



ARAKAN ROHINGYA UNION

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ARAKAN ROHINGYA UNION NARRATIVE REPORT TO OIC Development on the Ground in Arakan State, Burma/Myanmar

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The volatile situation in Arakan/Rakhine State in Burma has surged in recent days causing wide spread casualties in the civilian population. The number of reported daily casualties in the village population appears to be concerning, and the significant loss of life in civilian population in remote and isolated areas often goes unreported. The population movement and the number of IDPs have also significantly increased in recent weeks. As the armed clashes in Arakan escalates, the Rohingya people face multitude of issues related to their security, safety, health, economic, human rights, and political issues. The National Election is looming, and the disenfranchisement of Rohingya from participating in the electoral process remains in status quo. In the meantime, the United League of Arakan/Arakan Army has jointly called on the international media not refer to the group as a Buddhist faith-affiliated organization and explained the core of its mission in the statement.

Unrelenting armed clashes and instability in Arakan taking tolls on civilian population

On July 12, 2020, two residents from Kyaukpyha village in Ann Township were fired upon by Burmese military personnel, according to sources on the ground. The two passengers, mother and son along with two boat operators, were reportedly traveling from Kyaukpyha village to Mrauk U town. The gunfire came from a Myanmar military security check point, according to a resident of Kyaukpyha village. "One bullet came first from the check point followed by another larger fire from Thay Chaung station; the 42-year-old woman passenger, Daw Mumu Khaing, received head injury, and her son and the boat operator were wounded on their arms. The victims were transported to hospital in Kentaung Gyi in Myebon township for treatment. The injuries were reportedly severe but not life threatening. The increase in shooting of passenger transportation vessels has increased in recent weeks.

On July 12, 2020, in Ma'ii in Taungoke Township, a group of Burmese armed forces, comprised of 25-30 soldiers and 4 policemen, raided the home of U Maung Nyunt, a resident of Ward 1, and arrested his 17-year-old twin sons, Maung Than Zaw Zaw and Maung Than Zaw Htay, according to report from the ground citing an announcement made by the military on July 19, 2020. They The Burmese armed forces reportedly seized items which the resident claims to be parts of children's toys. The military reportedly said that the items seized were detonators and dry cells to be used for mines, and the two detainees will be charged for possession of the materials, according sources.

On July 21, 2020, armed clashes between Arakan Army and the Burmese Military broke out near Phapyo village in Minbya Township, according to sources on the ground. A 40-year-old woman resident, named Daw Ma Tin Kyi, was injured during the fighting. "At around 9 pm, the victim went to the backyard of her home, and then she was hit by bullets causing injury which seem to be quite serious; during that time sound of gunfire was also coming from one side of the village" said U

Kyaw Tin Aung, an elderly village resident, according to sources. The injury was reportedly extensive, and the victim was admitted to Minbya hospital. “The fighting began at 9 pm and lasted until 5 am; we heard infrequent large and small gunfire throughout, and we, with the children, had to rush to downstairs to take shelter; the situation did not improve, and then we had to flee to a nearby school building for safety” the elderly added. The armed clash and the hospitalization of the injured resident was confirmed by the State Assembly Representative from Minbya, U Hla Thein Aung. Information of the clash released by the military stated that at around 9 pm, at a location between Ya Maung bridge and Kenni, near Taung Pokay village in Minbya, a group of the Burmese military personnel was ambushed by Arakan Army from six different directions, while the military vehicle was transporting military personnel trainees, according to sources on the ground.

On July 22, 2020, a powerful explosion went off near Thayagong in Zedibran village tract in Rathedaung Township that has shaken village residents in the area, according to sources on the ground. “It sounded like a single explosion; yesterday at around 3 pm about 200 Myanmar military personnel came and set up camps on the west of us in the Mayu Range; it is unclear whether they are temporary camps or something permanent; the explosion took place on the road close to that location about two-and-a-half miles south of Thayagong; we do not know whether there were any casualties; yesterday a military column came from Inn Dinn village in Maungdaw Township and camped on the hill near that location” said U Twen Naing, an elderly resident of Thayagong village.

