

Recent Developments in Rakhine State



Permanent Mission of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations,
Geneva.

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(24-11-2016)

Brief Background

1. Since the new government took state responsibility in March 2016, finding a sustainable solution for a peaceful, harmonious and developed Rakhine state has been one of the highest national priorities.

2. The Central Committee on Implementation of Peace, Stability and Development of Rakhine State, chaired by State Counsellor Daw Aung San Su Kyi, and consists of (21) Union Ministers, was formed on 30 May 2016. The Committee is working towards enhancing security, peace and stability and rule of law; scrutinizing immigration and citizenship; facilitating settlements and implementing socio-economic development; and coordinating and cooperating with the UN Agencies and international organizations for providing humanitarian assistance.

3. The Central Committee had met three times so far, and discussed issues relating to security, citizenship verification, infrastructure and other development needs and better coordination and cooperation with international organizations. Efforts to meet socio-economic needs of all people in Rakhine State were highlighted, coordinated and further strengthened during the meetings with the participation of Chief Minister of Rakhine state. Practical measures to facilitate freedom of movement and birth registration are also discussed. The relaxations on these issues are being made on the ground.

4. As peace and stability is prerequisite for the development of Rakhine State, Union and State Government are striving to maintain peace and harmony between two communities. Since underdevelopment is root cause of the 2012 inter-communal friction, the Union Government has initiated a number of development projects namely Ponnakyun Industrial Zone, Yathaetaung Agricultural and Livestock Zone, Comprehensive Kalantan River Transportation Project, Ancient Mrauk U Cultural Zone and Hotel Zone Projects. Over 20,000 displaced persons have been resettled.

Advisory Commission

5. In order to find sustainable solutions that are acceptable to the people of Myanmar and the international community at large, an Advisory Commission

on Rakhine State led by former Secretary-General of the United Nations and noble laureate Mr. Kofi Annan was formed on 23 August 2016. The Advisory Commission is composed of three international and six national experts and eminent persons.

6. The Commission will interact with all relevant stakeholders in the country, international experts and foreign dignitaries with a view to finding best possible solutions to issues including providing security for all people in Rakhine, conflict prevention, reconciliation, the assurance of basic rights, access to basic services, humanitarian assistance, institution and infrastructure building and overall development of Rakhine State. The Commission will submit its findings and recommendations to the Government of Myanmar through the State Counsellor, and thereafter publish its report within twelve months of its establishment.



Advisory Commission on Rakhine State with State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi

Recent Armed-assaults

7. While the new administration is deploying all possible measures for a durable solution in Rakhine State, unknown terrorists launched a surprise and coordinated armed-assaults on three security outposts in No.1 Headquarter of Border Police in Kyikanpyin, Kotankauk and Ngakhuya on 9 October 2016. During the attacks, 9 policemen were killed, and 48 arms weapons together with ammunitions were lost to the attackers. It was revealed by the captured attackers that at least 400 attackers were mobilized to launch coordinated-attacks on 6 security outposts on that day.

8. The interrogation on the 2 captured terrorists and 2 others handed over by the Bangladesh authorities also reveals that the attacks were carried out in well-planned and orchestrated manners with financial and training assistances abroad.

9. It was further revealed that the attacks were masterminded by Aqa Mul Mujahidin organization, linked to the so-called Rohingya Solidarity Organization-RSO armed group which is receiving funds from exiles in the Middle East. The Aqa Mul Mujahidin is led by Havistoohar, a religious and racial extremist from Kyaukpyinseik village in Maungtaw Township who took a 6-month military training with Talibans in Pakistan. One of his associates Kalis, a trainee also in Pakistan, infiltrated into Maungdaw area and organized military trainings for local youths. There are about active 400 terrorists under Aqa Mul Mujahidin.

Maximum restraint and Code of Conduct

10. As sporadic attacks are continuing on security forces, they have no choice but to counter them. However, maximum restraint and strict code of conduct are exercised by the military and police in encountering with the terrorists so as excessive use of force, equipments and weapons are avoided. The security forces are also making sure that collateral damage on non-combatants such as civilians particularly women and children is avoided or minimized as much as possible. For example, helicopter support was used in one occasion in which a regiment commander was needed to be rescued in an encounter with over 800 armed attackers.

11. The Myanmar Police Force is also carrying out various missions including preventing the conflict escalating into religious and communal conflict; protecting villages and towns and their dwellers from terrorist attacks by reinforcing security; maintaining transport communications including waterways; facilitating safe return of those who left their places temporarily, and restoring normal functioning of government mechanism vital for livelihoods and basic services including education, health and social welfare of the people.

12. The police force is equipped with only non-lethal weapons for crowd control and management. There is no torture during investigations and investigations are recorded by photo and video. An Enquiry board was formed in relation to the death of two suspects during operation and in custody.

13. A directive on code of conduct in apprehending and during custody of the suspects has been issued to the Ministries of Home Affairs and Defence by the President Office on 26 October 2016. The directive aims to ensure transparency, accountability and responsibility in every action of the security forces. Moreover, security forces are cautioned that investigation will be conducted if human rights violations are reported and that perpetrators will be brought to justice.

