



IPPFoRB

International Panel of Parliamentarians
for Freedom of Religion or Belief

9 October 2017

His Excellency U Htin Kyaw
President
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

Dear President U Htin Kyaw:

We write to you as a global network of parliamentarians from diverse political, religious, and geographical backgrounds, committed to the promotion and protection of the freedom of thought, conscience, religion, and belief for all. As we did when we wrote to you one year ago, we wish to express our concerns about restrictions on freedom of religion or belief and discrimination against religious and ethnic minorities in Myanmar.

As members of parliament, we acknowledge the challenges often arise when governing and legislating across distinct interests, particularly those pertaining to religion and ethnicity. We also recognize that your government faces challenges inherited from the previous government. Nevertheless, we remain concerned about government-directed limitations and discrimination against minority religious and ethnic groups and also that some societal actors continue to foment dangerous and even deadly divisions in the country.

In times of conflict, leaders must set the tone—in both words and actions—for civility, compromise, respect, and trust. We beseech you to demonstrate this leadership in order to protect all vulnerable populations in Myanmar. This includes internally displaced individuals and families in Kachin State and northern Shan State, many of whom are Christians. It includes everyone in Rakhine State who suffers from poverty, underdevelopment, lack of education, malnutrition, and—as of late—widespread and alarming violence. While criminal and terrorist acts must be addressed, indiscriminately and disproportionately targeting innocent civilians, forcing them to flee for their lives, is a breach of international humanitarian law.

Last year, shortly following a visit that members of our network made to Myanmar, your government announced the creation of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. Following the 24 August 2017 release of the Advisory Commission's final report, we were encouraged to learn that the State Counsellor's Office intends to implement the report's recommendations. We echo the sentiments of many in the international community that this process must be credible,

transparent, and seek to identify and address the root causes of conflict in Rakhine State. This means both protecting universal freedoms and rights under international human rights instruments, and also ensuring that military and security personnel prevent additional violence and protect civilians. It also means allowing unfettered access to vulnerable populations by international human rights monitors, humanitarian aid shipments and workers, and independent media.

Although many in Myanmar may object to the international community's entreaties regarding human rights, our concern comes from a place of solidarity with the people of your country. Like many others, the IPPFoRB desires a peaceful, prosperous Myanmar in which religious and ethnic communities live together in harmony. Please consider the IPPFoRB a resource as you and your government navigate a path forward.

Sincerely,

cc: State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

The following parliamentarians support this letter in their personal capacity and not as a representative of their government, political party or any other body.

Mardi Seng Cambodia



Ngabuyenzi Kwantwa South Africa



Mardi Seng Cambodia



Mercy Chriesty Barends Indonesia



Eva Sundari Indonesia



CHARLES SANABAN Malaysia

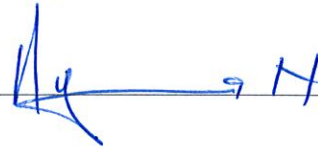


Lok Mani Dhakal Nepal



TOM VILLARIN PHILS

Asiya Nasir Pakistan



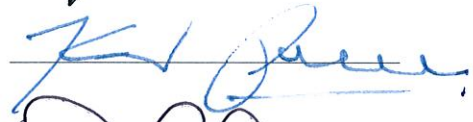
DR. MUHAMMAD ABDUR RAZZAQE BANGLADESA



MUJAHID BIN YUSOF MALAYSIA



KASIT PIROMY (Thailand)



DAVID ANDERSON CANADA



EDISON BROCE PANAMA