The United League of Arakan releases statement and explains their mission of building multi-ethnic, multi-faith, and pluralist society in Arakan

On July 10, 2020, The United League of Arakan and its affiliate, the Arakan Army in Arakan State, Burma, jointly released a statement expressing concern over the international media describing the League as a Buddhist organization, and explained the core mission of the organization.

The press statement reads *“The United League of Arakan/Arakan Army was formed as a revolutionary organization comprising all inhabitants in Arakan, irrespective of religion, race, ethnicity, minority or majority, with political objectives striving for the liberation of the entire oppressed population of Arakan from the yoke of Burmese fascism and imperialism, equal rights, self-determination, and freedom for the multi-ethnic Arakanese population, the restoration of the loss of national sovereignty and political freedom in Arakan, and the emergence of a dignified new Arakanese society”*.

Further, the statement called on the international media not to characterize the organization as a religious fundamentalist or racial organization.

Agony of displaced civilian heightens, student groups step in and provide assistance in Arakan

On July 23, 2020, Rohingya students in Sittwe [no longer allowed to attend the University], managed to assist displaced families of all faiths in Arakan, according to sources from the ground. Rohingya students from Sittwe University, witnessing the agony of the displaced families during the unforgiving torrential rains in this tropical monsoon season, took the relief support in their own hands and provided donations to displaced Buddhist Rakhine, Rohingya, and other families. “This is purely a humanitarian assistance; the victims have accepted the assistance because we are a student group, and we have no other reason but the humanity; we, the students, are not providing help to the needy based on their religious identity or the ethnic identity; it’s entirely based on humanity as we see their suffering; these victims belonging to different faith recognize

our intention, and therefore, they do not pick and choose the donors” said Ko Toe Toe Aung, the chairman of Sittwe Rohingya student union, who was also terminated from the university by the Government of Myanmar. “We are all victims, and we recognize the brotherhood even more so now than before” said Maung Zin Min Htun, then a college junior, who organized the humanitarian assistance.

[It should be noted that all the Rohingya students in Arakan State studying in Sittwe University were terminated through two different means. The local/resident Rohingya students from their home town of Sittwe, where the campus is located, were abruptly removed from enrollment; and those who were from other townships were banned from traveling to campus in Sittwe from their respective towns.]

Rohingya refugees and their repatriation to their homeland

The US Assistant Secretary of State for East Asian and Pacific Affairs, David Stilwell, represented the United States at the 27th Annual ASEAN Regional Forum Senior Officials Meeting held virtually on July 21, 2020. The Secretary called on Burmese Government for the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees, and for the Government of Burma to bring those responsible for atrocities to justice, according to US Department of State report.

The Foreign Minister of Bangladesh called for financial sanctions on Burma, as the country pushes for repatriation of Rohingya to their native country, VOA reports. Foreign Minister Abul Kalam Abdul Momen called on the international community to place concerted financial pressure on Burma in an interview with the VOA Bangla. Over 800,000 Rohingya fleeing to safety in Bangladesh in August 2017 have added tremendous financial strains on Bangladesh where it was already hosting over 400,000 Rohingya who were forced out by the Burmese Military in its Nagamin operation in 1978 and Galon operation in 1992 as part of the genocidal campaign against the Rohingya. Currently, Rohingya refugees living in camps in Bangladesh’s Cox’s Bazar district totals over 1.2 million.

The international relief support for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, Germany has donated US\$ 4.5 million for the Rohingya refugees, VOA Burmese program reports. The relief support money was donated to replenish humanitarian aid through the WFP’s food supplies assistance to the refugees. The relief aid will be delivered to the Rohingya families in camps who were forced out from their homeland of Arakan and some local needy Bangladeshi families in Cox’s Bazar area. During the current disease prone condition and monsoon humanitarian relief is extremely important under the current health and weather conditions, said Md. Mohsin, Secretary of the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief in Bangladesh.

