

ORAL STATEMENT AT THE 29TH REGULAR SESSION OF THE HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL (15 JUNE TO 3 JULY 2015) REGARDING THE RIGHTS OF ROHINGYA



Society for
Threatened Peoples

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Society for Threatened Peoples is deeply concerned about the situation of the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar's Rakhine State. For decades, the stateless Rohingya have been victims of systematic, persistent and widespread human rights violations, including denial of citizenship rights, land confiscation, restriction on education, marriage and religion, sexual abuse, arbitrary arrests, torture and killings.

In the last three years, the situation of the Rohingya has further worsened. After the 2012 pogrom against the Rohingya widely known as clashes between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya, the Myanmar government's response to Rohingya displacement has been guided by segregationist policies that perpetuate inter-communal tensions instead of reconciliation. The Rohingya are confined in internally displaced camps (IDPs), in Aung Myinglar quarter and in their villages across the Arakan State.

The government of Myanmar has voted to keep them living in apartheid-like conditions, segregated from the Rakhines community and from the rest of the world in the name of their security. The Rohingya are not allowed to move freely and leave their home, which basically means that the Rohingya are not allowed to go to the hospital, the school and even the market. The living conditions in the IDP camps, as well as in the villages and in Aung Myingalar, have been described as inhumane.

The 1982 Citizenship Law has revoked the already recognized ethnicity and citizenship of Rohingya by previous governments and has left them in a legal limbo. The lack of rights has encouraged systematic human rights violations against the Rohingya, but the government of Myanmar is refusing to amend and conform it to international human rights standards.

The Myanmar government is also tolerating and protecting nationalist groups which are spreading religious hatred across the country and are aiming at the protection and the purity of the Burmese "race". The 969 Movement of the nationalist monk Wirathu is just one of these extremist groups, which is fostering prejudices and violence against Muslims by sponsoring the "protection of race and religion laws", a controversial legislative package which includes new regulations on religious conversion, interfaith marriage, etc.

The Myanmar government is also contributing to the marginalization of the Rohingya with the adoption of discriminatory legislation. The Rakhine Action plan for example will force the Rohingya to brand them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and massively detain them. According to this Plan, those who refuse to give up their ethnic identity or those who are deemed ineligible for naturalization will be handled according to Myanmar Laws and Procedures which means being detained in temporary camps waiting for being resettled elsewhere.

Additionally to the above plan, President Thein Sein has signed into law an amendment to Myanmar's Political Parties Registration Law, which has removed the right of temporary citizenship cardholders, mostly Rohingya, to form political parties or serve as their members. This amendment summed with the revoke of temporary "white-card" identity documents that previously allowed Rohingya to vote, proves once again that the government will refuse to give basic rights to Rohingya.



Therefore, Society for Threatened Peoples urges the Human Rights Council to call on the Government of Myanmar to:

- Revise legislation as necessary, in particular the legislative package “Laws on Protection of Race and Religion”.
- Take action against Wirathu, the 969 movement and other organizations that involved in anti-Muslim violence.
- Condemn and take action against hate speech and propaganda against all ethnic and religious groups.
- Immediately end human rights violations and resolve the grievous situation of Muslim minorities in the country with particular emphasis on the Rohingya religious community
- Fully, impartially and fairly investigate and prosecute those responsible for serious abuses and human rights violations against the Rohingya.



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