

Press release: UK and France host High-Level Event on the Rohingya Crisis

The Foreign Secretary co-hosted a meeting with the French foreign minister in New York today to discuss the Rohingya crisis and called for urgent actions to be taken by the international community.

1 – On Monday 24 September UK Foreign Secretary Jeremy Hunt and French Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs Jean-Yves Le Drian co-hosted a High-Level Event on the Rohingya Crisis. Ministers from Burma/Myanmar and Bangladesh were joined by high level attendees from Australia, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, Kuwait, Malaysia, the Netherlands, Russia, Singapore, Sweden, Turkey and the US. UN High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi, Special Envoy Christine Schraner Burgener and UN Development Programme Administrator Achim Steiner also participated.

2 – The Co-Chairs agreed that the plight of the Rohingya was one of the largest refugee crises in recent history and one of the most pressing human rights and humanitarian crises facing the international community today. They noted with deep concern the conclusions of the report of the UN Fact-Finding Mission, which allege the Burmese military's responsibility for serious human rights violations, possibly amounting to crimes against humanity and which conclude that there is sufficient information to warrant the investigation and prosecution of senior officials in the Burmese army so that a competent court can determine their liability for genocide in relation to the situation in Rakhine state.. They noted also the Fact-Finding Mission's conclusion that the perpetrators of crimes must be held to account. Since August 2017 these have led to the displacement of over 723,000 Rohingya who are now residing in Bangladesh.

3 – The Co-Chairs noted that over the past year the Burmese government had taken some steps to address the crisis, including the signing of the MoU between Burma/Myanmar and UNDP and UNHCR and the establishment of a Commission of Inquiry (CoI).

4 – The Co-Chairs acknowledged the ruling of the ICC Pre-Trial Chamber that the Court may exercise jurisdiction over the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Myanmar to Bangladesh as well as over the alleged crime against humanity. They noted the decision of ICC Prosecutor, Mrs Fatou Bensouda, to open a Preliminary Examination concerning the alleged deportation of the Rohingya people from Burma/Myanmar to Bangladesh. They recalled their support to the efforts of the Human Rights Council to implement the conclusions of the Fact-Finding mission and to push for accountability, including through an independent Mechanism to collect, consolidate, preserve and analyse evidence of the most serious international crimes and violations of international law committed in Burma/Myanmar.

5 – The Co-chairs called for the immediate release of the two Reuters journalists Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Ooo as well as for the respect for their fundamental rights. In any country, journalists must be free to carry out their jobs without fear or intimidation.

6 – The Co-Chairs renewed their support to the Special Envoy of the Secretary General on Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, and called on the Burmese government to pursue its cooperation with her.

7 – However, the Co-Chairs regretted that conditions in Rakhine State were not yet conducive for the safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable repatriation of refugees to Rakhine and that there remained a need for ongoing international action to push for more and faster progress in three main areas. These include:

- The Burma – UNDP – UNHCR MoU: full implementation and effective access for UNHCR and UNDP is needed as a necessary next step in any return process, as well as further confidence-building measures such as allowing the Rohingya freedom of movement. Immediate, safe and unhindered access must be granted to UN agencies and their partners, as well as other domestic and international non-governmental organisations, to provide humanitarian assistance in Rakhine State.
- A credible accountability and remedy process: Given the severity of the findings of the UN Fact-Finding Mission, ongoing international efforts are needed to pursue accountability alongside the work of the domestic CoI, which has yet to produce any tangible results. Furthermore, more information is required from the CoI regarding its Terms of Reference and how it will operate with impartiality and independence and in cooperation with international bodies including the UN.
- Concrete implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission recommendations: The Co-Chairs affirmed these recommendations as the best path to a stable Rakhine and Burma/Myanmar, with improved conditions and equal rights for all and emphasised that these recommendations need to be implemented comprehensively, including those related to ending discriminations, protecting human rights and creating a pathway to citizenship for the Rohingya. The Co-Chairs also reaffirmed the willingness of the international community to support Burma in fully implementing all recommendations.

8 – The Co-Chairs thanked the government and people of Bangladesh for hosting more than a million refugees. They encouraged the international community to continue and intensify support for the refugees and Bangladeshi host communities, including through increasing financial support to the UN Joint Response Plan.

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