



Announcement of Clearance Operation by Tatmadaw in Rathaedaung Township Defies ICJ Ruling

27th June 2020 – Yangon/London -- Burma Human Rights Network is alarmed by new escalations from the Burmese army in Rakhine State which will put countless lives in danger and defy orders from the International Court of Justice. The Rakhine State's Ministry of Security and Border Affairs issued a directive on 24 June, stating that the Tatmadaw will conduct clearance operations against Arakan Army in Kyauktan administrative circle, Rathaeduang Township.

“The announcement of new clearance operations, along with reports of fresh skirmishes, is extremely concerning. Burma is putting countless Rakhine and Rohingya civilian lives at risk needlessly and in defiance of the ICJ’s provisional measures to prevent further harm to the Rohingya. These attacks are also being done despite calls from UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres to halt conflict as nations struggle to address Covid-19 and ensure the health of their citizens,” said BHRN Executive Director, Kyaw Win.

The directive letter was distributed by the Rathaedaung Chief Administrator to the village administrators in 39 villages, including three Rohingya villages, in Kyauktan on June 25, according to a village administrator. However, the letter does not mention how many villages fall into the clearance operation. Since the letter was issued, some villagers from 39 villages have fled for their safety. The three Rohingya villages are Arkar Taung, Kin Sate, and Sin Khone Tine. There are about 600 households and around 5000 Rohingya population residing in these three villages. The total population in all 39 villages is about 40,000.

Those fleeing are reported going to Rathedaung and Sittwe Townships and nearby villages seeking shelter, though villagers are reporting arrests of civilians attempting to escape the violence. Reports have also emerged of homes being burnt down by the military in Kyauntan village, similar to the arson attacks by the military in the 2017 clearance operations against the Rohingya.

The clearance operations will undoubtedly create a new humanitarian disaster which the Government will be responsible for. The operations are ongoing despite genocide investigations into previous clearance operations by the Burmese Military in the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court. Burma is defying provisional measures by the ICJ by engaging these operations which will clearly bring harm onto the Rohingya population, as well as the Rakhine and other ethnic populations. While Burma offers lies and excuses to the world about their crimes in 2017, they are continuing the same crimes in plain sight while the world is distracted by a global pandemic. The international community must not ease pressure on Burma despite other concerns in the world and must hold them fully accountable for all crimes past and present.

Organisation’s Background

BHRN is based in London, operates across Burma and works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

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