
STATEMENT BY MALAYSIA FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GRO...

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STATEMENT BY MALAYSIA FIRST MINISTERIAL MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL WORKING GROUP ON MYANMAR NEW YORK, 25 SEPTEMBER 2018

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2. As we are all aware, the Rohingya are categorised as the most persecuted ethnic group in the world. They have been subjected to oppression and brutality in their homeland for a long time. I understand that close to 1 million Rohingya refugees, including the elderly, women and children, have fled their homes and traversed hundreds of miles to seek refuge, safety and shelter in neighbouring Bangladesh.

3. The dire situation of the Rohingya needs urgent attention and a long term solution which will address basic human rights concerns and the very future of the Rohingya community. To that end, the international community cannot, and should not, stand idle as we witness the human catastrophe which has besieged the Rohingya unfold before our very own eyes.

4. A strong and prosperous Southeast Asia requires a united and stable Myanmar, one which is fully integrated into the global community and able to play its rightful role therein.

5. Hence, as a direct consequence of what is happening in Myanmar and to the Rohingya, Malaysia has and continues to receive Rohingya fleeing Myanmar. For this reason, Malaysia cannot be silent, or ignore the Rohingya crisis. It is at our very doorsteps. Currently, Malaysia is hosting 139,743 Myanmarese that make up 87% of persons-of-concern in Malaysia. From this figure, 77,133 are Rohingyas.

6. Concerned with the crisis, Malaysia hosted the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers to discuss this issue in Kuala Lumpur in January 2017. Two outcome documents were adopted at the end of the meeting, namely, the Resolution on the Situation of the Muslim Minority in Myanmar and the Final Communiqué of the Extraordinary Session of the OIC Council of Foreign Ministers on the Situation of the Rohingya Muslim Minority in Myanmar

7. Unfortunately, despite the numerous international recommendations, gentle prodding and advice, the situation has not improved. Instead, we still see an influx of Rohingya leaving Myanmar dragging along with them their meagre remnants of what is left of their home in Myanmar.

8. To this end, Malaysia believes that the international community's role in helping find an amicable solution to the crisis and addressing the root cause for this issue, is ever more needed now than before. We should ensure that the Government in place guarantees the values and principles of basic human rights and the Rohingya's right to live without the fear of one's life and livelihood. The killings, burning and persecution must and have to stop. At this time and age, it is unfathomable for us to even talk about such extreme treatment of our fellow human beings.

9. As we condemn the arbitrary, summary and extrajudicial killings committed against the Rohingyas, Malaysia wishes to reiterate its position that accountability and justice are crucial and integral to reach a long-lasting solution to the crises.

10. The recently published report of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission Report clearly describes that the crimes committed against the Rohingya are consistent with those outlined in the 1948 Genocide Convention, which Myanmar is Party to. For this reason, the Myanmar Government has the primary responsibility to take action against the perpetrators of the crimes under international law, especially in Rakhine State.

11. All of us should therefore use our leverage to urge Myanmar's Independent Commission on Enquiry on Rakhine State to bring all perpetrators of gross human rights violations to justice. Malaysia has also put forth that an international judicial mechanism should take effect in the event that the efforts of Myanmar authorities to investigate and prosecute the perpetrators are deemed insufficient.

12. The United Nations Security Council (UNSC) has the responsibility to establish an international judicial mechanism to try those individuals most responsible for these crimes. This too was clearly the view of the majority of the Members of the UNSC expressed during the open briefing held on 28 August 2018 in New York.

Madam Moderator,

13. While we continue to urge the Government of Myanmar to address the accountability issue, the humanitarian needs of the Rohingya refugees must not be forgotten. Malaysia noted from the Joint Response Plan (JRP) for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis in Bangladesh issued earlier this year, USD 951 million is required in terms of humanitarian assistance for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. While we acknowledge the generosity of countries that have been contributing financially in this effort, we urge the international community to contribute more, as only 34% of the fund needed is currently covered.

14. To this end, Malaysia commends the Government of Bangladesh for doing their utmost in receiving Rohingya refugees in past years, notably more than 723,000 displaced Rohingyas since 25 August 2017 and the current humanitarian work rendered to the Rohingyas. Sheltering such a huge number of displaced people certainly puts a strain on any country. Hence, in the spirit of compassion, humanity and solidarity with the Government of Bangladesh, Malaysia calls on the international community to support the humanitarian efforts in Bangladesh. At the same time, Malaysia will continue to help Bangladesh with all means at its disposal. On its part, Malaysia has set up a field hospital and deployed humanitarian aid, including food and supplies, to Cox Bazaar.

Madam Moderator,

15. Despite the hardship faced by the Rohingya, they are still reluctant to return to Rakhine State due to trauma caused by the atrocities and fear of persecution. Malaysia believes that an expeditious implementation of the bilateral agreement between Myanmar and Bangladesh on repatriation of displaced persons, as well as the tripartite MoU between Myanmar, UNDP and UNHCR, would be the first step towards restoring normalcy to the lives of the displaced Rohingya.

16. To this end, Malaysia will continue to speak out about the plight of the Rohingya, not merely because Malaysia receives Rohingya refugees, but simply because it is a catastrophe which needs to be stopped. No man, woman or child should be subjected to such inhumane treatment.

17. Hence, we continue to call on the Myanmar government to work with the international community towards identifying a long-term sustainable solution to the situation, one which will preserve the dignity and lives of the Rohingyas, and in so doing, preserve our faith in human kind.

18. Malaysia will continue to do what it can.

Thank you.