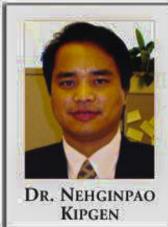


UN report on Rohingyas demands urgent action



DR. NEUGINPAO KIPGEN
The Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in its report released on February 3 detailed the widespread human rights violations against the Rohingya population by Myanmar's security

forces in the country's northern Rakhine state, some of which it claims may amount to crimes against humanity. The OHCHR report was based on interviews with people who fled Myanmar after attacks on a border post in October last year, the ensuing counter military operations and a lockdown in north Maungdaw. The report documents mass gang-rape, killings, including babies and young children, brutal beatings, disappearances and other serious human rights violations.

The question now is whether the Myanmar government will accept the allegations and do something to address the allegations. What will be the response of the international community, such as the Bangladeshi government, the 57-member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the United Nations?

Undoubtedly, the report sends a strong message and puts tremendous pressure on Myanmar. After the report was released, the Myanmar government said it is "deeply concerned" about the "very serious" allegations of atrocities against the Rohingya Muslims. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a statement released on February 8 said that the government was investigating the allegations and would take legal action against the perpetrators if there is a clear evidence of human rights abuses.

The home ministry, controlled by the military, has set up a team of five high-ranking police officials to investigate allegations of widespread human rights abuses committed by the security forces. The military has also said that five policemen have been sentenced to two months' detention and three senior officers had been demoted over the incident of a footage of police kicking and beating Rohingyas in Koe Tan Kauk village of Rathedaung township in November last year. The military has also said the man believed

to have led the Maungdaw border outpost attacks, which killed nine policemen, was sentenced to death on February 10. The man, named Uruma, was charged under Section 302(1)(c) of Myanmar's penal code for escorting the attackers to the police targets in Maungdaw. If convicted, it carries a punishment of a fine, a term of imprisonment of up to seven years, or death penalty in the most severe cases.

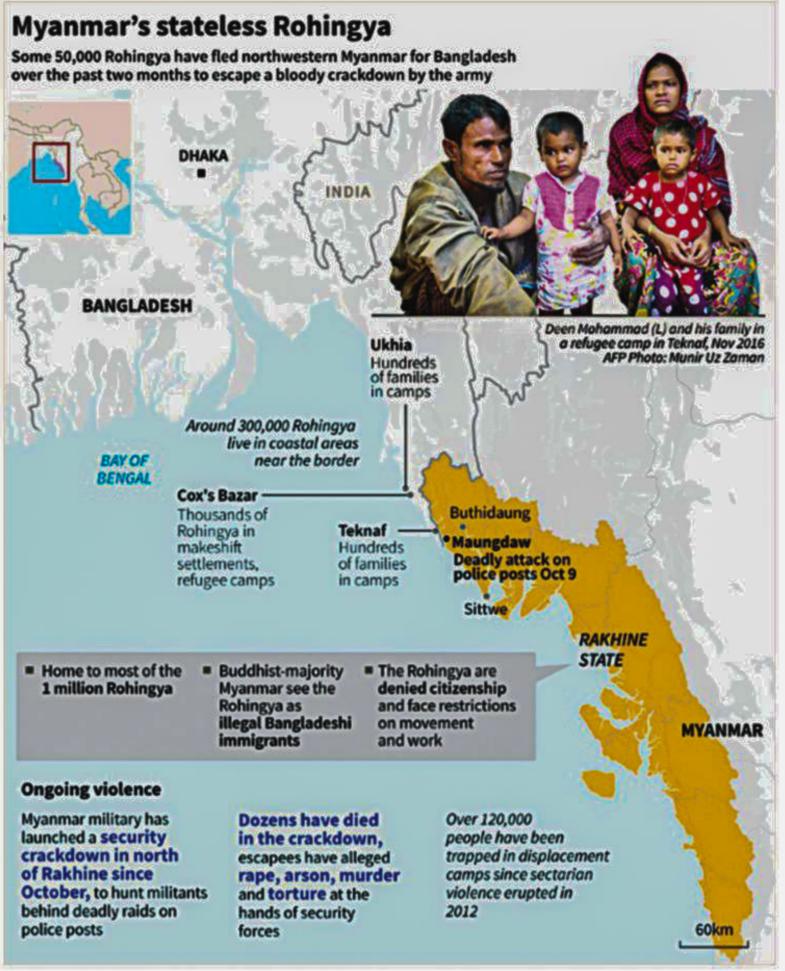
Though the National League for Democracy (NLD) government has not officially accepted the serious allegations, it has come under intense pressure by the report. But because of the delicate and sensitive nature of the issue plus the international scrutiny, Aung San Suu Kyi is likely to handle the matter cautiously.

