



Suu Kyi's Defence Of Tatmadaw Normalizes Violence Against Muslims in Burma

13th December 2019 -- London, UK -- While defending Burma and its military this week, State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has also managed to further normalize violence and bigotry against Muslims in her country, putting them at greater risk. Suu Kyi's arguments relied on justifying the majority of military actions, often referring to mass killings as military encounters even in cases where BHRN and other human rights organizations found there were no militants present. These massacres included gang rape, burning rape victim to death, the mass slaughter of unarmed men and boys, and the murder of children. By doing this she is presenting Rohingya civilians as militants by default simply for their identity. When Suu Kyi was presented with accounts of rape, torture, and mass killing, she was unfazed and unsympathetic. As the leader of Burma's ruling party and a symbol of peace and democracy to her supporters, she has set an example of how to treat atrocities against Muslims with indifference.

"Nationalism and anti-Muslim sentiment continue to spread in Burma and Daw Aung San Suu Kyi's testimony this week will only worsen this trend. The NLD should stand in opposition to the nationalism and violence of the military, but to save her political career Daw Suu Kyi is working in concert with them. Suu Kyi is seen as a principled leader by many in Burma, and now they will see the normalization of violence against Muslims as a principled stance. The danger of this should not be understated," Said BHRN's Executive Director, Kyaw Win.

Suu Kyi attempted to explain away violence in Rakhine State as a historic feud between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslim Rohingya (whom she refused to call by their name). While tensions between Rakhine and Rohingya have sometimes boiled over since World War II, the violence in 2016 and 2017 was a campaign by the Burmese Military and had nothing to do with communal tensions. Earlier violence in the state, particularly in 2012, was provoked by hate preachers and Buddhist ultra-nationalists, many of which were not from Rakhine State themselves. Suu Kyi's argument sought to normalize state violence against Muslims by pitting two ethnic minorities against one another while minimizing the grievances of a Muslim minority that had just suffered genocide.

BHRN supports the Gambia's request to the ICJ to implement provisional measures in Burma to protect the Rohingya from further harm. Restrictions on movement and citizenship must be

overturned and the safety of the Rohingya must be ensured. The Rohingya who have spent the past 7 years living in open-air prison IDP camps must have full rights and freedom before Burma can be trusted to safely and justly repatriate the nearly one million Rohingya they forced out of the country since 2016. Continuing the case without these steps would be a negligent step that would risk continued harm to the Rohingya population by a country accused of the worst crimes possible.

Organisation's Background

BHRN is based in London, operates across Burma and 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.

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