



Press Release: 11,000 Villagers in Five Rohingya Villages Face Dire Food and Aid Shortages Amid Threat of Violence

London, UK 25 September 2017 – The Burma Human Rights Network has been informed of dire need for aid in five Rohingya villages in Rathedaung Township where 11,000 people are currently living. Before the recent violence and military campaign there were 23 Muslim villages, but only five remain as the rest were reportedly burnt down and destroyed. At the same time the remaining residents of these villages have stated they are under threat from mobs in neighboring Rakhine villages that are not allowing them to flee or seek food and safety. As the situation is worsening we call on the Burmese Government to immediately allow aid to flow into these villages and that the villagers be protected from any hostile actors.

The villages in need are Nyaung Bin Gyi, Ah Naut Pyin, Sin Khon Taing, Arkar Taung and Kan Seik villages. Nyaung Bin Gyi and Ah Naut Pyin villages are composed of people displaced in the anti-Muslim riots of 2012. Residents in Nyaung Bin Gyi complained that food rations had been cut in June of last year and only a 1,391 villagers of the total 1,781 received their rations after they were restarted three months later. The remaining 400 have had to share among the total population, depleting the available food for the village.

Similarly, in Ah Naut Pyin villagers say 400 people remain without food rations and locals have said that neighboring Rakhine from Shwe Lin Tin prevent them from leaving their village to seek food or assistance. The locals have said that when they pass Rakhine villages they are threatened and hear gunshots in the distance. When these locals reported the gun shots to police they said authorities claimed the noises were only fireworks. As these villagers supplies are running out they say they've requested to be moved but have had their request unanswered. Currently these villagers say they only have enough food for two more weeks before they run out of food completely.

The villages of Sin Khon Tain, Arkar Taung and Kan Seik are all isolated and without roads connecting them to Rathedaung. These villages' only route of transportation is by boat and they have complained that shortages of rations are threatening the local populations with starvation. A local resident from Sin Khon Taing said, "Poor people are starving. Anyone who can report please do so. We cannot go anywhere. When we contact the government we have not gotten any response."

These villages combined have a total population of 11,000 including many children and elderly who are more vulnerable to malnutrition and disease. While they were facing shortages prior to the outbreak of violence in Rakhine State on August 25th the military operations have seemed to significantly compound their difficulty to access food and aid.

As tensions remain high and military activity continues in Northern Rakhine State the ability to get aid to those most in need remains unmet in many locations. Those who have not fled Rakhine over the past

month have often found themselves more isolated and destitute than they were previously. With this in mind we call on the Burmese Government to immediately allow access to these villages for food distribution and to ensure the safety of all residents living within them. We call on the international community to pressure the Burmese to allow this access and to ensure that Rohingya who have remained in Myanmar are also remembered and their needs immediately be addressed.

Notes for Editors

Background on the current situation:

On August 25th an insurgent group called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacked 30 police posts and killed 12 security officers and one soldier. In response the Burmese Authorities have unleashed a brutal campaign against the civilian population, which has caused half of the Rohingya population in Northern Rakhine State to flee. Security forces have been monitored burning down Rohingya villages systematically and driving the population into neighboring Bangladesh. These actions by the Burmese army have widely been described as ethnic cleansing, with the UN even evoking the term when they said the military's actions "seemed like a textbook case of ethnic cleansing." The military operations have caused a humanitarian crisis in neighboring Bangladesh which many nations have stepped up to address. Those remaining inside of Myanmar have not been given the same response as Myanmar has limited how much access NGOs have to the region and currently only the International Committee of the Red Cross has been given limited access.

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

Media Enquiries

Members of The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) are available for comment and interview.

Please contact:

Kyaw Win

Executive Director of the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

E:kyawwin78@gmail.com

T: +44(0) 740 345 2378