Press Release: Food Shortages Continue Throughout All of Rakhine State as Rohingya Continue to Flee

17 October 2017, London, UK – The Burma Human Rights Network has observed large scale food shortages throughout Rakhine State caused by restrictions on aid distribution for nearly all NGOs operating in the state besides the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) who is working in coordination with Myanmar's Relief and Resettlement Department (RRD). As a result several areas, which are dependent on aid, have gone long periods without any arriving. In the north of Rakhine State half the Rohingya population had already fled a military campaign the UN described as, "seeming like a textbook case of ethnic cleansing." Those remaining in the north continue to flee at an alarming rate, but witness statements indicate they are doing so due to threat of starvation rather than a direct threat from the military. Similarly, food shortages have grown increasingly throughout the Rohingya areas in the rest of the state as new restrictions starting in September were imposed, preventing nearly all NGOs from delivering aid even outside of conflict areas. As a result there is legitimate cause for concern that a new exodus could also emerge from central Rakhine, not unlike the boat exoduses seen in the area in 2014.

In Northern Rakhine Villagers have informed BHRN of large scale fleeing occurring daily. A villager in Thayet Kin Manu, in Buthidaung, stated that of the 165 households in his village, 30 had already fled with another 60 making preparations to do the same in the coming day. The reason, he said was "due to total blockade or restrictions and [because of] starvation people are fleeing continuously." Another villager also in rural Buthidaung told BHRN, "Lots of people have fled from our village because of starvation and most are daily workers. We are poor because the government confiscated our paddy [field] land to make an army barracks. Before we received assistance from WFP, but now we receive from no organization." Villagers from Rathedaung, Maungdaw and Buthidaung all told of mass shortages of food, limited or no aid deliveries, promised aid deliveries never arriving and restrictions on movement preventing villagers from buying or seeking out food. In some cases aid deliveries are so small they are unable to sustain local population for more than a few days. In Gu Ta Pyin village the Government delivered 100 bags of rice to be divided among the entire remaining population, which only lasted them for 2 days. Further endangering these villagers are the limited number of routes which they are able to flee the country, where thousands have periodically found themselves stranded on beaches south of the Naf River in southern Maungdaw, where they are unable to flee and have been completely cut off from food while being exposed to the elements for days.

The table below indicates more specific complaints and figures from these areas:

Village	Population	Population receiving aid (	Comments
Buthidaung			
Sein Nyin Par	9,000	200 in most recent	Villagers facing severe shortages but have been told not

village tract		delivery on October 2nd	to move from their location to seek food or go to market. Government gave rations only to 200 considered most vulnerable.
Gu Ta Pyin Village	-	-	October 3rd delivery of 100 sacks of rice, 5 gallons of oil and small garnishes. The food divided among all locals who said they could not survive on such small amount. The local market has been burnt down and villagers not allowed to move freely.
Maungdaw			
Kanyin Tan Myoma	1800 households	-	30 sacks of rice, dry fish and clothes distributed to accommodate all. (donation believed to be around September 30th). Supplies too small to last more than a few days per family.
Rathedaung			
Nyaung Pin Gyi	1781	1391 (Before August 25th)	Since August 25th no aid deliveries to village. Aid was said to be scheduled for delivery on October 10th but locals say it never came.
Ah Naut Pyin	2707	2309 (Before August 25th)	Locals say no aid has been distributed since August 25th. Village administrator said he would come for donation on October 10th. No updates of when aid will come
Ah Kar Taung	-	-	Locals say ICRC collected names of individuals in need on October 5th, but have not yet delivered aid to them.

Meanwhile, in central Rakhine State, arbitrary restrictions have been imposed preventing aid from being delivered, despite these areas being completely uninvolved in the recent conflict. The areas have complained about significant cuts in aid for some time, but the recent restrictions on aid to many areas have compounded their problems significantly. Some areas have had to depend completely on charity from local farmers to survive and others have complained of inflation in the costs of good as a result of shortages. Throughout all of these areas there are severe restrictions on movement for Rohingya, which often makes it impossible for them to find work or seek out food.

