

EXTERNAL (for general distribution)

AI Index: ASA 13/05/93

Distr: UA/SC

5 May 1993

Please draw this action to the attention of the refugee coordinator in your section.

Further information on UA 408/92 (ASA 13/08/92, 22 December 1992) - Fear of forcible return (refoulement)

BANGLADESH: Burmese Muslim refugees

On 23 December 1992 The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) issued a public statement stating that UNHCR, being denied free and unhindered access to the refugee camps, was not able to carry out its protection mandate, and urging the Bangladesh Government to take all necessary measures to halt the forced repatriation of Burmese Muslim refugees. In the following weeks large numbers of people, in some weeks several thousand, continued to be repatriated. But in mid-January 1993 the repatriations were suspended, and the Bangladesh Government offered to allow UNHCR to undertake private interviews in the transit camps with refugees intending to return, to establish that they were indeed returning of their own free will. The repatriations resumed, in smaller numbers, in early February. UNHCR announced on 30 April that since 31 January there have been no reports of forced repatriation, and that it is intended that in mid-May UNHCR and the Bangladesh Government will sign a Memorandum of Understanding on the assistance and protection of refugees from Myanmar.

Amnesty International will continue to monitor the situation. No further action from urgent action participants is needed at this stage. Thanks to those of you who took action on this.