The Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (ECHO)

Deputy Director-General responsible for Directorates C and D

Sub-Saharan Africa, Asia, Latin America, and Pacific

Mrs. Raffaella Iodice

Wetstraat 86

1049 Brussels

 Göttingen, September 30th, 2020

**Betr.: Elections on November 8, 2020, in Myanmar – Exclusion of the Rohingya**

Dear Mrs. Iodice,

We are deeply concerned about the elections in the Republic of the Union of Myanmar on November 8, 2020, because the Rohingya minority will be excluded from these elections. In 1982, the members of this population group – which has been living in the territory of the state of Myanmar for centuries – were collectively deprived of their citizenship. Until 2010, they were able participate in elections via provisional papers, and they were able to send their own representatives to parliament, but they were completely excluded from elections in 2015. So far, we have no reason to believe that the country's government is willing to implement any changes regarding this matter for the elections of this year. According to our information, the country's election commission has already rejected several applications for the admission of Rohingya candidates.

In 2016 and 2017, the Myanmar military committed genocide against the Rohingya. Thousands of people lost their lives, and hundreds of thousands were forced to flee abroad. These refugees should have a right to vote in Myanmar as well – but they will most probably denied this right, just like the Rohingya who are still living in Myanmar.

As long as the Rohingya are denied the right to vote and to stand for office, these elections and their results have no legitimacy. There can be no talk of the "observance of fundamental democratic values", as demanded by the European Union. Therefore, the EU should not support the election in any way – neither financially nor by sending an observation mission.

From the viewpoint of our human rights organization, support should only be considered if the following conditions are met:

1. All Rohingya must be granted citizenship – with all rights, including the right to vote and to stand for election!

2. All Rohingya must be granted unrestricted access to polling stations! Polling stations must be installed in Rohingya settlements, where they are easily accessible to those entitled to vote!

3. All Rohingya living outside Myanmar, especially the hundreds of thousands in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazaar, are to be fully informed about their voting rights!

4. Further, they must be given the opportunity to actively participate in the election, both actively and passively. Concessions on paper are not enough! It will also be necessary to build up the necessary infrastructure in the refugee camps.

5. The Myanmar authorities must ensure that all eligible voters, regardless of their ethnicity and their current whereabouts, can vote without fear of pressure or violence from the country's army.

Currently, the Myanmar army and the civilian government are apparently not willing to respect these conditions. We therefore urge you to do what you can to help – and to draw consequences if necessary: If the aforementioned conditions are not met, the elections in Myanmar are to be seen as illegitimate, and the European Union should not support them.

Please keep us informed about your efforts to ensure that the aforementioned condition are met, and keep us updated on any progress you have made.

With kind regards,

Ulrich Delius Jasna Causevic

Director Genocide Prevention and R2P

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