While the NLD government initiates its own investigation, behind the scene Suu Kyi is likely to reach out to the military commander-in-chief Senior General Min Aung Hlaing for his intervention. The home ministry, which is in-charge of the 'clearance operations', is headed by the military.

Suu Kyi's role is crucial but limited. Because of her role as the de-facto leader of the civilian government as well as because of her international stature as a democratic icon, usually there is high expectation from the 1991 Nobel peace laureate. She has received her share of criticism from governments and rights groups from around the world.

However, it is important to note that Myanmar's democratisation is still incomplete, which means there is a hybrid nature of political system whereby the civilian government and the military share power.

While criticising her, one should also recognise what she has done within her limited capacity. For example, she created the Kofi Annan-led commission to get the international perspective (or unbiased assessment) on the sensitive issue, despite opposition from several political parties, including the Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP), which governed the country for five years under President Thein Sein. The NLD government constituted a commission led by the country's military-backed Vice President Myint Swe. Moreover, the NLD government sent a high-level delegation to Bangladesh in its attempt to resolve the Rohingya conundrum.



The Myanmar government has also formed a leading body to accelerate the process of issuing National Verification Cards (NVCs) to Rohingyas waiting for citizenship verification under the 1982 Citizenship Law, which classifies citizenship into three categories - full citizen, associate

citizen and naturalised citizen. But what Suu Kyi and her NLD government could and should do is, instead of denying human rights violations against the Rohingya population, especially in light of the OHCHR report, it must work together with the military leadership to end atrocities

and provide adequate humanitarian assistance to the affected population. Be fitting punishment should be given to human rights violators. Suu Kyi and her NLD government also needs to lay out a concrete and systematic policies and plans for addressing the fundamental problems of the Rohingyas, such as identity or nomenclature and citizenship issues.

The report is also likely to put Bangladesh on the spotlight. The Bangladeshi government is seeking the international community's assistance in developing the Thengchar island and in transporting the refugees there. The island in the Bay of Bengal is lashed by high tides year-round and submerged during the monsoon season which is largely uninhabitable marshland and several hours by boat from the mainland.

The plan has drawn criticism from around the world. The relocation plan was last proposed in 2015, but the government suspended it after international aid groups and rights activists criticised it. The plan was reinstated following the arrival of about 65,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar in October and November last year.

The relocation plan may not materialise if there is strong opposition from the international community, including the United Nations. In case the relocation plan goes ahead against the will of the refugees, Bangladesh will get its share of international criticism and see herself under the international media spotlight for its action.

While the Myanmar government is conducting its own verification process, the United Nations and the OIC should extend all possible assistance to the Myanmar government in its attempt to address the problem. This should include providing aids and logistical support, as well as the possibility of resettling some of the most vulnerable Rohingya population into their own or other willing third countries, like any other refugee populations of the world.

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PROJECT SYNDICATE

Ensuring Euro-Atlantic security

DES BROWNE, WOLFGANG ISCHINGER, IGOR IVANOV, AND SAM NUNN

The chasm between Russia and the West appears to be wider now than at any point since the Cold War. But, despite stark differences, there are areas of existential common interest. As we did during the darkest days of the Cold War, Americans, Europeans, and Russians must work together to avoid catastrophe, including by preventing terrorist attacks and reducing the risks of a military - or even nuclear - conflict in Europe.

Ever since the historic events of 1989-1991 changed Europe forever, each of us has been involved in Euro-Atlantic security, both inside and outside of government. Through it all, efforts to build mutual security in the Euro-Atlantic region have lacked urgency and creativity. As a result, the Euro-Atlantic space has remained vulnerable to political, security, and economic crises.

In the absence of new initiatives by all parties, things are likely to get worse. Terrorist attacks have struck Moscow, Beslan, Ankara, Istanbul, Paris, Nice, Munich, Brussels, London, Boston, New York, Washington, and other cities - and those responsible for carrying them out are determined to strike again. Thousands of people have been killed in Ukraine since 2013, and more are dying in renewed fighting today. Innocent refugees are fleeing the devastating wars in the Middle East and North Africa. And Western-Russian relations are dangerously tense, increasing the



risk that an accident, mistake, or miscalculation will precipitate a military escalation - or even a new war.

The first step in acting to advance our common interests is to identify and pursue concrete, practical, near-term initiatives designed to reduce risks, rebuild trust, and improve the Euro-Atlantic security landscape. There are five key areas that such initiatives should cover.

We must reduce the danger of a nuclear weapon being used. Today, the risk of an accidental or mistaken nuclear ballistic-missile launch is unnecessarily high. A starting point for minimising the threat could be a new declaration by the Russian and US presidents reaffirming that a nuclear war cannot be won and must never be fought. This would mirror the joint statement made by former US President Ronald Reagan and

former Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev, which was well received in both countries, and marked a new effort to improve relations.