14. At the same time, copies of the Common Article-3 of the Geneva Conventions have been distributed among members of the security forces to raise their awareness on the proper conduct during armed conflicts.

15. The Commander-in-Chief has also ordered security forces to exercise maximum restraint in dealing with the situation unless otherwise confronted by armed resistance.

Access for information and Humanitarian Assistance

16. In order to gather first-hand information on situation on the ground, a diplomatic mission led by UN Resident Coordinator and comprised of ambassadors/ heads of mission from China, Egypt, European Union, India, Indonesia, Thailand, Turkey, the United States and United Kingdom visited villages and places of their request in Maungtaw township, Rakhine State from 2 to 3 November 2016.



Renata Lok-Dessallien (L), the U.N. Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator in Myanmar, and British ambassador to Myanmar Andrew Patrick attend a news conference at Sittwe airport after a trip to the Maungdaw areas in northern Rakhine State in Myanmar November 3, 2016.

17. As the armed attackers of terrorist do not wear uniforms and camouflage themselves in the villages, it is difficult to identify them and thus providing sufficient security measures to any local or foreigner including journalist and diplomatic is challenging. However, access to area for information and

humanitarian assistance will be facilitated as and when circumstance permits. In the meantime, information will be provided by the afore-mentioned Committee in a timely fashion.

18. During the visit and in the Q&A session, it was responded by the high ranking police official that allegations of rape are not true and if it is evidence-based, action will be taken against any perpetrators in a transparent manner. The UN Resident Coordinator, on her part, to provide security and protection for villagers returning homes and to allow access for humanitarian assistance. Both recommendations were accepted and now being implemented by the government.

19. Since 4 November 2016, the WFP has been resuming distributions of food supplies such as rice, pulses, oil and salt. As of 15 November 2016, a total of 785 metric tons of food supplies were distributed to Maungtaw and Buthitaung Townships covering and including Kyetyopyin, Ngarsarkyu, Pyaungpiké and Warpake villages benefiting 7,232 muslim villagers there.

20. Seven members of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State also visited Sittwe and met with Rakhine State government officials, and members and elders of the both communities on 15-16 November 2016.



Visit by Members of the Advisory Committee visited to Sittwe on 6 November 2016

HRW Report

21. It is alleged in the Human Rights Watch Report dated 10 November 2016 that government troops to have set fire on houses in Maungtaw, and the story was reproduced in Bangkok Post on 14 November 2016. At a briefing by the Information Committee for Rakhine Issues, it was established that the number of houses destroyed by fire in the Report is in some cases eight-fold higher than

the actual numbers. Using the same tactic in previous occasion, the attackers set fire on huts in the fields and village houses to demonize the security forces, to deceive international media and community and thereby winning sympathy and assistance from outside.



Special press conference was held at the Presidential Palace in Nay Pyi Taw

22. The following satellite and aerial photos depict the different numbers of burnt houses in HRW report and what is left standing on the ground at the same village of Kyet Yoe Pyin.



The Government Policy and Efforts

23. At a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw on 12 October 2016, the State Counsellor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the government is dealing with the current issue in Rakhine state exercising the rule of law so that the government can reach the best and most just settlement. She also said that the Myanmar government is dealing with the human rights complaints through systematic

investigation and cooperation of the people is needed in dealing with human rights issues.

24. At the third meeting held on 18 November 2016, a decision was taken to form a national-level investigation commission to probe into the violent attacks in Maungtaw. The Commission will submit a report on its findings and recommendations to prevent recurrent of such attacks in future.

25. It is very unfortunate that such violent attacks occurred while the government is making efforts to bring peace, harmony and development for all people in Rakhine state.

26. The interrogation of the captives reveal that these attacks were intended to promote violent extremism ideology among the Muslim population in Maundtaw and other areas in Rakhine state. The attacks in Maundtaw were systematically planed and prepared for a long period of time with the support and assistance of outsiders. As such attacks impose threat to security of nation and the people of Myanmar, they will be dealt with decisive counter-measures handle they are totally defeated. Efforts are being made to expose and take severe actions against individuals and organizations that have master-minded, supported in various means. Actions will also be taken again those who attempt to instigate people for instability and conflict between communities on religious and racial grounds.

27. Myanmar shall not tolerate sowing seeds of violent extremism in our soil. At the same time, possible root causes creating a breeding ground for such violent acts shall be urgently and decisively addressed. Basic human rights for all people in Rakhine state and brining developments for them is crucial in finding durable solution in Rakhine To this end, the government is calling on religious and community leaders and the people of Myanmar as a whole to work with the government to protect national security and to prevent conflict among the population.

28. The government's relentless efforts to provide a peaceful, harmonious and prosperous environment with a sense of security and hope for all in Rakhine state should be complimented by the international community with understanding and objective engagements.

**Permanent Mission of Myanmar
Geneva.**

Dated: 24 November 2016