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Leeds United must reconsider playing in Burma

The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is disheartened by the announcement that Leeds United football club is planning to play two matches inside of Burma. The matches will be sponsored by AYA Bank, owned by Zaw Zaw; a crony of the Burmese military who is blacklisted by the United States Government for this connection. Burma's security forces stand accused of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya population, in parallel to intensifying human rights violations against the ethnic Kachin and Shan people.

Commenting on the announcement today BHRN's Executive Director, Kyaw Win, said: "It is a deeply disappointing decision against the backdrop grave atrocities committed by the Burmese military. It is unthinkable that the club have decided to partner with an individual with established ties to those responsible for these atrocities. I urge Leeds United to immediately reconsider their decision – to go ahead is to be complicit in normalizing individuals and entities implicated in war crimes.

Zaw Zaw himself recently visited Northern Rakhine State with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, and is invested in the building of camps for displaced Rohingya inside of northern Rakhine State. These camps are inhospitable open air prisons for the Rohingya, and all indications are that his visit to the area was related to contracts to build these camps.

The Burmese people deserve an open and prosperous relationship with the rest of the world - it is the military and enablers within the Government who have prevented this from being realised. The international community must make clear to Burma that without drastically addressing the human rights violations, and a genuine accountability process, it will face further punitive measures including sanctions and targeted trade restrictions against individuals and entities complicit in human rights violations and atrocities. Business as usual with Burma ignores the vast suffering, and coordinated efforts by security forces and government officials to bury these facts as atrocities continue to occur."

Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London and operates across Burma/Myanmar 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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