

These new violations highlight the institutionalised and systematic nature of military violations in Myanmar, as well as the consequences of ongoing impunity. Indeed, some recent violations have been committed by soldiers from the same units implicated in atrocities against the Rohingya population in late 2017.

Since 21 June 2019, Myanmar authorities have shut down internet access in conflict-affected areas of Rakhine and Chin States. The situation has created an information black hole and raises urgent concerns about the safety of civilians given the ongoing conflict.³

Rakhine State is not safe for the communities still living there, it is most certainly not safe for refugees to return to.

Madam High Commissioner,

Given the conclusions of the Rosenthal report, which found “systemic and structural” UN failures in Myanmar,⁴ how do you think the UN can better integrate human rights into its work in the country and beyond?

Thank you, Mr. President.

² Amnesty International, “No one can protect us”: War crimes and abuses in Myanmar’s Rakhine State (Index: ASA 16/0417/2019), 29 May 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0417/2019/en/>.

³ Amnesty International, *End internet shutdown in Rakhine, China States* (Index: ASA 16/0604/2019, 25 June 2019, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/0604/2019/en/>.

⁴ Gert Rosenthal, *A brief and independent inquiry into the involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018*, 29 May 2019.