

Make Myanmar

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on December 10-12.
New evidence indicates how Myanmar authorities are using Rohingyas for slave labour, systematically restricting their freedom of movement and denying them the right to nationality. More than 500,000 Rohingyas now live in Myanmar's Rakhine State. "Forced labour and systematic restrictions on freedom of movement may constitute the infliction of conditions of life designed to destroy a group in whole or in part -- a prohibited act of genocide," said the Bangkok-based rights body. "Myanmar authorities are defiant and continue to violate the rights of Rohingyas. These ongoing violations aggravate the issue of genocide before the court and require urgent action," said Matthew Smith, chief executive officer at Fortify Rights that works on human rights in Southeast Asia. "We are confident the court will urgently and appropriately respond to the situation," he said in the statement.

The Gambia, on behalf of the 57-member Organisation of Islamic Conference (OIC), filed the lawsuit against Myanmar on November 11, accusing it of violating the UN Genocide Convention.

The move came more than two years after some 7,50,000 Rohingyas fled a brutal military campaign in Rakhine and took shelter in Bangladesh.

Gambia Attorney General and Justice Minister Abubacarr Marie Tambadou will lead a panel of lawyers on behalf of his country while Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi will head a team of counsels on behalf of her country at tomorrow's hearing.

In the lawsuit, the Gambia said Rohingyas have been facing persecution and discrimination for long. In October 2016, Myanmar military and security forces launched widespread and systematic "clearance operations" against the community.

From August 2017 onwards, such genocidal acts continued with Myanmar's resumption of "clearance operations" on a more massive and wider geographical scale.

The Gambia requested the court to "issue provisional measures to Myanmar as a matter of extreme urgency" and to "protect against further, irreparable harm to the rights of the Rohingya group under the Genocide Convention".

In previous cases, the ICJ indicated provisional measures when it found that it was "not inconceivable" that the violations in dispute might occur again and where the affected group remained at risk of additional violations. In the current case before the court, these conditions for provisional measures are met, said Fortify Rights.

FORCED LABOUR

Fortify Rights interviewed 12 Rohingya survivors of recent human rights violations in Rakhine, documenting seven cases of Rohingya forced labour by the Myanmar Army Light Infantry Battalions (LIBs) 551, 552, and 564 as well as the Border Guard Police (BGP) as recent as September this year in Buthidaung Township.

Citing an example, it said, on September 19, Myanmar Army personnel from LIB 551 entered Sindi Parang village, also known as Tha Pyay Taw, in Buthidaung Township, detained 30 men and boys, and forced them to carry military equipment for nearly the entire day without food or

water.

A Rohingya survivor, 35, told Fortify Rights, "[Soldiers] kicked and punched me more than seven times along the way. I was hit on my head. They beat me because I was not walking as fast as they wanted."

"They hit me on my head with the gun. One of the soldiers yelled, 'Move quickly. Move quickly'. When I was hit with the gun, I fell to my knees. My friend helped me stand up. I was very dizzy, and I had a hard time walking."

Soldiers also forced Rohingya boys, aged 13 to 14, to work as porters. "The boys were crying," a survivor told Fortify Rights. "They were struggling to carry the bags the military gave them."

RESTRICTIONS ON FREEDOM OF MOVEMENT

Myanmar continues to deny Rohingyas freedom of movement and arbitrarily detain those who attempt to travel outside their villages without official approval. These restrictions prevent Rohingyas from accessing health care, livelihoods and means of subsistence, said Fortify Rights.

For instance, on September 26, 2019, Myanmar police arrested a group of 30 Rohingyas in Irrawaddy region after they arrived by boat from Sittwe, where the government continues to confine more than 125,000 civilians, mostly Rohingyas, in more than 20 internment camps.

The police denied the 30 Rohingyas due process and access to lawyers, and on October 4, the Ngapudaw Township Court sentenced 21 of them to two years in Patheingyi prison. A Myanmar-based lawyer told Fortify Rights that the authorities prevented her from providing legal support for the detained Rohingyas.

