



THE ARAKAN PROJECT



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Oral statement by Amnesty International, the Women's Peace Network-Arakan and The Arakan Project in light of the review of Myanmar's fourth and fifth combined report to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Chairperson, Honourable Committee members,

Amnesty International, the Women's Peace Network-Arakan and The Arakan Project welcome the opportunity to address the UN Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and to raise our concerns regarding the situation of Rohingya in Myanmar and in particular women and girls who experience discrimination on multiple fronts, including their gender, ethnicity, and religion.

Since Myanmar's last review, the situation of Rohingya women has significantly deteriorated. Since violence swept Rakhine State in 2012, an estimated 120,000 individuals, mostly Rohingya remain in squalid conditions in internally displaced person (IDP) camps. Because of restrictions on their movement they are confined to the camps and effectively segregated from other communities.

At the same time across Rakhine State, Rohingya living outside IDP camps continue to face discriminatory policies and practices. They are required to apply to travel between townships and villages. For some this entails arbitrary extortion for money at checkpoints or for some women being forced to remove their veils or headscarves. Because of these restrictions on their movement, Rohingya women and girls' ability to practice their religion, and access education, healthcare and other services is severely impacted. In particular women's access to emergency obstetric care is seriously hampered.

Rohingya couples also still have to apply for specific permission before they can marry and local orders still require them to agree to limit the number of children they would have to no more than two, although it is unclear to what extent this is enforced in practice. This policy has led some women to seek unsafe and clandestine abortions.

Many of the abuses Rohingya women and men suffer stem from their lack of citizenship, as the vast majority of Rohingya are still denied full citizenship rights under the discriminatory 1982 Citizenship Act.

In addition, recent moves by the authorities have even further excluded the Rohingya. They were prevented from self-identifying in the 2014 national census and from voting and standing for election in the 2015 general elections.

The restrictions imposed on the Rohingya community are such that it is extremely difficult for them to advocate for their rights. It is therefore essential that the international community – including this Committee – speaks out strongly for their rights. Amnesty International, the Women's Peace Network-Arakan and The Arakan Project recommend that the Government of Myanmar take the following – among other – measures:

- Revoke all local orders and policies which place arbitrary and discriminatory restrictions on Rohingya, in particular restrictions on their freedom of movement and on women's ability to marry and form a family;

- Ensure that all women and girls in Rakhine State – including internally displaced women and girls – are able to freely and safely access healthcare, in particular emergency obstetric and other sexual and reproductive healthcare – without discrimination on any grounds; and
- Ensure the Rohingya have equal access to citizenship rights based on objective criteria that comply with the principle of non-discrimination, including by amending the 1982 Citizenship Act.

Thank you for your attention.