



Republic of the Union of Myanmar
National Unity Government
Ministry of Human Rights



United States Holocaust Memorial Museum

Remarks by H.E. Aung Myo Min, Union Minister of Human Rights

National Unity Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

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1. Introduction

Good morning,

I am honoured to attend the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum today, and I am grateful to have been guided through its exhibitions.

The contents of the Museum are devastating. The horrors that humanity has inflicted on groups of persons because of their ethnic, racial or religious identity would be unthinkable were they not recorded here and in similar institutions.

That makes this Museum essential – it forces us to confront what we have collectively committed, what we have allowed to occur, and what we are cursed to relive if we do not correct course.

Yet the lessons of history seem lost on us. As the Museum's case studies document, the Holocaust was followed by atrocities and acts of genocide in Bosnia and Herzegovina, in Cambodia, and in Rwanda to name only a few places. As I speak, reports are emerging of Ukrainian streets strewn with civilian bodies, and of the unearthing of mass graves.

2. Myanmar

As these cases show, atrocities can occur anywhere. No region has been spared. And it is with terrible shame that Myanmar now features in the Museum's collection in an exhibition entitled *Burma's Path to Genocide*.

On the 21st of March of this year, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken announced that after careful, rigorous investigation and scrutiny, the United States Government had determined that the Myanmar military's 2017 attacks against the Rohingya in Rakhine State amounted to genocide and to crimes against humanity.

In a single wave of atrocities in 2017, thousands of Rohingya were killed and disappeared and close to a million were forcibly displaced. Rape and sexual violence, including mass gang rape, were used as part of a deliberate strategy to intimidate, terrorise or punish the Rohingya as a tactic of war. Hundreds of villages were razed.

Years later, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya remain displaced not only from their villages and homes, but from the country to which they belong.

The U.S. Government's determination followed longstanding calls by independent experts – including the United Nations (UN) Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar – for Myanmar's military leadership to be investigated and prosecuted for genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes against the Rohingya.

Nor were these crimes limited to the Rohingya and Rakhine State. As the UN Fact-Finding Mission found, military atrocities were also directed against ethnic groups in Kachin and Shan States.

Today, the historic impunity enjoyed by the Myanmar military has enabled its leadership to commit now countrywide atrocities at the helm of an illegal military junta. The targeted few have become the many.

3. The National Unity Government

The National Unity Government of Myanmar acknowledges with great shame that historic exclusionary and discriminatory policies, practices and rhetoric against the Rohingya laid the ground for atrocities. Over the course of decades, these atrocities recurred in waves. The Holocaust Museum captures this in a section of the Burma exhibition entitled '*a history of persecution*'. That is, a history of dehumanisation.

In June 2020, the National Unity Government issued a *Policy Position on the Rohingya in Rakhine State*. This Policy acknowledged that grave crimes and atrocities had been committed against the Rohingya by the military. It also made clear that the National Unity Government would pursue accountability.

The U.S. Government's determination of genocide is timely given that the International Court of Justice – the World Court – is hearing a case brought by The Gambia against Myanmar under the Genocide Convention. It is our hope that the U.S.'s determination will be instructive to the Court and its deliberations.

The National Unity Government continues to extend every offer of support, including evidence, to the Court. We remain determined to represent Myanmar in the case by displacing the present representatives of the military junta, and we will accept and fully comply with whatever the Court decides.

Furthermore, the National Unity Government has lodged an Article 12(3) Declaration with the Registrar of the International Criminal Court (ICC) on behalf of Myanmar, accepting the ICC's jurisdiction with respect to international crimes – including genocide – committed in the country since 1 July 2002. We stand ready to provide the ICC with evidence and, in the interim, continue to share evidence and corroborative materials with the UN's Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar.

In my meetings with senior government officials over the coming days, I will strongly encourage the U.S. to use its permanent membership of the UN Security Council to refer the situation in Myanmar to the ICC.

4. Practical steps

The legal determination of atrocity crimes and of genocide would be of great significance in recognising the horrors occasioned against the Rohingya and other Myanmar communities, and, crucially, in securing accountability.

Judicial decisions, however, must be joined by practical steps. The National Unity Government's *Policy Position on the Rohingya* commits to the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable returns of all Rohingya refugees and internally displaced persons. It also commits

to comprehensive legislative and policy reform on citizenship, and to ensuring equality of rights and opportunity for all.

5. Conclusion

Myanmar's Federal Democracy Charter envisages a nation founded on peace, justice, equality, human rights, and the protection of minorities.

For now, this remains a vision. Since its failed coup d'état of 1 February 2021, the illegal military junta has escalated its atrocities and acts of terror to levels unprecedented in modern Myanmar.

Peaceful protestors have been shot dead in the streets by snipers. Children have been murdered in their homes. Young people have been disappeared. Thousands more remain arbitrarily detained, with corresponding reports of torture, rape and sexual violence. Civilians have been burned alive. Air strikes and shelling are targeting villages. Yet again, homes have been razed and hundreds of thousands of people have been displaced.

But the people will prevail. We have formed a rights-based resistance based on democratic values and fundamental freedoms. We have deployed civil disobedience. We have gathered in peaceful protests. We are acting in self-defence to protect our communities.

And once we do prevail, once our vision becomes our lived reality, it will remain the duty of this Museum and of the international community to ensure that Myanmar never forgets the atrocities and horrors that it committed against its own people.

Thank you.



UNITED STATES HOLOCAUST MEMORIAL MUSEUM

