

Security Council Presidential Statement Calls on Myanmar to End Excessive Military Force, Intercommunal Violence in Rakhine State

Permanent Representative Says Text Places Undue Political Pressure on Government

Calling on the Myanmar Government to end the excessive military force and intercommunal violence that had devastated the Rohingya community in Rakhine State, the Security Council this afternoon urged the implementation of agreed-upon mechanisms to assist return of those who have fled and to ensure access for humanitarian aid.

Through a statement read out by Sebastiano Cardi (Italy), its President for November, the Council condemned attacks against the Myanmar security forces by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on 25 August, while strongly condemning violence and abuses that had taken place since then that had displaced more than 607,000 people, the vast majority Rohingya, citing reports of systematic killing, sexual violence and destruction of homes.

Stressing the primary responsibility of the Government of Myanmar to protect its population, the Council emphasized the importance of reform in security and justice sectors in the country's transition to democracy. It urged the Government to work with Bangladesh and the United Nations to allow the voluntary return of refugees in conditions of safety and dignity to their homes, on the basis of a 24 October Memorandum of Understanding between the two countries.

Welcoming Myanmar's decision to establish the Union Enterprise Mechanism for humanitarian assistance, resettlement and development in Rakhine, the Council urged the Government to ensure that the Mechanism supported such return and allowed United Nations agencies full access. In that context, it urged the Governments and all humanitarian partners to pay special attention to the needs of women, particularly survivors of sexual violence.

In that regard, the Council welcomed the Myanmar Government's public support for recommendations by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State chaired by Kofi Annan and called for their full implementation. It called in particular for protection of human rights without discrimination, including freedom of movement, access to basic services and equal access to full citizenship. It stressed the importance of transparent investigations into allegations of human rights violations, and of holding to account all those responsible.

Commending the provision of humanitarian assistance and support for dialogue by Bangladesh, other countries of the region and regional organizations, the Council requested the Secretary-General to continue to engage with the Government of Myanmar through good offices, encouraging him to consider appointing a special advisor on Myanmar.

Myanmar's representative expressed serious concern over the statement, which would not help to resolve the issue as it placed undue political pressure on Myanmar and as some elements infringed the work of other United Nations organs. He said that on 25 August, terrorist attacks by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army had triggered a tragedy, with foreign militants fighting beside the rebels.

To deal with that tragedy, his Government had reached out to Bangladesh and two Memoranda of Understanding had been signed, he said. Although Myanmar rejected some elements in the presidential statement, it was determined to find a sustainable solution for the issue of Rakhine

State. His Government would continue to work with the international community, including the United Nations, towards peace and development there.

The representative of Bangladesh thanked the Council for a comprehensive statement, which could be a building block towards the timely and critical action that was needed. Time was of the essence. His country would continue to provide aid to the hundreds of thousands who had fled and would continue to engage Myanmar.

The complexity of the engagement could be seen in the denial of the real situation by Myanmar's representative, he said. Claims about terrorism in Rakhine State were only part of the fiction put forward by that delegate. He expressed hope that today's statement would result in actions to assist those on the ground, supporting the appointment of a special representative as well. Among the priorities was adequate aid to those remaining, significant progress in the repatriation process and restoration of the rights and status of the Rohingya, he said.

The meeting began at 3:06 p.m. and ended at 3:30 p.m.

Presidential Statement

The full text of presidential statement S/PRST/2017/22 reads as follows:

The Security Council condemns the attacks against Myanmar security forces carried out by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) on 25 August in Rakhine State and expresses grave concern over accounts that ARSA has been responsible for human rights abuses.

The Security Council strongly condemns the widespread violence that has taken place in Rakhine State, Myanmar, since 25 August, which has led to the mass displacement of more than 607,000 individuals, the vast majority belonging to the Rohingya community.

The Security Council further expresses grave concern over reports of human rights violations and abuses in Rakhine State, including by the Myanmar security forces, in particular against persons belonging to the Rohingya community, including those involving the systematic use of force and intimidation, killing of men, women, and children, sexual violence, and including the destruction and burning of homes and property.

The Security Council reaffirms its strong commitment to the sovereignty, political independence, territorial integrity, and unity of Myanmar, and stresses its support to the Government of Myanmar in the pursuit and consolidation of its ongoing democratic transition process, emphasising the importance of reforms to promote accountable government institutions, especially in the security and justice sectors and to build the confidence of the people of Myanmar.

The Security Council stresses the primary responsibility of the Government of Myanmar to protect its population including through respect for the rule of law and the respect, promotion and protection of human rights.

The Security Council calls upon the Government of Myanmar to ensure no further excessive use of military force in Rakhine State, to restore civilian administration and apply the rule of law, and to take immediate steps in accordance with their obligations and commitments to respect human rights, including the human rights of women, children, and persons belonging to vulnerable groups, without discrimination and regardless of ethnicity, religion, or citizenship status, further calls on the Government of Myanmar to implement measures in line with resolution 2106 (2013) to prevent and respond to incidents of sexual violence, and encourages in this regard the Government of Myanmar to work with the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflict.

