

Rushanara Ali MP

Fighting for Bethnal Green and Bow

21st February 2018

Over 100 Parliamentarians call on UK Government to refer Myanmar Military General Min Aung Hlaing to International Criminal Court

For Immediate Release

Ahead of the EU Foreign Affairs Council meeting on 26 February, 102 Parliamentarians across parties have signed a letter urging the Foreign Secretary to publicly support and campaign for his EU counterparts to back a UN Security Council referral of Myanmar General Min Aung Hlaing to the International Criminal Court.

The United Nations has now documented more than 688,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh since the Myanmar military began their offensive against Rohingya civilians in August 2017. Médecins Sans Frontières have recently documented almost 7,000 Rohingya civilians were killed in just one month last year, including 730 children.

On 11th September UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein described the military's security operations as "textbook example of ethnic cleansing." On 18th December he went a step further and described the military campaign as one in which "you cannot rule out the possibility that acts of genocide have been committed."

In the letter, the Parliamentarians say:

"We welcome the diplomatic leadership the United Kingdom has shown so far in response to this crisis by securing a statement from the UN Security Council, and building international consensus on steps needed to be undertaken by the government of Myanmar. We also welcome the £59 million

in UK aid that has been donated so far. However, the demands of the UN Security Council have largely been ignored. Now it is time to go further.”

“It is time for the British government to unequivocally state that the situation in Myanmar should be referred to the International Criminal Court”

“The British government should also work to secure agreement that the European Union bans the supply of all equipment to the Myanmar military, not just arms, and ends all military training and co-operation programmes.”

You can read the letter in full below.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

- 1) For further information or comment please contact Rushanara Ali MP’s Office on 020 7219 7200 or email rushanara.ali.mp@parliament.uk
- 2) You can find more information on Rushanara’s work in Parliament [here](#):
- 3) Following the Foreign Secretary’s recent visit to Myanmar and Bangladesh where he saw the scale of destruction of Rohingya villages and met refugees, Rushanara published an article in the Guardian on the urgent need for an ICC referral. You can read that article [here](#).
- 4) You can read a recent article by Human Rights Watch on the case behind an ICC referral [here](#).

Rushanara Ali MP



HOUSE OF COMMONS

LONDON SW1A 0AA

Rt. Hon Boris Johnson MP,
Foreign Secretary,
Foreign Commonwealth Office,
Kings Charles Street,
London,
SWA 2AH

21st February 2018,

Dear Foreign Secretary,

We are writing to you regarding the ongoing Rohingya crisis and the urgent need for the British Government to publicly and unequivocally state its support for a United Nations Security Council referral of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court.

The United Nations has now documented more than 688,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing to Bangladesh since the Myanmar military began their offensive against Rohingya civilians in August 2017. The government of Bangladesh has stated that it has registered more than a million new Rohingya refugees in the same timeframe. Thousands more continue to flee Myanmar every week, with continuing reports of Rohingya property being destroyed, threats of violence, and increased repression forcing people from their homes.

Médecins Sans Frontières have recently documented almost 7,000 Rohingya civilians killed in just one month last year, including 730 children. They predict that this figure however is likely to be significantly higher than their initial estimates. Thousands of Rohingya women have also been raped by the military, security forces and by mobs and militias supported by the military.

The government of Myanmar and the Myanmar military both continue to deny that large-scale human rights violations have taken place, despite the overwhelming and growing amount of evidence available. In addition, not one of the repressive laws and government policies that target the Rohingya in Myanmar have been revised or repealed.

Plans agreed between the Myanmar and Bangladesh governments on 23rd November 2017 to repatriate Rohingya refugees are deeply problematic as well as premature. Significant fears that Rohingya refugees would be returned to what are in effect giant prison camps, where the refugees will have no rights and no freedom of movement have thankfully delayed this repatriation process. The civilian-government of Myanmar can in no way guarantee the safety of any repatriated Rohingya refugees as it has no control over the military.

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Furthermore, the civilian-government of Myanmar itself is part of the problem. Almost two years after taking power, despite establishing numerous committees, they have taken no actual practical steps to improve the civic rights and humanitarian situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar.

We welcome the diplomatic leadership the United Kingdom has shown so far in response to this crisis by securing a statement from the UN Security Council, and building international consensus on steps needed to be undertaken by the government of Myanmar. We also welcome the £59 million in UK aid that has been donated so far. However, the demands of the UN Security Council have largely been ignored. Now it is time to go further.

When the EU Foreign Affairs Council meets on 26th February, it will be almost six months since this crisis began. The Myanmar military and General Min Aung Hlaing have paid no meaningful price for their 'security operations' first described by the UN's High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein as "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" but more recently as a military campaign in which "you cannot rule out the possibility that acts of genocide have been committed."

General Min Aung Hlaing's sense of impunity appears to be emboldening him. He is aggressively escalating existing conflicts against other ethnic groups in the country, threatening the peace process. For the first time in several years he is increasing the use of fighter jets in these conflicts, which are killing and injuring civilians. Military era appointees in government ministries are more aggressively obstructing reforms proposed by the democratically elected part of the government.

It is time for the British government to unequivocally state that the situation in Myanmar should be referred to the International Criminal Court. Although at present such a step would likely be opposed within the UN Security Council by Russia and China, we must work to build an international consensus to convince these countries to change their positions. This process should start with the British government ensuring that the European Union announces support for a referral to the International Criminal Court in its conclusions on 26th February.

The more countries can be persuaded to support a referral, the more the sense of impunity with which General Min Aung Hlaing and his military operates will be reduced. This in turn may help prevent further military offensives against civilians of the kind which has just taken place.

The British government should also work to secure agreement that the European Union bans the supply of all equipment to the Myanmar military, not just arms, and ends all military training and co-operation programmes. Further, the time is long overdue for the imposition of a UN-mandated global arms embargo against Myanmar. The European Union should call on countries around the world to join them in imposing unilateral arms embargoes, until such time, as agreement can be reached for a UN-mandated embargo. Finally, targeted economic sanctions against military owned and controlled companies and senior military personnel should now also be implemented. This is something that should be included in the Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on 26th February.



We hope that the British government will work to ensure that the European Union will do all in its power when it announces what steps it will take on February 26th.

We look forward to hearing from you,

Best wishes,

Rushanara Ali MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Democracy in Burma
and Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rohingya

Anne Main MP, Co-Chair of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Rohingya and Chair of
the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Bangladesh

Ann Clwyd MP, Chair, All-Party Parliamentary Group on Human Rights Group (PHRG)

Baroness Glenys Kinnock, former Chair of APPG on Democracy in Burma

Afzal Khan MP

Lord Alan Smith

Alex Cunningham MP

Alex Sobel MP

Alison McGovern MP

Lord Andrew Stunell

Andy Slaughter MP

Angela Smith MP

Ann Coffey MP

Anna McMerrin MP

Anna Turley MP

Barry Sheerman MP

Carol Monaghan MP

Baroness Caroline Anne Cox

Caroline Lucas MP

Catherine McKinnell MP

Catherine West MP

Chris Law MP

Chuka Umunna MP

Clive Efford MP

Clive Lewis MP

Chris Leslie MP

Daniel Zeichner MP

Lord David Alton

David Drew MP

David Hanson MP

David Lammy MP

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Yasmin Qureshi MP