The table below details the complaints and figures from these areas:

Village	Population	Population receiving aid	Comments
Pauktaw	271 households	215 served 56 without	Donations distributed by WFP on October 5th said to serve all but delivery on the 7th of October said to not include 56 families who are not registered due to having fled cyclone in 2013 and returned after.
Minbya Area			
Peik The	Est. 1500	Villagers complained no food deliveries for past 2 months	Villagers said food costs are ten times more expensive now than before recent shortages. Restrictions on movement preventing access to food. Villagers depend on 25 local Rohingya farmers to feed community.
San Ma Lay	2074	780 (Prior to recent shortages)	Villagers complain that they have not had aid deliveries since September. Poor in villages are

			dependent on local support.
Aung Naing Village	2059	350 (Prior to recent shortages)	Criteria for IDPs to receive food rations said to have changed in 2016 causing large drop in number of people receiving rations.
Thar Da Village	10625	10,337 (Prior to recent shortages)	Villagers complained they have not received any rations from September or October.
Kyauk Phyu (camp)	11,000	-	Villagers complained of lack of delivery for September rations. In October IRCR and WFP were said to have made a joint delivery.
Sittwe			
Mawtin Nya	-	-	IDPs complained of no deliveries for September but commented they had received October rations
Thet Kae Pyin	8500	-	Distributions made on September 12th and WFP on October 9th. Villagers said to make up for shortages they had to fish, which was only permitted three times a week for limited hours.
Kyauktaw			
Peikthe	15,000	-	Villagers complaining they have still not received rations since cuts have been made and do not know when they will continue.
Ha Yar	1050	-	Villagers have said in order to make up for shortages they have to buy from Rakhine merchants who sell in community without informing the local government
Aung Bar Yi	1700	903 (most recent deliver)	WFP and Government distributed aid after lapse on October 9th.
Mrauk U			
Yein Pe	3050	1365 (Prior to recent shortages)	Villagers complained that they had not received rations since August. Villagers say the Township Administrator told them not to leave in search for food.
Pu Rein	3896	-	Villagers complained they have not received rations since interruption.

While there have been some positive steps in distributions by the World Food Program and ICRC the needs of these communities are still being grossly unmet due to restrictions by the Burmese Government and lack of security for aid agencies involved in distributions who have already been threatened and attacked for aiding Muslims. If these trends continue they will certainly result in a vast increase of preventable deaths, spread of disease and are likely to fuel another exodus from the central part of the state.

"State Chancellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is asking the international community to support the repatriation of the Rohingya who have fled Burma while she is starving the remaining Rohingya causing them to flee. There is no way to reconcile her requests with the reality of her Government's policies. The Rohingya have been facing various problems since long before the current crisis, which demonstrates the Government was

already aware of the deteriorating situation. Despite this they still decided to suspend the operation of aid agencies," Said Executive Director of BHRN, Kyaw Win.

The Burma Human Rights Network believes the current conditions are part of a longstanding policy by the Burmese government to intentionally deny the Rohingya regular access to food, medicine and other aid, which has drastically worsened since August. If left unaddressed it will have disastrous results for the Rohingya population and BHRN calls upon the Government of Myanmar to immediately allow all agencies providing aid to return to all areas of Rakhine State without restrictions. We call on ASEAN nations to use their influence to pressure the Burmese Government to allow unfettered access for aid agencies into all areas of Rakhine State. We call on the international community to approach the current situation of the Rohingya with the highest level of seriousness with an awareness that loss of life and deteriorating quality life are prominent and preventable and to use all leverage they have diplomatically to pressure the Burmese government to immediately allow full access for aid agencies to reach all areas in need throughout Rakhine State without restriction. The international community must also demand that before Rohingya are returned from Bangladesh measures are take to ensure that they can live with fundamental human rights and their safety can be guaranteed. Finally, we call on the international community to insist these measures are taken along with steps to end conflict in Rakhine State, including the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and access for the UN mandated fact finding mission to areas of conflict and alleged abuses.

Notes for Editors

Background on the current situation:

On August 25th an insurgent group called the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacked 30 police posts and killed 12 security officers and one soldier. In response the Burmese Authorities have unleashed a brutal campaign against the civilian population, which has caused half of the Rohingya population in Northern Rakhine State to flee. Security forces have been monitored burning down Rohingya villages systematically and driving the population into neighboring Bangladesh. These actions by the Burmese army have widely been described as ethnic cleansing. The military operations have caused a humanitarian crisis in neighboring Bangladesh which many nations have stepped up to address. Those remaining inside of Myanmar have not been given the same response as Myanmar has limited how much access NGOs have to the region and currently only the International Committee of the Red Cross has been given limited access in the north of the state.

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

Members of The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) are available for comment and interview.

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