

## STATEMENT ON LATEST VIOLENCE AGAINST THE ROHINGYA POPULATION IN MYANMAR

September 26<sup>th</sup>, 2017

The below-named Canadian civil society organizations and individuals, who all have a strong interest and/or long experience of working in the Asia-Pacific region, are gravely concerned regarding the latest wave of military violence against Rohingya civilians in northwestern Myanmar.

The Myanmar military is inflicting collective, disproportionate and illegal punishment on Rohingya civilians following attacks against several police and military installations on August 25, 2017 by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army. These attacks were used as an excuse for the army to systematically attack and burn Rohingya villages, raping and murdering civilians in the process.

This latest violence follows attacks in October 2016, when the military attacked dozens of villages, killing an untold number and displacing more than 80,000 people. Now hundreds of thousands more have been displaced. The UN Refugee Agency estimates that since August 25, 2017, about 410,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled violence in their native Myanmar for refugee camps in Bangladesh.

A number of fellow Nobel peace laureates have called on Aung San Suu Kyi to condemn the violence and the UN Special Rapporteur on Myanmar has called on her to “step in.” While we appreciate the State Counsellor’s September 18, 2017 condemnation of human rights violations, this condemnation is compromised by her denial of ongoing military and police operations, and the government’s insistence that there is not a mass campaign directed at civilians.

Unfortunately the Myanmar government has made no public effort to end the violence – to the contrary, the words and actions of the government have severely aggravated the situation. Moreover, the government has systematically blocked humanitarian aid from reaching the Rohingyas, which may constitute a crime under international law. It has consistently denied all reports of military abuses, and is currently blocking a UN-mandated fact finding team from accessing the region.

We are pleased with the Canadian government’s recent announcement of \$2.5 million in aid, and encourage Global Affairs to find opportunities to allocate more aid towards needs identified by front-line organizations as the most urgent. We applaud Prime Minister Trudeau’s letter to Aung San Suu Kyi that underscored her moral obligation to help stop the crisis, and Foreign Affairs Minister Freeland’s announcement of planned advocacy at the United Nations General Assembly. To this latter end, we urgently call on the Canadian government to:

- Use all diplomatic channels, particularly through its Embassy in Yangon, to press and support Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and the government of Myanmar to ensure the cessation of the ongoing hostilities, to protect the human rights of Rohingya people, and denounce the exactions perpetrated by the Myanmar military;
- Demand that the government of Myanmar provide unimpeded access to the Fact-Finding Mission established in March 2017 by resolution of the UN Human Rights Council;
- Push for humanitarian access and ensure relief assistance in Rakhine State;
- Press Myanmar officials to desist their inflammatory rhetoric which is endangering humanitarian workers and empowering the military to continue its campaign against civilians
- Encourage the use of all possible legal channels – national and international - to bring to justice those responsible for atrocities and human rights abuses;
- Implement immediate travel bans on all Burma Army leaders attempting to visit Canada;

- Propose the introduction of a United Nations arms embargo against the Myanmar Military, as a measure to reduce the ongoing violence in Rakhine State and also in Kachin and Shan States; and
- Encourage and support the Myanmar government to demonstrate its commitment to finding meaningful and lasting solutions to the issues in Rakhine State, including, among others, by applying the recommendations of the Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.

We and our organizations will continue to monitor the situation, and urge the Canadian government to continue deepening its action on this worsening humanitarian crisis.

The following institutions have endorsed this statement:

Associates to Develop Democratic Burma / Euro-Burma Office  
 Burmese Muslim Association  
 Canada Tibet Committee  
 Canadian Collective against Islamophobia  
 Canadian Federation of University Women  
 Canadian Union of Public Employees  
 Development and Peace  
 Initiatives of Change Canada  
 Innerspeak Digital Media  
 Inter Pares  
 International Coalition on Human Rights in the Philippines – Canada  
 International Development and Relief Foundation  
 KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives  
 Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada  
 Mae Sot Education Project  
 MATCH International Women's Fund  
 MY STORY photo project  
 National Union of Public and General Employees  
 Ontario Committee for Human Rights in the Philippines  
 Partners Relief & Development Canada  
 Peace Brigades International Canada  
 The Primate's World Relief and Development Fund  
 Project Umbrella Burma  
 The Public Service Alliance of Canada Social Justice Fund  
 Rohingya Association of Canada  
 Steelworkers Humanity Fund  
 South Asia Partnership Canada  
 Unifor Social Justice Fund  
 USC Canada  
 World University Service Canada

The following individuals, all of whom have years of experience in working in Myanmar or of acting in solidarity with struggles for human rights and democracy in Myanmar, have endorsed this statement:

Milagros Arguelles

Brenda Belak

Dominique Caouette, Études contemporaines et transdisciplinaires de l'Asie du Sud-Est, Université de Montréal

Naima Chowdhury, Women's Leadership and Gender Specialist, COADY International Institute, Saint Francis Xavier University

Paul Copeland, C.M.

Rod Germaine, founder of the former Just Aid Foundation

Fareed Khan, sponsor of [Change.org petition](#) to revoke Aung San Suu Kyi's honorary Canadian citizenship

Susan Hartley, Rotary Global Peace Scholar

Murray Thomson, Co-Founder, Canadian Friends of Burma

Nisha Toomey, former board member, Canadian Friends of Burma

Paul Turcot, South House Exchange

Jody Williams, Nobel peace laureate (1997) and chair of the Nobel Women's Initiative