

UN has spoken unequivocally on Rohingyas

So should the rest of the world, especially our friends

THE United Nation's message is loud and clear. It has denounced Myanmar's "brutal security operation" against Rohingyas as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" in what is its strongest ever condemnation of Myanmar. The UN high commissioner for human rights also said that the "security" operation being conducted by the government is disproportionate to the insurgent attacks carried out last month and there is no scope for Myanmar to continue to dilute the magnitude of the oppression.

Geopolitical interests notwithstanding, international relations cannot be bereft of principles. The present world order, however imperfect, is based on certain fundamental principles and norms, one of which is human rights. What would happen to the world order if minority communities all the world over were deprived of that?

Despite widespread reports of persecution and the onrushes of Rohingyas into Bangladesh in the past, we are yet to see any substantial action taken by the international community to address the gross human rights violations against the Rohingyas. Latest developments, however, should. We request earnestly our friends India and China to recalibrate their stance on the Rohingyas and use their leverage on that country to stop the persecution.

Rohingyas have already suffered enough for a very long time. Bangladesh has had to deal with the influx of Rohingya refugees and bear the many associated costs time and again and has done so again, this time around.

Our appeal to the world is quite simple: justice for a persecuted people. Myanmar is a country composed of various minority groups, and if other minority groups could be granted their basic human rights, why not the Rohingyas? The UN has spoken and now our neighbours, especially our friends, also should.

BCL assaults teacher, again!

When will such atrocious behaviour stop?

MEMBERS of the Bangladesh Chhatra League (BCL) have, over the years, built a reputation for beating up anyone who does not agree with unethical practices by some members of their fraternity. The latest case of teacher-beating reportedly occurred at Bogra's Government Shah Sultan College where BCL activists assaulted the principal when two of its members were expelled for wanting to appear in examinations on September 11 without paying fees. That these so-called students have no compunction about misbehaving with teachers and then calling their comrades to vandalise college property and display the audacity to attack the principal merely goes to prove, once again, that political activists of this student body believe they are above the law.

Not a month goes by when we are not greeted by one act of violence or the other by members of the affiliated body of the ruling party. Student politics has by and large been violent in our country regardless of which party is in power. What we find disturbing is that these students believe that just because they belong to the ruling party, the rules do not apply to them; that all must bow to their will and if they don't, it is perfectly alright to settle the matter through violence. Regrettably, despite regular occurrences of such incidents, the party appears least concerned.

The college authority has filed a case with the police and two arrests have been made. But, unless there is serious pressure on party affiliates from their political superiors to reform and be held accountable, there is little the police can do. Without punitive action against errant and unruly cadres such behaviour will continue.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

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UN should take action to save Rohingyas

The United Nations Security Council has imposed fresh sanctions on North Korea for its recent nuclear tests. If it could impose such harsh sanctions on North Korea for its unruly behaviour, why is it, at the same time, ignoring the Rohingya crisis? And why could the Security Council not even pass a resolution on the plight of the Rohingyas? Isn't that the least it could do given the ground realities?

The UN has even acknowledged now that Myanmar's brutal military operation against Rohingyas amounts to ethnic cleansing. Yet, it has failed to take any discernible action to stop the horrors that the Rohingyas people are being exposed to. Does that not justify any action by the international community?

Will the UN and the international community just stand by and watch as Myanmar continues to persecute the Rohingyas? Will Myanmar be allowed to completely root out the Rohingya people from their own land? If so, the international community and the UN will lose much credibility in the eyes of the people of the world.

Ashek Sarker
 Chhagalnaiya Government College

Stop genocide, in the name of Buddha

CHINTITO SINCE 1995



Siddhartha Gautama Buddha, have embraced Buddhism as a lifestyle; so powerful has been its all-inclusive ideology.

Following his *dhyana* under the Bodhi Tree, an enlightened Gautama Buddha's Sermon at Benares marks the birth of Buddhism through the proclamation of the Four Noble Truths and the Eightfold Path. Since Myanmar's de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi and her supporters could not abandon desires (to unlawfully free their land from Rohingya Muslims), their sufferings will not end, and they will not attain Nirvana. They shall be endlessly reincarnated, whereby their *karma* of murder, rape, torture and ethnic cleansing will hardly merit a noble rebirth. They have strayed from Siddhartha's "*madhyampratipad*" (Middle Path). This is not me talking, it is Buddhism.

