

Myanmar: Plight of refugees focus of top UN political official's meetings

17 October 2017 – Concluding a visit to Myanmar, the top United Nations political official has underscored the importance of accountability and non-discriminatory rule of law and public safety as part of the comprehensive approach needed to address the fears and distrust among communities in Rakhine.

According to a [press note](#) issued by the UN, Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs Jeffrey Feltman visited several communities affected by the recent violence in northern Rakhine state and viewed dozens of burned and destroyed villages by air.

“He witnessed how, in addition to the documented endemic discrimination against the Rohingya population, socio-economic challenges adversely affect all communities,” read the note.

Mr. Feltman noted the Government’s endorsement of the recommendations of the final report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State and urged their comprehensive implementation – which the UN can help support if so requested – the note added.

Visiting the country from 13-17 October, the UN official met with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and Tatmadaw (the country’s armed forces) Commander-in-Chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, among other officials, as well as with representatives of Myanmar’s civil society, the resident diplomatic community and representatives of international non-governmental organizations.

Most of Mr. Feltman’s discussions focused on the situation in Rakhine state and the plight of the hundreds of thousands of refugees who have fled to Bangladesh in the aftermath of the 25 August attacks on security positions and subsequent military action.

“He reiterated [Secretary-General](#) Antonio Guterres’ call that humanitarian actors be given full and unhindered access to northern Rakhine state and that refugees be allowed voluntary, safe and dignified return to their place of origin,” added the press note.

Acknowledging the announcements by the Government of Myanmar, including the State Counsellor’s address to the nation on 12 October, regarding the establishment of programmes and policies to address the humanitarian concerns in Rakhine and the return of refugees from Bangladesh, Mr. Feltman encouraged the authorities to utilize the capacities, best practices, and extensive experience of the UN to help assure that stated intentions could be implemented in a timely and effective manner.

In his meeting with the Tatmadaw officials, Mr. Feltman said that in the UN’s

experience, successful counter-terrorism efforts do not rely exclusively on security measures.

Returning to New York, Mr. Feltman will report to Secretary-General as the Organization continues to respond to the humanitarian and human rights crisis and positions itself to work with Myanmar to help relieve the suffering of the Rohingya population and address the grievances and needs of Rakhine and other ethnic groups.

During his visit, the UN official also attended the commemoration of the signing of Myanmar's National Ceasefire Agreement and met with the signatory ethnic organizations. He also visited internally displaced persons' camps outside Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine state, set up in 2012.