

May 22, 2014

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— **ASEAN, international community must prioritise Rohingya women and children in crisis**

The Women Peace Network - Arakan (WPN-A) urgently calls upon the international community, including ASEAN governments, to act immediately to save and protect the Rohingya women and children who are currently trapped at sea. WPN-A also calls for urgent action to address the root causes of the humanitarian disaster faced by Rohingya women within Myanmar and in the region, and demands a halt to discriminatory policies and practices by the government of Myanmar.

Rohingya women and children have traditionally been vulnerable to discrimination, human rights violations and severe deprivation. The intensified threats since the anti-Rohingya violence of 2012 have put them in an even more desperate situation. This is evidenced by the increasing number of women and children who are compelled to risk their lives to flee Rakhine State in unseaworthy boats without any guarantee of safety or means of survival. Before 2012, it was extremely rare to see women and children amongst Rohingya boatpeople. Since then, there has been a significant rise: at least 20% of the people currently stranded in the Malacca Straits are women and children.

These women and children have been driven to desperation because of the inhumane conditions they face in IDP camps and other parts of Rakhine State, where they remain under segregation. In April, Rakhine State authorities announced they had confiscated over 300,000 temporary IDs, depriving their owners of access to most basic services. Rohingya children face several forms of deprivation, including being denied birth certificates since 2012 and having limited access to education.

The Myanmar government has escalated this humanitarian crisis via increasingly restrictive policies, practices and legislation. For decades, authorities have committed violence targeting Rohingya and other Muslim minorities, including widespread sexual violence against Rohingya women and girls. The government has gone further in fuelling religious intolerance and discrimination through the introduction of the controversial 'National Race and Religion Protection' bills, which, if signed into law, will restrict religious, marital, and reproductive freedoms.

The Myanmar authorities' denial of Rohingya citizenship and identity, as well their active involvement in trafficking Rohingya people, is the root cause of this humanitarian disaster.

We call on ASEAN governments and the international community to demand that the Myanmar government fulfill their responsibility to protect. We also call on the Myanmar government to comply with various women, peace and security resolutions, including UN Security Council Resolution 1325. Myanmar also has obligations through the UN Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), both of which it is party.

We urge the ASEAN governments and the international community to act swiftly to address the growing humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Southeast Asian seas to prevent further unnecessary loss of life and suffering.

For further information or to arrange interviews please contact:

Wai Wai Nu

E:

waiwai.peace@gmail.com

M: +959450014876 (Burma/Myanmar)

M: +66942762721 (Thailand)

About Women Peace Network – Arakan (WPN-A)

Founded in 2012 by former political prisoner and Rohingya activist Wai Wai Nu, WPN-A is involved in peace engagement in Arakan State, offers political empowerment training targeting youth from different religious and ethnic backgrounds, focusing on diversity and tolerance.

Signatories:

1.

Active Citizenship Foundation of the Philippines

1.

Ain O Salish Kendra, Bangladesh

1.

Alternative ASEAN Network on Burma, Thailand

1.

American Jewish World Service , USA

1.

ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights

1.

Asia Justice and Rights, Indonesia

1.

Asia Pacific Centre for the Responsibility to Protect, Australia

1.

Asian Circle 1325, Philippines

1.

Association of Human Rights Defenders and Promoters, Myanmar

1.

Association of War Affected Women in Sri Lanka

1.

Autonomy Foundation, Poland

1.

Banteay Srei, Cambodia

1.

Buku's Gender, Sexuality and Human Rights Classroom, Thailand

1.

Burma Action Ireland

1.

Burma Campaign UK

1.

Burma Partnership

1.

Burma Rohingya Organization UK

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Burma-Initiative, Stiftung Asienhaus , Germany

1.

Center for Community and Development, Indonesia

1.

Channel Foundation, USA

1.

Charles Hector, Malaysia

1.

Christian Solidarity Worldwide, UK

1.

Equality Myanmar

1.

Free Burma Campaign South Africa

1.

Genocide Alert, Germany

1.

Genocide Watch, USA

1.

Global Centre for Responsibility to Protect, USA

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Global Justice Center, USA

1.

Global Network for Reproductive Rights, Philippines

1.

Human Rights Institute of South Africa

1.

Info Birmanie France

1.

Insan Foundation Trust, Pakistan

1.

International Coalition for the Responsibility to Protect, USA

1.

Kachin Peace Network, Myanmar

1.

Kishwar Sultana, Pakistan

1.

Knights for Peace, International, Philippines

1.

Malaysians Against Death Penalty and Torture

1.

Nagorik Uddyog (Citizen's Initiative for Human Rights), Bangladesh

1.

Network for Democracy & Development, Burma

1.

Other Space Foundation/Projekt Birma, Poland

1.

Peace Institute of Cambodia

1.

People's Empowerment Foundation Thailand

1.

Pergerakan Indonesia

1.

Research for Social Advancement of Malaysia

1.

Rohingya Community Ireland

1.

Society for Appraisal & Women Empowerment in Rural Areas, Pakistan

1.

South Asia Forum for Human Rights, India

1.

TENAGANITA Women's Force, Malaysia

1.

The Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies - Concordia University, Canada

1.

Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, USA

1.

UnYPhil-Women, Philippines

1.

Urgent Action Funds for Women's Human Rights , USA

1.

US Campaign for Burma

1.

Vietnam Committee for Human Rights, France

1.

VIVAT – International, Indonesia

1.

William Nicholas Gomez , UK

1.

Women in Governance, India

1.

Yayasan Mandiri Kreatif Indonesia

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Yayasan Transformasi Lepra Indonesia

1.

Youth for Peace Cambodia