The noble ascetic taught us to believe in the Truth. Buddha would be greatly disappointed, as is the rest of the world, in Suu Kyi, who would rather learn from Donald Trump the art of hiding behind the veil of "fake news". The truth is the rape of many Salmas, the bullet-riddled bodies of many Rafiqs, and the unidentified corpses floating on river Naf in their dozens.

Nearly 313,000 Rohingya refugees, a stateless Muslim minority group, have fled to Bangladesh since August 25; hundreds have been killed, following a brutal Myanmar army crackdown triggered by attacks by Rohingya insurgents in Buddhist-majority Rakhine State. That influx is additional to the over 500,000 Rohingyas already sheltered in Bangladesh for decades as Myanmar denies them citizenship. Are they unreal? Are they a figment of the misinformed media's imagination?

Some Buddhist monks and local vigilantes in west Myanmar have not expressed Buddha's "right intent" of good, as opposed to evil, and have been involved in immoral and criminal acts of raping, looting, torturing, setting alight villages and killing. This for them is an unbelievable turnaround from the existence pursued by Buddhist reverends worldwide. Far detached from the teaching of the great religion, as practised around the world, including Bangladesh, those Buddhists in Myanmar are unable to "avoid untruth, slander and swearing"; Right Speech is the third path from which they have sadly deviated. They could not stay away from blameworthy behaviour, as world leaders and Noble Laureates are urging them to stop the

killing in Arakan. They have failed to channel their efforts towards the good and thereby contemplate the truth. Since the eighth path will result from following the noble Eightfold Path, many of them are perhaps only following that of Right Livelihood. Interestingly, killing of animals is despised in Buddhism.

It requires no convincing to understand that no one leaves home unless persecuted to the extreme. Muslim and even Hindu refugees have been crossing the 271 km-long border with Myanmar with bullet and hacking injuries. Despite the recent atrocities across our south-eastern border, and the ethnic flushing by terrorism over several decades being perpetuated by Rakhine Buddhists

humanity (*Sydney Morning Herald*). The Tibetan Buddhist leader revealed he has privately communicated with Suu Kyi "to use her influence to bring about a peaceful resolution to this problem." But, alas!

The *Washington Post*-AP reported last month that Pope Francis is decrying persecution of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and praying they receive "full rights". The pontiff said there was "sad news about the persecution of the religious minority of our Rohingya brothers."

As far back as November 2013, the United States Congress had urged "the Government of Burma (Myanmar) to end the persecution of the Rohingya people and respect internationally

extreme opposition to the Myanmar government and army, and those Arakanese responsible for the ruthless genocide, while at the same time offer people of all faiths an environment to continue to live in peace and communal harmony within our boundary. Depending on the escalation (or otherwise) of Myanmar's atrocities against its civilian population, we should chronologically undertake political and diplomatic lobbying, sever socio-cultural ties, cut off economic and trade relations, and keep our border guards and armed forces on highest alert to respond to any military contravention at the border.

The Myanmar Nobel Laureate's position has exposed the irony that not



The number of Rohingya refugee arrivals in Bangladesh sparked by the recent spate of violence in Myanmar stood at an estimated 3,13,000 as of yesterday—an increase of 19,000 in just 24 hours.

PHOTO: ANISUR RAHMAN

and the Myanmar Army, not a finger has ever been raised in revenge against the Buddhist community in the Hill Tracts or elsewhere.

Buddhists in Bangladesh, a minority by far, have been living in peace for centuries. Bangladesh and its people have the best of relations with Buddhist-majority countries of Bhutan, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Korea, and Japan. The Bangladeshi Buddhist community here has publicly and vehemently protested the Myanmar misdeeds. We are only that much more brotherly and humane.

In March this year, the Dalai Lama (the spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhists) joined Pope Francis in calling for Myanmar Buddhists to end violence against Rohingya Muslims in what the United Nations says amounts to ethnic cleansing and possibly crimes against

recognised human rights for all ethnic and religious minority groups within Burma." Around the same time, the UN General Assembly's human rights committee resolution also called on Myanmar to curb an increase in violence against Muslims since military rule ended in March 2011.

Counter to the well-recorded genocide in Rakhine, a sliver of public opinion is attempting to propagate that the Rohingya Muslims are also killing Buddhists and the so-called "local community". "It's not Buddhists killing Muslims in Myanmar, it's Rohingya Muslims killing Buddhists from 1947," wrote Ahinamo Kurasawa on October 30, 2016. We, including Desmond Tutu and Kofi Annan, however do not see or hear of any refugees from the local Buddhist community escaping to Naypyidaw or Yangon.

