



Statement in Support of Rohingya Pleas for Immediate UN Peacekeeping Intervention in Rakhine/Arakan State, Myanmar

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The Lemkin Institute for Genocide Prevention underscores and amplifies the recent plea from Rohingya survivors to intervene immediately in Rakhine State/Arakan (Myanmar) to counteract intensifying civilian harm and interdict a return to active genocide against the Rohingya people by the Myanmar military government and regional forces. This Lemkin Institute statement follows Secretary-General António Guterres’s recognition that increased violence necessitates further “sustained international and regional attention,” including coordination with regional actors such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. We note that Rohingya survivors have also appealed to the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation and European Union for protection.

The Lemkin Institute is persuaded by voices from Rakhine and displaced Rohingya leadership that ASEAN, the EU, the OIC, and the relevant United Nations officials must unite around a specific and immediate action: to urge the UNSC and UNHRC to deploy a peacekeeping force with the purpose of protecting Rohingya people from attacks by both the Myanmar military and the separatist Arakan Army. This peace operation would preserve Rohingya life, monitor human rights violations against all civilians caught in the conflict, and preserve crucial evidence for current and future ICC and ICJ cases, in line with the provisional measures of 23 January 2020, which require the preservation of evidence. The Myanmar Ethnic Rohingya Human Rights Organisation in Malaysia warns specifically that such evidence is threatened with destruction without the presence of a UN Peacekeeping Force. Destruction of evidence will harm the possibility of justice for the Rohingya people and thereby permanently harm their right to truth, justice, and memory. Time is of the essence to begin this process – a technical assessment mission should be undertaken at the earliest opportunity.

In December of 2022, the UNSC adopted a resolution stressing the “importance of providing continued protection and assistance to refugees and displaced persons” of the Rohingya people in

Rakhine, which remains in force. This followed the General Assembly recognizing an [increase](#) in attacks on Rohingya survivors following the 2021 coup. While many UN and [international efforts](#) to sanction and isolate the Myanmar junta have been successful, on this front the world has thus far failed. Indeed, instability in 2023-2024 has led to a [rise](#) in the targeting of civilians by the Myanmar military, called the Tatmadaw, and Min Aung Hlaing's extension of the State of Emergency until [August 2024](#). These actions require a response beyond simple concern. The escalating civilian assaults include an [increased use of airstrikes](#), a pattern of airborne genocidal attack that echoes recent Russian and Israeli aggression. Newly procured [Yak-130 aircraft have bombed refugees and Mi-35 type helicopters supplied by Security Council members](#) have been used in genocidal attacks to gun down civilians. That any UNSC member would provide weapons for on-going genocide is abhorrent and ought to be unimaginable.

This past month, the UNHCR documented 27 children who [drowned](#) seeking to escape by boat, and the [OCHA confirmed](#) that 88 percent of Rakhine townships have been affected by the fighting. The shelling of a civilian market in the region's capital on 29 February, which killed 21 people, has added 148,500 newly displaced people to the already enormous number of Rohingya refugees. The Myanmar junta has also resumed using [naval vessels](#) against fleeing Rohingya. Internet access is scarce in the region, as part of [on-going, innovative and chilling digital repression](#), and without a peacekeeping force many atrocities are undercounted or ignored. Indeed, Rohingya activist Zafar Ahmad Abdul Ghani Mohammad Sadek [reports](#) that over 100 civilians were killed in March 2024 while being used as human shields by both the Myanmar and Arakan Army. His report on the pattern of targeting the Maungdaw, Buthidaung, Minbya, Rathedaung, and Sittwe Townships for genocidal actions confirms other sources documenting [forced recruitment of male Rohingya](#) and the [ransoming of children](#), and lends credence to the [many allegations of rape](#) of Rohingya women and children. This data is congruent with regional reports of Arakan Army activity, which has [deepened starvation](#) in the region.

The Lemkin Institute [joins](#) UN Special Rapporteur Thomas Andrews in urging action that “supports the heroic efforts of the people of Myanmar while degrading the junta's ability to brutalise its own people,” and believes a peacekeeping operation would further that goal. Importantly, it would also guard against continued atrocities that target the Rohingya. Kyaw Hsan Hlaing, a regional analyst who contributed to Pulitzer Prize-winning reporting on Rakhine from 2018-2020, writes that many of his sources point to the Arakan Army [delaying the question of co-existence](#) with Rohingya survivors until “after the defeat of the military junta.” If Myanmar dissolves into several liberated, democratic states, having boots on the ground to prevent the completion of the Tatmadaw's [2017 clearance operations](#) will be critical. In genocide, prevention is always preferable to reaction. The world can, and must, protect the Rohingya this time.

Those who wish to learn more about the plight of the Rohingya are directed to the Lemkin Institute for Genocide Preventions's [microcourse](#).