The Government of Burma has begun to imprison Rohingya refugees who have voluntarily returned to their home villages on their own will, according to reports from the ground. On July 6, 2020, 21 Rohingya refugees who have returned to their homes in Maungdaw Township were reportedly sentenced to 6-month imprisonment, and again on July 17, a group of 13 Rohingya refugees were reportedly handed down 6-months imprisonment terms. The Government of Burma has effectively blocked the return of the refugees through various means since it signed an agreement with Bangladesh in 2017 for safe, voluntary, and dignified return of the refugees to their original homes in Arakan. In 2018 and 2019, the Government of Burma had rejected some members from the family lists of potential returnees while no preparations were made on the ground for their return, and conditions still remains non-conducive for the repatriation.

Burma National Election looms - Uncertainties on Restoration of Rohingya voting rights, Rakhine party controversies heat up in Arakan

Restoration of Rohingya's voting rights and participation in electoral processes in the upcoming 2020 National Election in Burma remains uncertain. Disenfranchisement of the voting rights of Rohingya was done by the Military-led USDP Government in 2015, ending their legitimate voting rights after 69 years, since 1947 - a year before the country got its independence from Britain. There were a total of 26 Rohingya parliamentarians from Arakan under the democratically elected governments and the military regimes, according to records. Of the 26 Rohingya parliamentarians, 24 have served their full terms and some multiple terms, and 4 elected in 1990, could not serve due to the military coup that led to the arrest of Aung San Suu Kyi, who won the national election by land slide. Currently, there are three Rohingya political parties in Burma that have previously participated in the national elections. In a recent meeting organized by the Election Mission, the officials were reportedly evasive in answering questions raised by the Rohingya representatives on Rohingya's participation in the upcoming election.

Arakan National Party, a major political party of the ethnic Buddhist Rakhine, is not accepting resignation letters from its members of the parliament until after the 2020 National Election in Burma, The Burmese language Irrawaddy reports. "We will only decide after 2020 election; we will not consider the resignation of the members of parliament until the end of their current terms according the party convention rules" the chief of the policy-making committee U Twen Aung Kyaw has reportedly told the Irrawaddy.

The members of the Pyithu Hluttaw (Lower House) who submitted resignation were Daw Htu May from Rambre constituency, U Wei Sein Aung from Sittwe constituency, and U Aung Thaung Shwe from Buthidaung constituency. Additionally, there were also members of the Amyotha Hluttaw (Upper House) and Pyinay Hluttaw (State Assembly) from Arakan are among those who submitted their resignations. This controversy on the resignation has appeared to have centered around the possibility of the resigning members contesting from another party such as Arakan League for Democracy.

Recommendations

The OIC and the international community must demand the Government of Burma:

- To protect the Rohingya civilian population and other ethnic groups in the volatile areas in Arakan State.
- To immediately reinstate the voting rights of the Rohingya people and allow the Rohingya political parties to contest in the upcoming National Election in Burma.
- To enlist Rohingya people from their respective townships in Arakan, the IDPs in camps in Arakan, and the refugees from camps in Bangladesh in the voter's registration.
- To create conducive conditions on the ground in Arakan and repatriate Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh, in cooperation with Bangladesh Government and international agencies, and stop the exploitation of COVID-19 to further delay the implementation of the repatriation agreement.
- To enforce the law and reissue the notice of eviction to illegal occupants of the Rohingya properties in Arakan.

Arakan Rohingya Union, a global Rohingya umbrella organization representing 61 Rohingya organizations worldwide, was formed under the patronage of the OIC Secretary General through the *38th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers Resolution No.4/37-MM* as a united Rohingya coordinated council to reclaim the rights of Rohingya people in their homeland. Arakan Rohingya Union is registered in the United States as non-profit (501)(c)(3) organization and recognized by all the 57 member countries of the OIC as the official representative organization of the Rohingya people.