Our stance should be to adopt

all non-violent movements, if we can call her silence against the army during her house arrest that, have the footprint of a Gandhiji-like integrity, wisdom and determination. Some children are catapulted as leaders, if at all we can label her so, because of parental lineage. They remain silent because they fear the gun.

It is befitting here to quote Suu Kyi: "It is not power that corrupts but fear. Fear of losing power corrupts those who wield it and fear of the scourge of power corrupts those who are subject to it." And she again said, "The only real prison is fear, and the only real freedom is freedom from fear." She remains quiet because of fear. She remains a prisoner.

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Equity, justice, fairness and climate change

POLITICS OF CLIMATE CHANGE



problem has been caused by the emissions of the rich countries for several centuries but will primarily impact the poorest people and poorest countries.

Hence, when countries came together to discuss and agree to take actions under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) these principles were fundamental to the discussions.

However, the way in which each of these terms was perceived and addressed is very specific to the climate change issue. I will try to explain below how each principle is dealt with under the UNFCCC.

Let us start with the principle of equity. This is addressed under the UNFCCC under a famous phrase that goes like "common but differentiated responsibilities" (CBDR). This means that while acknowledging that tackling climate change is a common problem for all countries and hence every country needs to take actions, some countries (the richer countries) have nevertheless a greater responsibility as they have been the main beneficiaries of emissions for the last two centuries. This is also sometimes called their "historic responsibilities" for past emissions.

This principle has been accepted by the richer countries and the countries are named in Annex 1 of the UNFCCC (and they are sometimes referred to as the

"Annex 1 countries").

This principle was used in designing the Kyoto Protocol under the UNFCCC some years ago where the Annex 1 countries agreed to make commitments to reduce their greenhouse gas emissions while the non-Annex 1 countries did not have to do so.

The principle of justice, although related to equity, has a different meaning under the UNFCCC and involves different sets of countries. Whereas the principle of equity is used in the context of Annex 1 countries versus non-Annex 1

to reduce their emissions and also provide finance for adaptation to climate change.

So while the principle of equity is relevant to mitigation actions, and the argument is between the developed countries and the large developing countries (such as China and India), the principle of justice is relevant in the context of both mitigation as well as adaptation and involves the poorest and most vulnerable countries versus both the rich as well as large developing countries.



PHOTO: MUMINT M

countries, the principle of justice (or more accurately, injustice) is about the adverse impacts of climate change on poor people and countries whereas the problem has been created by the emissions of richer people and countries.

In this context, it is the poorest and most vulnerable developing countries, such as the Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Small Island Developing States (SIDS) and countries in Africa, who want all the major emitting countries (who now include large developing countries such as China and India) to take actions

The principle of justice has been incorporated in the Paris Agreement on climate change in two ways. First, by making it a universal agreement where all countries (not only the Annex 1 countries) have agreed to take actions to reduce their respective emissions.

The second way that the principle of justice is acknowledged is under the articles on Adaptation and on Loss and Damage, under which the poorest and most vulnerable countries are supposed to be funded to support them to tackle the adverse impacts of climate change.

The third principle, related to fairness is not so much an official article under the UNFCCC but rather a principle that underlies the way in which countries perceive the application of the other two principles, and fairness can be very subjective in its application. For example, the speech by US President Trump in the White House Rose Garden in which he announced his intention to withdraw from the Paris Agreement invoked the principle of fairness as he felt that the agreement was unfair to the US.

Hence, for any negotiating text to be agreed in the UNFCCC, it requires each country (and group of countries) to agree that the outcome is fair to them. If they do not feel it is fair, then they will not agree.

It is important to recall that while the UNFCCC is a formal global treaty between 195 sovereign nations, who have to agree on everything by consensus, the principles of equity, justice and fairness also have more general applications for all people. This is particularly important when considering the role of communities, companies and even individuals.

For example, in the hurricanes Harvey and Irma hitting the United States and the floods affecting Nepal, India and Bangladesh, the people and communities that are being affected most are the poorest, even in the US. And richer people and companies from these countries as well as from around the world are coming to their assistance. Therefore, the principles of equity, justice and fairness are fundamental for each and every one of us to both understand and agree on how to tackle the problems associated with human-induced climate change.

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