

URGENT ACTION

ROHINGYA LAW STUDENT SUSPENDED FROM STUDIES

University student Rohima Akter Khushi has been suspended during her second semester at a private university in Cox's Bazar solely due to her being Rohingya. One of the very few Rohingya young women who have braved all odds to pursue higher education, denying her access solely based on her identity is an affront to the human rights commitment that Bangladesh has made under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

TAKE ACTION: WRITE AN APPEAL IN YOUR OWN WORDS OR USE THIS MODEL LETTER

Kazi Shahidullah

Chairman

University Grants Commission of Bangladesh

UGC Bhaban, Plot # E-18/A

Agargaon, Sher-e-Bangla Nagar

Dhaka-1207

Bangladesh

Email: chairman@ugc.gov.bd

Honourable Chairman Shahidullah,

We are deeply concerned about the decision by Cox's Bazar International University to prevent **Rohima Akter Khushi**, from pursuing her education solely because she is a Rohingya refugee. Born and schooled in Bangladesh, Rohima Akter Khushi was in her second semester of studying law.

She is one of the very few women from her community who has braved all odds to pursue education. Education is a universal right regardless of status. Denying her education on the basis of her identity is an affront to the commitments Bangladesh has made under the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

We urge the Bangladesh government to:

- 1. Immediately end the suspension, and allow Rohima Akter Khushi to complete her higher education**
- 2. Work with the international community to provide all children, including Rohingya refugees, access to accredited primary and secondary education in Cox's Bazar**
- 3. Respect and promote academic freedom and the right to education for all as enshrined in the International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights**

Yours sincerely,

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Rohima Akter Khushi, 20, is a young Rohingya refugee woman, the eldest of five siblings born in the Kutupalong registered refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. She is one of about 34,000 registered Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. After completing her higher secondary education at Cox's Bazar Government Women's College in 2018, she enrolled for a Bachelor of Law degree at the Cox's Bazar International University in January 2019.

After an international news agency featured her in a video story as one of the very few Rohingya young women to have been able to achieve academic excellence, the private university suspended her from continuing further education at the institution on 6 September 2019 solely on the basis of her Rohingya identity. The university authorities told Amnesty International that they suspended her education as no Rohingya can study in any public or private university as per the rule of Bangladesh government.

The young woman has since been suffering from depression. "I'm inside a house like jail," she told Amnesty International.

Denying education on the basis of her Rohingya identity is an affront to the international human rights laws that Bangladesh has ratified including Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which requires State Parties to "recognize the right of everyone to education without discrimination. They agree that education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, and shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms."

Close to one million Rohingya refugees currently live in Bangladesh. More than 700,000 of them fled their homes in Myanmar after August 2017 when security forces in that country launched a brutal crackdown against the entire ethnic group in response to an attack by an armed group at security check posts. The apartheid conditions in Myanmar have systematically deprived the Rohingya of their rights including their citizenship.

Two years since the recent influx, more than 500,000 Rohingya children below the age of 18 remain in limbo in overcrowded camps with no access to an adequate and accredited level of education. Children only receive very basic and informal education at the learning centres supported by the UN agencies in the refugee camps.

Rohima Akter Khushi wants to lift her community out of misery by promoting access to education for every person including the Rohingya. "After [I] complete my education, I would like to work for human rights and...[ensure] education facilities for the Rohingya community and also for all who are not getting this human right," she told Amnesty International.

Bangladesh has demonstrated tremendous generosity at hosting nearly a million Rohingya refugees. However, with the passage of time a vast majority of teenagers and young adolescents are becoming frustrated as they find little to do in the camps in absence of any schools to attend. UNICEF's August 2019 Advocacy Alert has documented cases where people have sought to exploit them into peddling drugs for money and better living. By denying them this most fundamental of human rights, the authorities are failing to support and invest in the next generation whilst also putting them at risk of exploitation by criminal gangs, human traffickers and armed groups.

PREFERRED LANGUAGE TO ADDRESS TARGET: English

You can also write in your own language.

PLEASE TAKE ACTION AS SOON AS POSSIBLE UNTIL: 25 October 2019

Please check with the Amnesty office in your country if you wish to send appeals after the deadline.

NAME AND PREFERRED PRONOUN: Rohima Akter Khushi (She, her, hers)

