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BURMA'S REJECTION OF UN SPECIAL RAPPORTEUR YANGHEE LEE SIGNALS NEED TO RATCHET UP PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT

On 20 December, the government of Burma informed UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee that it had barred her from access to the country. The Special Rapporteur was due to visit Burma in January to investigate the human rights situation, including abuses against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State.

"Burma's decision to block Ms. Lee is another clear sign that the authorities are covering up the horrific human rights violations that have taken place against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in the country. In addition to blocking access for Ms. Lee, the Burmese authorities have refused access to the Human Rights Council's Independent International Fact-Finding Mission and have intensified repression against journalists. The government and military are plainly attempting to conceal the truth, " said Kyaw Win, Executive Director of the Burma Human Rights Network.

Since the Burmese military launched its brutal campaign against the Rohingya, over 650,000 refugees have fled from the country. These survivors have described harrowing crimes by the military including murder, torture, forced starvation and rape. The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights has called the violence a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" that could amount to genocide in a court of law.

"In international for like the Security Council and Human Rights Council, Burma has claimed its willingness to cooperate with the UN and investigate human rights violations. These misleading statements aim to placate the international community while the authorities silence critics and erase evidence at home. " "The crimes committed against the Rohingya are among the worst atrocities in modern history. So far, the international community has failed to impose sufficient consequences on Burma.

Yesterday's obstruction of Ms. Lee should provoke governments to ratchet up pressure. States should demand Burma facilitate complete access for the UN, including the Special Rapporteur, Fact-Finding Mission, and humanitarian agencies. In tandem, individual states, the EU, and the UNSC should impose targeted sanctions on Burma's military leaders, " concluded Mr. Win.

Editor's Note

Beginning on 25 August, the Burmese authorities unleashed a campaign of violence against the Rohingya Muslim population in Burma's Rakhine State. There are credible allegations of serious human rights violations and abuses committed against the Rohingya, including extrajudicial killings, excessive use of force, torture and ill treatment, sexual and gender-based violence, and forced displacement. Over 650,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh in response to the violence.

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Surveys of refugees by Medicines Sans Frontiers indicate that at a minimum 6,700 Rohingya were killed. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has also reported that the government of Burma allowed incitement of hatred and condoned intimidation and attacks against Rohingya families by other ethnic and religious groups. Burma's military released a report in November denying all allegations of rape and killings by the security forces.

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.

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