The Security Council expresses further grave concern over accounts of intercommunal violence and calls upon the Government of Myanmar, to take all necessary measures to counter incitement to violence or hatred and restore peace and intercommunal harmony through dialogue, a comprehensive reconciliation process and by respecting the rule of law.

The Security Council expresses alarm at the significantly and rapidly deteriorating humanitarian situation in Rakhine State and grave concern at the increasing number of refugees and internally displaced persons, which has a destabilising impact in the region.

The Security Council notes the initial steps taken by the Government of Myanmar and humanitarian agencies to provide humanitarian assistance to individuals in Rakhine State, including through granting access to the World Food Programme, expresses its deep concern that humanitarian access remains severely limited and that humanitarian needs exceed the current levels of provision, and demands the Government of Myanmar to grant immediate, safe and unhindered access to United Nations agencies and their partners, as well as other domestic and international non-governmental organizations, to provide humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State, as well as to ensure the safety and security of humanitarian personnel.

The Security Council highly commends the efforts undertaken by the Government of Bangladesh, with the assistance of the United Nations, their partners and other non-governmental organizations, to provide safety, shelter, and humanitarian assistance to those who have fled the violence, *encourages* the Government of Bangladesh to continue to do so until those who have fled the violence can return voluntarily, and in conditions of safety and dignity to their homes in Myanmar, with due regard to the principle of non-refoulement, *welcomes* states provision of support to Bangladesh, and *encourages* states able to do so to provide further financial and logistical support to Bangladesh, the United Nations, in particular to the United Nations Rohingya Refugee Crisis Humanitarian Response Plan, and other humanitarian partners engaged in this effort.

The Security Council welcomes the signing of a memorandum of understanding on 24 October 2017 between the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh on the situation in Rakhine State, urges the Government of Myanmar to work with the Government of Bangladesh and the United Nations to allow the voluntary return of all refugees in conditions of safety and dignity to their homes in Myanmar, welcomes in this regard the commitment to establish of the Joint Working Group between the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to implement this process, urges the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh to invite the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other relevant international organizations to participate fully in the Joint Working Group and implementation of the returns process, further calls upon the Government of Myanmar to expedite the voluntary return of all internally displaced persons in conditions of safety and dignity to their homes in Myanmar.

The Security Council welcomes the Government of Myanmar's decision to establish the Union Enterprise Mechanism for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement, and Development in Rakhine State (the Union Enterprise Mechanism), as well as its commitment to ensure that humanitarian assistance and development work undertaken by the Union Enterprise Mechanism is provided for the benefit of all communities in Rakhine State without discrimination and regardless of religion or ethnicity, urges the Government of Myanmar to ensure the Union Enterprise Mechanism supports the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced individuals and refugees to their homes in Rakhine States, and to allow UN agencies to operate with full access in Rakhine State.

The Security Council *urges* the Governments of Myanmar and Bangladesh, the United Nations, and other humanitarian partners to pay special attention to the specific needs of women and girls in all assessments, planning and delivery of humanitarian assistance and to ensure the availability of specialised medical and psychosocial services for survivors of sexual violence.

The Security Council commends the continued efforts of countries of the region and regional organizations, in particular the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union, in providing humanitarian assistance and supporting dialogue between all relevant stakeholders.

The Security Council calls upon the Government of Myanmar to address the root causes of the crisis in Rakhine State by respecting, promoting and protecting human rights, without discrimination and regardless of ethnicity or religion, including by allowing freedom of movement, equal access to basic services, and equal access to full citizenship for all individuals.

The Security Council welcomes the Government of Myanmar's public commitment to implement the recommendations of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State chaired by Kofi Annan, as well as the establishment of a ministerial-level committee to implement the recommendations, and urges all parts of the Government of Myanmar to work together to implement these recommendations swiftly and in full.

The Security Council stresses the importance of undertaking transparent investigations into allegations of human rights abuses and violations, including sexual violence and abuse and violence against children, and of holding to account all those responsible for such acts to provide justice for victims.

In this regard, the Security Council calls upon the Government of Myanmar to cooperate with all relevant United Nations bodies, mechanisms and instruments, in particular the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, and to continue further consultations on opening a country office of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR).

The Security Council calls upon the Government of Myanmar to urgently grant domestic and international media organizations full and unhindered access to Rakhine State and throughout the country and to ensure the safety and security of media personnel.

The Security Council requests the Secretary-General to continue to provide his good offices and to pursue his discussions with the Government of Myanmar, involving all relevant stakeholders, to offer assistance to the Government of Myanmar in this regard and encourages him to consider, as appropriate, appointing a Special Adviser on Myanmar.

The Security Council remains determined to continue to closely follow the situation in Myanmar and requests the Secretary-General to brief the Security Council on developments on the situation in Rakhine after 30 days from the adoption of this statement.

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