Date : 07 September 2016

BURMA HUMAN RIGHT NETWORK ALARMED BY REDUCTIONS IN FOOD RATIONS TO IDP CAMPS IN RAKHINE STATE, MYANMAR

"The Burma Human Rights Network has documented a reduction in food rations that can only lead to starvation and death. We are appalled by the current state of affairs and call upon the international community and UN agencies to review cuts to food" stated Kyaw Win of BHRN
The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is concerned about cuts to IDP food aid by the United Nations World Food Program (WFP) in parts of Rakhine state, Myanmar.

BHRN sources report that food aid has ceased for a significant number of people in the towns of Kyauktaw, Mrauk U, Min Bya and surrounding areas, referred to as "Zone 1" by the humanitarian community. Specifically, one camp near Kyauk Phyu, one in Ramree, six around Min Bya, one in Myay Bon, 13 in Sittwe, 10 in Kyauk Taw, two in Mrauk U, four in Pauk Taw, and three in the Rathedaung area. In total, 41 camps have experienced cuts or have been informed they may face cuts in the near future.

BHRN has learned that new rules have been (or will soon be) imposed on food aid recipients so that the most vulnerable, widows and widowers, and the disabled will have their rations ring-fenced as everyone else is set to lose their provisions altogether. Those fortunate enough to retain their entitlements will receive a monthly food ration consisting of 54 tins of rice (estimated 5kg), one packet of salt, seven tins of beans (estimated 2kg) and half a liter of cooking oil.

A resident of San Hto Tan village (which has a population of 750) told BHRN:
"We were told that only widows and widowers and disabled IDPs will get food rations, but another condition is only those who are living alone, so none of IDPs from this village qualified under these conditions."

A resident of Peik Thae village (near Min Bya) told BHRN:
"Even though some people are poor they are not getting food rations as their age is between 20 and 30; they were given [the] reason that they are able to work for living ... but work opportunities are so scarce here and we are not allowed to go anywhere."
In Da Tha village, local residents told BHRN that one man in his 50s had died recently due to malnutrition. Two villages in Rathedaung Township - Nyaung Bin Gyi and Ah Nauk Pyin - have reported to BHRN that they stopped receiving food rations in January 2016.

A resident of Kadi village in Ponnagyun Township told BHRN that many had resorted to begging:
"Some villagers here are surviving without food rations since the beginning [of the humanitarian crisis in 2012]. They go out to other villages where [better off] people live, to ask for food donations and then they distribute among the people in this village."

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BHRN is deeply concerned about the impact that these arbitrary cuts have had, and will have, on communities in which many families rely on food rations to survive. Restrictions on freedom of movement and access to employment opportunities mean that most of those affected are not self-sufficient and thus are likely to face a deterioration in their conditions of life once support ends. In addition to a lack of access to employment, many Rohingya villages are surrounded by Rakhine settlements; there have been many cases in the past in which Rohingya individuals have been attacked in Rakhine areas.

The distress and concern felt by the people BHRN have spoken to, as well their lack of means to independently support themselves, underlines the need for the responsible decision-makers within the UN and WFP to reassess the appropriateness of these moves.

Notes for Editors

The Rohingya

The Rohingya people are Muslim Indo-Aryan peoples from Rakhine State, Myanmar. Since violence broke out between communities in Rakhine State in 2012, around 140,000 Muslims have been detained in IDP camps, while the remaining 1.2m Rohingya have restricted movement and cannot leave their villages.

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

Media Enquiries

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