

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Press Release on Situation in Rakhine State

The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar is building a peaceful, modern and developed nation, setting priority to ensure peace and stability and the rule of law.

At the time the Government is tirelessly working to achieve peace and stability and rule of law in the entire country, two incidents that affected peace and security occurred in Rakhine State with the rape, robbery and killing of a young woman by three youths in Yanbye township on 28 May and the subsequent killing of ten persons in a passenger bus in Taungup township on 3 June. In the two cases, the first victim was a Rakhine Buddhist female and the latter case, victims were Muslim males.

Following the two incidents, riots broke out in Sittway, Maungtaw and Buthidaung townships where rioters torched and destroyed houses, shops and guest houses and committed killings. Because of the riots, 77 people from both communities lost their lives and 109 people were injured. A total of 4822 houses, 17 mosques, 15 monasteries, 3 schools were burnt down.

The Government tried to immediately restore stability in places where riots broke out since the very beginning of violence in Rakhine State. Similarly, the Government has taken necessary measures to stop spreading of violence and to restore peace. The people have been informed of the situation with full transparency.

To expose the truth and to take legal actions to the perpetrators involved in the lawlessness and anarchist acts in Rakhine State, a 16-member Investigation Committee chaired by the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs was formed on 6 June 2012.

On 11 June, President U Thein Sein delivered a statement to the nation concerning the incidents in Rakhine State. In his Statement, the President appealed to the people of Myanmar to cooperate and work together with the government and requested all to realize every aspect of the situation with magnanimity and promised that the government would attach great importance to the rule of law. The President's Office declared State of Emergency in the Rakhine State to stop the violence and restore law and order on 12 June 2012.

In reviewing the incidents in Rakhine State, it is found that lawlessness was spread due to mistrust and religious differences that had created hatred and vengeance against one another. As the victims of violence are both from Buddhist and Muslim communities, it is very clear that the riots are not linked to religion persecution. Myanmar is a multi-racial and multi-religious country where people of different faiths have lived together in peace and harmony.

Cabinet members and officials of the Union and State Governments, representatives of various civil societies have visited the riot affected areas and engaged with the resettlement and rehabilitation, distribution of relief goods to the peoples in the relief camps.

The Government took legal actions against the perpetrators of the criminal acts. At the same time the government is taking measures under existing laws and rules to make sure such phenomena and incident do not happen again.

The government has built 89 relief camps in those townships for the total of 14328 Rakhine people and 30740 Muslim people who were affected by the violence. As the situation of law and order in Rakhine State is returning to normalcy, people sheltered in those relief camps are gradually returning to their places.

As part of efforts for reconstruction of houses, which were burnt down in Maungtaw and villages in Maungtaw Township, Ministry of Border Affairs will build 202 houses, UNHCR will build 222 and the CARE Myanmar, an INGO, will build 128 houses. UNHCR has sent 400 tents so far for the refugees in Maungtaw Township. In order to provide shelters in Sittway and villages in Sittway Township, Rakhine State Government has pledged to build temporary 170 tents while UN agencies and INGOs led by UNHCR to build 600.

World Food Programme (WFP) has spent around USD 600,000 on providing four dry provisions to refugee camps and so far a total of 1515 tons of provisions have been sent to the camps. Over 2100 tons of provisions have already been stored at the warehouses of WFP.

UNHCR and INGOs have already provided 6818 sets of different kinds of household utensils and 2412 sheets of tarpaulin to the refugees in Rakhine State. Furthermore, cash and kinds worth of more than Ks. 3 billions for relief and rehabilitation for the victims of both sides have been received from well wishers within the country and abroad.

The Government has exercised maximum restraint in order to restore law and order in those particular places in Rakhine State. As such, Myanmar strongly rejects the accusations made by some quarters that abuses and excessive use of force were made by the authorities in dealing with the situation.

The unfortunate incidents are confined to a few townships in Rakhine State as it constitutes an inter-communal violence relating only to the some portion of the population in the State.

In light of the true circumstances and situation, Myanmar totally rejects the attempts by some quarters to politicize and internationalize this situation as a religious issue.

Peace and stability is indispensable for the on-going democratization and reform process in Myanmar. National solidarity and racial harmony among different nationalities is vital for the perpetuation of the Union. Myanmar is a multi-religious country where Buddhist, Christians, Muslims and Hindus have been living together in peace and harmony for centuries, hence those recent incidents occurred in the Rakhine State are neither because of religious oppression nor discrimination.

The authorities have taken necessary measures with great care and with magnanimity. The Government is cooperating with religious and community leaders, political parties and social organizations to resolve the issue. The overall situation is now returning to normalcy.

Nay Pyi Taw

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