Rohingyas frequently face arrest and prosecution for attempting to travel between townships or outside Rakhine, said the rights body.

It also documented how Myanmar authorities beat, extort, and arbitrarily detain Rohingyas at checkpoints and while travelling in Rakhine.

"Myanmar authorities enforce discriminatory restrictions on the right to freedom of movement against Rohingyas through a series of decades-old orders, which remain in effect."

Myanmar continues to deny Rohingyas the right to nationality. It coerced Rohingyas to accept National Verification Cards, which effectively identify them as "foreigners" and deprive them of access to full citizenship rights, read the statement.

"Rohingya in Myanmar are at grave risk," said Matthew Smith.

"The government continues to deny any violations against Rohingyas and is using the ICJ case to rouse nationalistic, anti-Rohingya sentiment at home, which could easily turn deadly. Provisional measures are certainly needed," he said.

Fortify Rights called upon the UN member states to support the ICJ case against Myanmar. It suggested that the UN Security Council urgently refer the situation in Myanmar to the International Criminal Court or create an ad hoc criminal tribunal.

"The international community should support all initiatives for justice as well as seek alternative solutions to the ongoing violations in Myanmar," said the CEO of the rights body.

"Every possible avenue for justice, accountability, and the protection of rights should be used without delay," he added.



Workers of Platinum Jute Mill in Khulna's Khalishpur area yesterday announce their hunger strike, which will begin from tomorrow and involve workers from across the nine-state owned mills, to press home their 11-point demand. The demands include implementation of the wage commission announced in 2015 and clearance of all arrears.

PHOTO: DIPANKAR ROY

Shut down all polluters

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report from the DoE.

Meanwhile, the Dhaka Water Supply and Sewerage Authority (Wasa) yesterday submitted an undertaking to the HC that said it would seal off all its drains and sewerage lines connected to the Buriganga and would file a progress report every month.

At that time, Dhaka Wasa Managing Director Taqsem A Khan unconditionally apologised to the HC bench for making an untrue statement about sewerage lines linked to the river.

He submitted a report before the HC on December 2, saying that there were 67 underground drains and sewerage lines connected to the Buriganga. But in an earlier report submitted on June 18 this year, he said no such lines were there.

The HC bench said this court would accept the Wasa MD's apology and exonerate him from the case proceedings after six months if the Wasa implemented its undertaking accordingly.

The apology petition will be kept in the case record until further order, the HC bench said.

During the proceedings on the petition filed by Human Rights and Peace for Bangladesh (HRPB) in 2010, the HC bench yesterday said if the Wasa and DoE were sincere and worked by forming separate teams, they could stop dumping of liquid waste into the Buriganga within a few days.

The court directed the authorities

to seal off all sewerage disposal lines in 2011, but it had to pass further order to implement its 2011 directive, the bench said.

The HC bench said Dhaka has become the most polluted city in the world.

"How will people breathe if the situation is not improved?" it said.

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) recently submitted a compliance report to the HC bench stating that 68 underground drains and sewerage lines were linked to the Buriganga.

On December 3, the HC bench observed that the Dhaka Wasa was responsible for controlling the 68 underground drains and sewerage lines, and Dhaka city corporations were responsible for the surface pipelines.

It also ordered the BIWTA to identify whether there were any waste disposal lines connected to the shores of the Buriganga in Dhaka, apart from the underground drains and sewerage lines, and to seal them off by January 7.

Aklas Uddin Bhuiyan and Ripan Barai stood for HRPB.

