



# General Assembly

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## Human Rights Council

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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

### **Written statement\* submitted by Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[12 May 2017]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## **Human Rights Violations against Rohingya must be stopped immediately**

Due to the deadly attacks on Border Guard Police on 9 October 2016 and the days following there were violent attacks against Rohingya in northern Rakhine State in Myanmar. Villages mostly inhabited by Rohingya were destroyed, women were raped and men were abused by the Myanmar military. This has led to thousands of Rohingya fleeing to neighboring countries like Bangladesh, India, Thailand or Malaysia to escape the military violence in Myanmar. This wasn't the first time of violent attacks against Muslim groups in Rakhine State. In June and October 2012 there were already violent attacks and discrimination against Muslim communities in the state.

The Myanmar government is denying that the Rohingya are an ethnic group of Myanmar. There are 135 ethnic groups in Myanmar, but the Rohingya are not recognized by the government as one of them. The government calls them Bengalis and has forbidden calling them Rohingya. They are treated as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and therefore are not granted citizenship. Even though there are historical records showing that the Rohingya have been living in Rakhine State since the 8<sup>th</sup> century, in 1982 there was a law implemented that makes it harder for Muslims in general and Rohingya in particular to get the Myanmar citizenship.

Without citizenship the Rohingya are stateless and therefore have very limited rights. They are not allowed to marry whoever they want, to have more than two children or to study. Besides this they don't have the same access to health, education and food as the citizens of Myanmar have. They are not allowed to leave their townships, where they were forced to live in, without permission of the authorities and there are reports of cases where the authorities took away the phones of the Rohingya who live in camps for Internally Displaced People (IDP) to prevent them from communicating with other Rohingya, a clear violation of freedom of speech and human rights.

Because of their religious beliefs, the Rohingya are victims of institutionalized and public discrimination as well as human rights violations. More than 1,000 Rohingya have been killed since October 2016, tens of thousands have fled to neighboring countries. Some of the countries like Bangladesh don't accept them as refugees, which forces the Rohingya to hide because they are afraid of being deported back to Myanmar. Recently, Bangladesh planned to deport the Rohingya refugees to an uninhabited island with poor living conditions. India is even planning to deport them back to Myanmar even though the situation hasn't changed at all for Rohingya in Myanmar. Besides this Myanmar is denying access to humanitarian aid organizations to the refugee and IDP camps, which makes it even harder for the Rohingya to receive adequate food, medicine and other essential supplies.

Due to this tense situation a Fact Finding Mission was announced to look into the current situation in Myanmar, especially in Rakhine State. However, the Myanmar military doesn't support this fact finding mission, it rejects it. Besides this, Aung San Suu Kyi denies the fact that especially Rohingya are discriminated, abused and threatened in Myanmar. According to Suu Kyi there's no reason to talk about ethnic cleansing, even though it's clear that especially Rohingya are victims of this institutionalized violence.

However, it's not only Rohingya who face persecution in their home state. The Kaman Muslims, an ethnic minority who is recognized by the Myanmar government and also lives in Rakhine-State, were also victims of the violations in 2012; many have lived in refugee camps or IDP camps since then. Now some of these camps are supposed to be closed and the people living there should be relocated to Yangon, a city in the south-east of Myanmar, hundreds of kilometers away from their home region. It seems that the authorities are trying to expel all Muslim communities in the Rakhine state.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urgently ask the Myanmar government and all departments concerned:

- To find a humanitarian solution by enabling aid organizations to supply the refugees with food, medicine and other essential supplies
- To find political solutions by derestricting the Rohingya and give them the same rights like all other residents of Myanmar
- To repeal the citizenship law of 1982 and grant the Rohingya citizenship
- To acknowledge the Rohingya as one of the ethnic minority group of Myanmar
- To find a way of reconcile and reconnect the ethnic groups in Rakhine state and resettle the people living in IDP camps back to their home region in Rakhine-State instead of relocating them to other states

Society for Threatened Peoples also calls on the Human Rights Council to urgently ask the neighboring countries governments and all departments concerned:

- To accept the Rohingya as refugees in compliance to international law
  - To raise the support for the funding programs in Cox's Bazar District in Bangladesh as well as in other refugee camps to improve the living conditions of the thousands of refugees and ensure humane living conditions
  - To stop their plans of relocating Rohingya to regions with inhumane living conditions or deporting them back to Myanmar as long as they are still discriminated and are victims of violations of human rights.
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