



Ministerial to Advance **RELIGIOUS FREEDOM**

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Statement on Burma/Myanmar

As representatives of the international community, we stand together in expressing deep concern about ongoing and undue restrictions on religious freedom, including those on members of minority ethnic and religious groups, in Burma/Myanmar. We call on authorities to uphold the rights protected by Burma/Myanmar's own Constitution "to freely profess and practice religion" and pursue accountability for those who have denied others these rights. Many of Burma/Myanmar's religious and ethnic minorities – including Rohingya and other Muslims, Christians in Kachin and Chin States, and Hindus – face discrimination because of their beliefs.

We are appalled by the horrific acts of violence and ethnic cleansing of Rohingya in northern Rakhine State, where Burmese security forces engaged in shocking and brutal violence that caused more than 740,000 Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh and many others to be displaced within Burma/Myanmar. The government continues to commit abuses in Rakhine State and restrict access to citizenship and freedom of movement for the majority of Rohingya who remain in Rakhine State, especially for the more than 127,000 Rohingya in camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs) in central Rakhine State. We are also troubled by the widespread reports of human right violations and abuses committed by the military in Kachin and Shan States, which have contributed to the displacement of more than 106,000 civilians. In other regions, authorities and armed actors have detained religious leaders on account of their faith, unduly restricted travel and religious practice, destroyed religious property and texts, denied or failed to approve permits for religious buildings and renovations, transferred lands away from minority communities without proper and transparent process, and discriminated on the basis of religion and ethnicity in public employment.

As Burma/Myanmar prepares for 2020 elections, we call on all stakeholders to ensure that the preparations include equitable treatment of all regardless of religion or ethnicity, and encourage peaceful dialogue between contending parties and candidates. We emphasize the need for equal rights and citizenship, including the right to vote, without distinction as to religion or ethnicity.

We urge Burmese authorities to protect the constitutionally-provided religious freedom of all in Burma/Myanmar, hold accountable perpetrators of abuses, provide unhindered humanitarian access to all in need, and ensure equal protection for all under the law. In Rakhine State, we call upon all parties to show restraint and for all involved to seek a negotiated, durable solution. We urge Burmese authorities to create conditions that would allow for the voluntary, safe, dignified,

and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and IDPs to Rakhine State, including by implementing the recommendations of the Annan Commission and by respecting the human rights of members of the Rohingya community in Burma/Myanmar.

Co-Signatories: Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Bangladesh, Kosovo, Cyprus, Lebanon, United Kingdom, Jordan, Georgia, Marshall Islands, United Arab Emirates