

The Rohingyas: Act Now to Stop the Genocide in Myanmar!

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There is increasing recognition of the fact that ‘ethnic cleansing’ of the Rohingyas, — A GENOCIDE — is taking place in Rakhine, Myanmar. A number of groups and individuals are coming to terms with this grim reality especially after the “evidence of a new reign of terror and wholesale destruction of communities exercised by the Myanmar state against the Rohingya population has emerged” in October/November 2016. On the 25th of November 2016, the Malaysian government officially referred to the “alleged ethnic cleansing” of the Rohingyas.

Given the constraints of bilateral relations within the context of their common ASEAN membership, the Malaysian government has more than at any time in the past admonished the Myanmar government for its acts of commission and omission vis-à-vis the tragic plight of the Rohingya people. The Malaysian government should now try to convince the other ASEAN governments that a slow genocide has been unfolding in Rakhine since 1978. It should share the overwhelming evidence garnered by credible researchers and human rights organizations of mass killings of Rohingyas, their forced displacement, the denial of access to food, healthcare and employment and the systematic refusal of the state of Myanmar to recognize Rohingya identity. Collectively, the nine ASEAN governments should now persuade the Myanmar government to:

- 1) Stop immediately the massacre of the Rohingyas;
- 2) Restore the most fundamental rights of the Rohingyas as human beings
- 3) Recognize the right of the Rohingyas to their identity
- 4) Accord the right to citizenship to the Rohingyas.

Malaysia and other ASEAN governments should convince other Asian governments which have vast economic ties with Myanmar such as China, India and Japan to raise issues pertaining to justice for the Rohingyas with the Myanmar government. Diplomacy should be utilized to the fullest for this purpose. There is no reason why governments outside Asia should not also be drawn into this effort on behalf of the Rohingyas.

There is an additional reason why the world should act now.

On 24 November 2016, 19 groups of Rohingyas from different parts of the world took the initiative to write to the Permanent People’s Tribunal in Rome urging the Tribunal to examine the situation in Myanmar from the perspective of state crime and genocide. These Initiators are backed by Supporting Initiators from Malaysia, Cambodia, South Africa, Britain

and the United States of America. The International Movement for a Just World (JUST) and the Centre for Human Rights Research and Advocacy (CENTHRA) are among the Supporting Initiators.

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