



ARAKAN ROHINGYA UNION

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ARAKAN ROHINGYA UNION SUMMARY REPORT ON SITUATION IN ARAKAN STATE, BURMA/MYANMAR (September 20, 2015)

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There is no sign of the Government of Myanmar/Burma backing down from its hostile policies against the Rohingya and other Muslim community in Myanmar. Series of recent actions by the Government of Myanmar against Rohingya and the Muslim population range from tightening the restrictions on Rohingya (basic human right violations) in various townships in Arakan state to reshuffling of senior USDP officials and anti-Muslim legislation in the capital city, Naypyitaw, including the religious conversion law and the marriage law.

Disenfranchisement of Rohingya and Myanmar Muslims from voting in 2015 National Election

The Government of Myanmar has disenfranchised Rohingya and Kamen Muslims from the national election that is scheduled for November 8, 2015. This is the first time in the history of Myanmar the Rohingya and Kamen Muslims have been denied to vote in national election. Further, the registration applications by Muslim candidates to contest in the national election have been denied. To date, application for registration to contest in the election by all the Rohingya, Kamen, and Myanmar Muslim candidates (total 42), have been denied on a ground that they are not citizens of Myanmar. The candidates include three Rohingya sitting-MPs in National Parliament, and two Rohingya MPs in the Arakan State Assembly. The numbers of Muslim candidates and the political parties that have been denied to contest in the election are:

Rohingya

Democracy and Human Rights Party - 18 candidates
National Democratic Party for Development - 3 candidates
National Democratic Party for Peace - 6 candidates

Kamen

All Myanmar Kamen Development Party - 3 candidates
Kamen National Development Party - 2 candidates

Myanmar Muslim

Pathi Myanmar Muslim Party - 6 candidates

Independent candidates

All Rohingya - 4 candidates

Note: The Government of Myanmar began to revoke the National Registration Certificate - NRC (known as *Amyotha Mappontin Kappya*) from mid-1960s, eventually confiscating most of them just before instituting the 1982 Citizenship Law by the Military Junta. Recently, following the 2012 violence against Rohingya and Kamen by the Buddhist mobs, the Government of Myanmar has branded the Kamen Muslim as “Bengali”, despite their status of full citizenship as an ethnic minority group out of the 135 recognized by the Government of Myanmar. In September 2015, the Government of Myanmar has rejected registration application by both the Kamen Muslim parties to contest in the national election on a ground that they are non-citizens.

Potential Violence by Buddhist Rakhine in Arakan during the election campaigns

There are alarming indications of pre-planning of violence against Rohingya by Buddhist Rakhine, following the same pattern of violence against Rohingya and other Muslims in 2012 and 2013. In addition to the recent activities in the Buddhist Rakhine communities such as increased hate speech, extensive movement of Buddhist Rakhine armed groups (Arakan Army) along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border, harassment of Rohingya by Rakhine mobs and Rakhine police, the elected officials of Rakhine State have also been making provocative statements. In an incendiary speech by the new Chief Minister of Rakhine state, U Mra Aung (ruling USDP) reportedly addressed Rakhine groups in a large public gathering. He stated:

“The ‘Bengali’ Muslims (implying Rohingya) in Northern Rakhine state are planning to commit violence against Rakhine because they are barred from the upcoming election, and the Bengali Muslim terrorist groups have also infiltrated Arakan; therefore, you (the Buddhist Rakhine community) must be prepared to defend yourselves as you did in the past”.

The new Chief Minister has been reportedly traveling to various townships in Arakan state and making similar statements. There are major concerns in the Rohingya community in Arakan over the incendiary speech of the Government officials and Buddhist Rakhine leaders that is likely to set off new waves of violence against Rohingya by the Buddhist Rakhine mobs on the pretext of barring Rohingya from upcoming election. There are also concerns in the Rohingya community in Arakan that Buddhist Rakhine Government officials in Arakan are evidently planning to set off new waves of population movement and refugee crisis while there are over 140,000 Rohingya IDPs languishing in camps in Arakan.

Human Smuggling and Trafficking Season Lies Ahead

As in every year, smuggling and trafficking of Rohingya from IDP camps and Rohingya villages to Southeast Asia have subsided recently during the monsoon season, particularly due to the torrential rain and rough seas. There are major concerns in the Rohingya community in Arakan that continuous exploitation of Rohingya in IDP camps by human traffickers and the calm seas with favorable weather conditions during the upcoming winter will likely cause the resumption of human trafficking across the Indian Ocean to Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia.

Conclusion

The Government of Myanmar has stepped up its human right violations and ethnic cleansing campaigns against Rohingya and the Muslim population in Myanmar. Over 500,000 eligible

Rohingya (over the age of 18) have participated in 2010 election as citizens of Myanmar.

On the contrary, the Government of Myanmar has launched campaigns to eliminate the ethnic identity of Rohingya and Kamen, branding them as “Bengali or illegal Bengali Immigrant”, in an attempt to degrade their full citizenship to “third class citizenship” through naturalization process. The Rohingya people appeal to the international community to pressure the Government of Myanmar:

- To allow all the Rohingya holding the former NRC cards, white cards, and other nationality documentations, to vote in the National Election on November 8, 2015.
- To allow all the Rohingya, Kamen, and Myanmar Muslim political parties to contest in the National Election on November 8, 2015.
- To investigate the incendiary hate speech by the Chief Minister of Rakhine State and the monks, and take appropriate actions to prevent a volatile situation leading to possible violence.
- Abolish the religious conversion and marriage laws, and other legislations targeting Muslims and Christians minorities.
- To cooperate with the international community in preventing the human trafficking to various destinations in Southeast Asia through the sea and land routes during the upcoming trafficking season in the winter.
- To reinstate all their basic rights, including the right to travel, right to marry, right to education, freedom to worship, and others.