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contact@forbroundtable.org

Brussels, the…

October 2020

To:

Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission
David Sassoli, President of European Parliament
All Members of the European Parliament
Eamon Gilmore, EU Special Representative for Human Rights

Cc: Ahmed Shaheed, UN Special Rapporteur on FoRB

**Re:**

Dear Madams, Dear Sirs,

We write as an informal group of organizations and individuals who are scholars, religious leaders and human rights advocates. We are a truly multi-faith group, representing a high degree of diversity. While there is very little we agree on theologically, or politically, we all agree on the importance of religious freedom for all faiths and none.

We strongly believe that the European Union (EU) has not done all it can to ensure justice and accountability for the violations of international law against the Rohingya and other ethnic groups in Burma.

Neither has the EU done all it can to support the humanitarian needs of Rohingya in Burma and of Rohingya refugees.

We think that the EU could do more to promote the rights of the Rohingya, both in Burma and in host countries such as Bangladesh.

To this date, nor has the EU committed itself to implementing the recommendations of the Independent United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, available here:

<https://burmacampaign.org.uk/media/International-Fact-Finding-Report-on-Myanmar.pdf>

We understand that there is no single measure that can be taken to address the Rohingya crisis, and that it will take a combination of a wide range of measures. The following are five actions the EU can do immediately to start that process of helping to address the Rohingya crisis, that we advocate for.

Five steps the EU can take now to address the Rohingya crisis:

**1. Impose sanctions on military companies**

The Burmese military earns hundreds of millions of dollars a year through its vast range of military-owned companies. Burma Campaign UK has published a ‘Dirty List’ exposing international companies linked to military-owned companies.

The EU should immediately impose sanctions to stop British companies and others doing business with the military and helping to fund genocide. The Independent United Nations Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, and Burmese human rights activists, including Justice

For Myanmar, have called for such sanctions.

**2. Join the genocide case at the International Court of Justice**

Gambia has brought a case against Burma at the International Court of Justice that Burma is in breach of the Genocide Convention. Gambia is supported in the case by 56 other members of the Organisation of Islamic Co-operation, the Maldives, Canada and the Netherlands. The British government has refused to join.

**3. Stop funding the Union Election Commission**

The Union Election Commission (UEC) is responsible for the administration of elections in Burma. Its members are appointed by the government. The UEC discriminates against Rohingya seeking to be candidates in Burma’s elections, banning them from standing. It has also acted in a discriminatory way against Muslim and other potential ethnic candidates. The UEC receives funding from the British government, as well as from the European Union, Norway and other countries.

**4. Protect and increase funding for refugees and IDPs**

International donors, including the UK, do not prioritise the need of refugees and IDPs from Burma when making aid spending decisions. In recent years, aid to refugees in Thailand has even been cut, causing immense suffering to vulnerable populations.

With significant cuts in the UK and EU aid budgets on the way, the funding for IDPs and refugees should not only be ring-fenced, but actually increased. These populations are aid dependent and as a number of governments are unwilling to take steps to help them return home safely, we have a special responsibility for their wellbeing.

**5. Citizenship is essential for safe return of Rohingya refugees and addressing root causes. Real pressure is needed on Aung San Suu Kyi’s government**

Just as the military must be held accountable for their crimes against the Rohingya and other ethnic groups, so must Aung San Suu Kyi’s government. Aung San Suu Kyi is breaking international law by denying the Rohingya citizenship, restricting international aid to the Rohingya and implementing a range of laws and policies which are designed to make life unbearable for the Rohingya, and which are part of the genocide against them.

Years of attempting quiet diplomacy to persuade Aung San Suu Kyi to change her discriminatory policies against the Rohingya have completely failed. During the first five years of her government, the situation of the Rohingya has deteriorated on every level, and elections in November 2020 again exclude Rohingya from voting and standing as candidates.

The EU Institutions should publicly advocate for an immediate change to the Citizenship Law in Burma to ensure that the Rohingya’s right to citizenship is recognised. The EU Institutions should review whether it should continue to provide development and humanitarian support to and through the government, in light of the appalling human rights record of Aung San Suu Kyi’s government.

We therefore respectfully request you to take these proposals into account, and step-up drastically the actions in defence of one of the most discriminated and persecuted minority today in the world: the Rohingya.

October 2020

Signed by

Martin Weightman
All Faiths Network

(and others that will sign)

Links

Compilation of the recommendations of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar

[https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/20190916/A\_HRC\_42\_CRP.6.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/FFM-Myanmar/20190916/A_HRC_42_CRP.6.pdf%20)

Burma Campaign UK ‘Dirty List’ of companies linked to the military or human rights violations in Burma.

<https://burmacampaign.org.uk/take-action/dirty-list/>

Justice for Myanmar website: <http://www.justiceformyanmar.org>

Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK

<http://www.brouk.org.uk>

Burma Campaign UK

<http://www.burmacampaign.org.uk>

Justice 4 Rohingya UK

[www.justice4rohingya.org](file:///Users/ericroux/Library/Containers/com.apple.mail/Data/Library/Mail%20Downloads/71FBC506-643C-4014-860A-FF808698689D/www.justice4rohingya.org)