We must reduce the risks associated with keeping nuclear forces on "prompt-launch" status, whereby they are ready for immediate launch and can hit their targets within minutes. The United States and Russia should commit to begin discussions on removing a significant percentage of strategic nuclear forces from prompt-launch status at a later date. This, together with the declaration proposed above, would set a strategic direction for reducing the nuclear threat.

We must reduce the threat of nuclear and radiological materials falling into the wrong hands. As the Islamic State looks for new ways to export terror to Europe, North America, and beyond, it may try to acquire and detonate a radiological-dispersal device, commonly known as a "dirty bomb." It is especially urgent that the US, Russia, and Europe lead a global effort to secure the most vulnerable nuclear and radiological materials around the world. In particular, there is an urgent need to cooperate on securing radiological sources. Many facilities using these materials today are vulnerable, but the estimated date for securing them globally is 2044.

We must reduce the risks of a military confrontation by improving military-to-military communication through a new NATO-Russia Military Crisis Management Group. This initiative should accompany efforts to restart bilateral military-to-military

dialogue between the US and Russia. The focus should be on increasing transparency and trust on all sides.

We must reduce the risk of a mid-air incident leading to a political or military conflict. Increased military activity in areas where NATO and Russia both operate now poses an unacceptably high risk to civilian air traffic. Countries that are active in the Baltic Sea region, for starters, should exchange "due regard" regulations - the national operating procedures that state aircraft must follow when in the proximity of civilians. Technical support for greater air transparency would also significantly reduce the risk of a mid-air collision.

Europe, the US, and Russia are confronting a range of significant issues today. But none should distract attention from the important goal of identifying a new policy framework, based on existential common interests, that can stop the downward spiral in relations and stabilise Euro-Atlantic security. The practical near-term steps that we have identified here are the right place to begin. We need to start now.

Des Browne, a former British secretary of state for defense, is Chair of the European Leadership Network. Wolfgang Ischinger, a former German deputy foreign minister, is Chairman of the Munich Security Conference. Igor S. Ivanov, a former Russian foreign minister, is President of the Russian International Affairs Council. Sam Nunn, a former Democratic US senator, is Co-Chairman and CEO of the Nuclear Threat Initiative. Copyright: Project Syndicate, 2017. www.project-syndicate.org

(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

A WORD A DAY

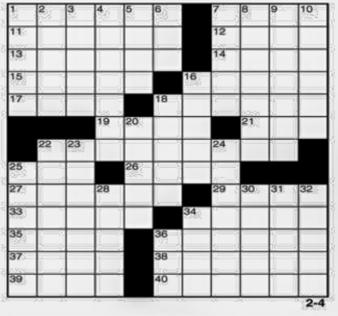


EPISTOLARY

adjective of or relating to a letter

CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

- ACROSS**
- 1 Indian turnover
 - 7 "Believe" singer
 - 11 Wry
 - 12 Frenzied
 - 13 Turn
 - 14 In - (lined up)
 - 15 Gives off
 - 16 Vestige
 - 17 Hotel room feature
 - 18 Au - potatoes
 - 19 Mystique
 - 21 Writer Tarbell
 - 22 Boxer Walcott
 - 25 Crayon makeup
 - 26 Facility
 - 27 Bestow
 - 29 Brass ingredient
 - 33 Manicure targets
 - 34 Columbus' home
 - 35 Marionette mover
 - 36 Go ashore
 - 37 Bakery worker
 - 38 Threat phrase
 - 39 Cartoonist Thomas
- DOWN**
- 40 Kane's portrayal
 - 1 Fathers
 - 2 Kitchen come-on
 - 3 Recurrent theme
 - 4 Running wild
 - 5 Plops down
 - 6 Serving feat
 - 7 Heater Barton
 - 8 Hamlet's pal
 - 9 Polluter's crime
 - 10 Ivanhoe's love
 - 16 Serving aids
 - 18 Manual
 - 20 Mass readers
 - 22 Reggae's birth-place
 - 23 Runs out
 - 24 Shameless woman
 - 25 Mutually profitable
 - 28 Vigilant
 - 30 Completely
 - 31 Like Loki
 - 32 Sweet treats
 - 34 "Sommersby" actor
 - 36 Market indicator



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER
G A I T S T I B E R
R E C A P A T O N E
I R E N E R O U T S
P I C C O T I R E
E A R I R S L E T
S L E W E D A L E S
A R S E N I O
A R M Y R A D N E R
M A C T I M C R O
A D O O N E U N O
D U I N E R T U B E S
N U E T O A R E S T
A S S E S G I S T S

BEETLE BAILEY by Mort Walker



BABY BLUES by Kirkman & Scott

