

## HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL - 50th SESSION

### Panel discussion on human rights violations against Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar

15 June 2022

In her opening remarks, **Ms. Michelle Bachelet, United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**, reminding of the fifth anniversary this year of the widespread and systematic campaign of violence, repression and discrimination by the Myanmar military, affirmed that the military coup in 2021 has worsened the human rights situation of Rohingya Muslims. The Council has sought to respond to these grave violations and abuses – appointing or recommending the creation of new mechanisms to investigate and document them, while pursuing accountability. Mentioning findings from her last report, she listed human rights violations and abuses suffered by ethnic and religious minority groups, including discrimination, exclusion, displacement, racism, xenophobia, and hate speech. Among other calls for dialogue and engagement, she called for legal, constitutional and policy reforms to foster greater space for diversity, equality and sustainable peace and reconciliation.

**Ms. Thyn Zar Oo, Co-Founder and Program Director of the Public Legal Aid Network (The PLAN); Ms. Laetitia Van den Assum, Commissioner on the Annan Advisory Commission of Rakhine State; Ms. Wai Wai Nu, Founder and Executive Director of the Women’s Peace Network and Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor of International Relations and Director of the Centre for Genocide Studies at the University of Dhaka** briefed members of the Council about the root causes of violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar, taking into account the latest research and developments on the ground. The panel reviewed existing and updated recommendations to address these and to provide a solution for peace in Myanmar. This included a solution for the Rohingyas displaced from Rakhine State.

Specifically, **Ms. Thyn Zar Oo** discussed with the Council the root causes of the genocide and policy constructs inserted into the Myanmar Governmental system as informed by the legal aid cases and experiences in the field. From her analysis, she asserted that genocide crime in the country has five stem causes: first, the concepts of victim and perpetrators. In this context, those who commit genocide, have convinced themselves and others that they really were the victims. This has been the constant protectionist propaganda that generates and re-enforces such crime. Second, the colonial residual attitudes of fear: fear of invasion, of losing national and cultural identities, and of losing land. Third, the failure of political regime and government to prevent the public discontent, causing extreme poverty and mismanagement of resources. Fourth, the existence of a financial model of genocide: political and economic benefits and profits in relation to the crimes committed. Lastly, the implementation of a retaliatory discriminatory model and discriminatory frameworks.

**Ms. Laetitia Van den Assum**, comparing crises in Rakhine State during these years, underlined that the three main crises remain highly relevant: a crisis of development, a crisis of human rights, and a security crisis. Despite some positive changes for the Rohingya during the ceasefire, much more needs to be done. Therefore, she suggested to increase interaction between all ethnic groups for long-term stability and development; to reintroduce ethnically mixed schools, to build trust and equal access to education; to implement a new citizenship law; as well as to ensure criminal accountability, bringing those responsible for international crimes to justice. **Ms. Wai Wai Nu** participated and addressed relevant questions related to her community, the Rohingya. She underlined that all Rohingyas want is justice, including a safe and dignified return home in Myanmar with an assurance of their security, full citizenship and return of their lands. For this to happen, the impunity that has emboldened their perpetrators must end. Until these root causes are properly addressed, no sustainable peace or democratic development will be achieved. Finally, **Mr. Imtiaz Ahmed** highlighted three main root causes that grounded the Rohingya exodus into Bangladesh due to Myanmar military violence. The first cause concerns the concept of identity. Among the 135 ethnic

communities recognized, Myanmar does not recognize the Rohingyas as nationals. Second, the disruptive policy of Myanmar which has gradually disenfranchised and dehumanized the Rohingyas, comes from an “unspoken racial feeling” of the military and civilian elite of the country. Lastly, the third and final root cause which is the fear of Rohingya “autonomy”. He also mentioned, that if we look into the root causes, it is clear that without bringing pressure, including economic and political sanctions, nothing will change the tragic fate of the Rohingyas.

**Countries**, including *Australia, Denmark (on behalf of Nordic and Baltic countries), EU, Maldives, Senegal, and the UK*, reiterating support for ASEAN’s efforts, strongly condemned the military’s campaign of human rights violations, including credible reports of arbitrary arrests, torture and sexual violence. They also expressed concern about the situation of the Rohingya in Rakhine, who face systemic discrimination, denial of citizenship, and restrictions on access to education and healthcare. Restrictions on movement also leave Rohingya people vulnerable to traffickers. In addition, *Venezuela*, while continuing to support efforts made in the promotion and protection of human rights in Myanmar, in particular of its vulnerable minorities, affirmed that impositions and interventionist schemes are counterproductive. They are also contradicted the broad and inclusive political dialogue that should be encouraged in the country, guaranteeing the participation of all sectors of society in order to move towards lasting peace, in favor of national unity.

**NGOs**, reporting that Rohingyas remaining in Rakhine State face continuing genocide with denial of citizenship, severe restrictions on fundamental freedoms including freedom of movement, and access to health, education and other essential services, called UN Member States to initiate criminal proceedings under the principles of universal jurisdiction against perpetrators of the Rohingya genocide, and to join the case before the International Court of Justice brought by the *Gambia*. The root causes of violations against the Rohingya and other minorities cannot be addressed without justice and accountability. They also called on the international community to stem the flow of arms and finances by imposing sanctions on all enterprises that the military directly profits from and to support a global arms embargo to prevent the military from resupplying weapons that they will use to harm and kill innocent civilians and target minority groups.

Delegations that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (20):

*Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Denmark (on behalf of the Nordic and Baltic countries), Egypt, European Union, France, Indonesia, Iran, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Maldives, Namibia, Netherlands, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, Senegal, United Kingdom, Venezuela, Türkiye.*

NHRIs and NGOs that took the floor during the Interactive Dialogue (6):

*Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, CIVICUS - World Alliance for Citizen Participation, Human Rights Watch, International Bar Association, International Commission of Jurists, International Human Rights Council.*

To watch full meeting refer to [UN Web TV](#).