

UN rights expert 'disappointed' by Myanmar's decision to refuse visit

20 December 2017 – The United Nations expert on the human rights situation in Myanmar on Wednesday expressed disappointment at the Government's decision to deny her all access to the country and withdraw cooperation for the duration of her tenure.

"I am [puzzled and disappointed](#) by this decision by the Myanmar Government," said UN Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee Ms. Lee. "This declaration of non-cooperation with my mandate can only be viewed as a strong indication that there must be something terribly awful happening in Rakhine, as well as in the rest of the country."

Ms. Lee had been due to visit Myanmar in January to assess the state of human rights countrywide, including the human rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine State.

The Special Rapporteur said she hoped Myanmar would revisit the decision.

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"Only two weeks ago, Myanmar's Permanent Representative informed the Human Rights Council of its continuing cooperation with the UN, referencing the relationship with my role as Special Rapporteur," she said.

"Now I am being told that this decision to no longer cooperate with me is based on the statement I made after I visited the country in July."

Ms. Lee had previously been afforded cooperation and access to Myanmar, and had maintained a relationship of mutual respect with the Government. The Government has now claimed that her end-of-mission [statement](#) in July was biased and unfair.

The Special Rapporteur's mandate requires two visits to Myanmar a year, in order to report to the Human Rights Council and the UN General Assembly. Since taking up the mandate in June 2014, she has visited six times.

While the Government had responded positively to past requests to visit, access to some areas had been consistently refused, with the authorities citing security concerns.

The Government is also not cooperating with the Human Rights Council independent international fact-finding mission on Myanmar, established in March 2017.

“It is a shame that Myanmar has decided to take this route,” said Ms. Lee.

“The Government has repeatedly denied violations of human rights are occurring throughout Myanmar, particularly in Rakhine state. They have said that they have nothing to hide, but their lack of cooperation with my mandate and the fact-finding mission suggests otherwise,” said the expert.