The owners and addresses of the 52 illegal washing plants identified by the DoE are: Md Mubarak Hossain, Achia Washing Plant, Jinzira Bus Stand, Keraniganj, Dhaka; Md Rafique, Al-Amin Washing, Bashpatty, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Taki Ullah, Dhaka Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; Belal Hossain, Azan Washing, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Khalilur Rahman, Five

Star Washing, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Baser, Shonali Washing, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Delwar Hossain, New Sahara Washing, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Kamrul, Mayer Dua Washing, Chunkutia, Hizla, Keraniganj; Md Amir Hossain, Parjoar Washing, Bashpatty, Keraniganj; Md Rasel, Unique Washing, Jinzira, Keraniganj; Md Mujibur Rahman, Megha Washing, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Md Kopil Uddin, Tintara Washing, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Munna, Sayma Washing, Aganagar, Berek Road, Keraniganj; Md Amir Hamza, Moynamou Washing, Kaliganj Bazar Road, Keraniganj; Md Sultan Shikdar, Setu Washing, Kaliganj Bazar Road, Keraniganj; Md Riad, Jilani Washing Plant, Char Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Ramjan Hossain, Rajdhani Washing Plant, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Zakir, Hawladar Washing Plant, Char Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Kazi Abu Sohail, Tamanna Washing Plant, Char Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Uzziel, New Madina Washing, Char Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Delwar Hossain, Al Madina Washing, Char Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Rafique, Bismillah Washing, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Md Amirul Islam, Water Colour Washing, Bashpatty, Aganagar, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Fazlu Khalashi, Dohar Washing, Jinzira, Keraniganj; Madul Hazi, Bismillah Washing, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Md Jahangir Hossain, Shraboni Washing, Beribadh, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Md Abul Bashar, Insuf Washing, Ambagicha, Keraniganj; Md Ibrahim, Sunmoon

Washing, Hazi Abdur Berek Road, Keraniganj; Md Shami Ullah, New Nasha Washing, Jhawbari, Chunkutia, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Md Anwar, Aysha Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; Md Mujibur Rahman, Mayer Dua Washing, Hijoltola, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; Md Abdur Rouf Chanchal, Chanchal Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; Md Nur Alam, Lotus Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; a washing factory owned by Md Salek in Keraniganj; Md Babu, Global Washing, Abdur Berek Road, Keraniganj; Md Masud, Royal Washing, Hasnabad, Keraniganj; Md Ahmed, Ahmed Washing, Abdur Berek Road, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Md Hossain, Relative Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; Md Emam, Ma-Babar Dua Washing, Kaliganj, Keraniganj; Suman Talukdar, Lily Washing, Jinzira, Keraniganj; Md Joni, Jhorna Washing, Mohuripatti, Keraniganj; Md Sohail, BLT Washing, Keraniganj; Nat Miah, City Washing, Pargenderia, Keraniganj; Md Mamun, Greenland Washing, Doleshawar, Keraniganj; Md Sohag, Four Star Washing, Keraniganj; Md Rasel, Bikrampur Washing, Kochi Saha Road, Aganagar, Keraniganj; Md Jewel, SB Washing, Aminbazar, Keraniganj; Md Titu, ATM Washing, Pargenderia, Keraniganj; Md Badiuzzaman, Sifat Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj; Zillur Rahman, Quality Washing, Jinzira, Keraniganj; Md Jamal, Allah Rasul Washing, Aminbazar, Mohuripatti, Keraniganj; and Md Monir, Asif Washing, Chunkutia, Keraniganj.

On this day in 1971

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four sides. On the east, a faction is advancing towards Ashuganj, Daudkandi and Chandpur. On the west, a faction reaches the bank of Madhumati River. Another group frees Kushtia and is heading towards Goalanda. The final section reaches near Mymensingh from Haluaghat.

Pakistani representative for the UN General Assembly Mahmud Ali returns to Pakistan and meets President Yahya Khan. In a press conference, he criticises Soviet Union's stance. He says that the USSR should have stopped supporting India for the sake of global peace. Praising the stances of US and China, he says, "Pakistan thanks you for your historical and brave support."

An Indian brigade attacks Jamalpur in the afternoon. A few companies of Mukti Bahini and another group of

Indian army join the brigade from the left and right parts of the districts after crossing the Brahmaputra River reaching the southern bank. Later, Indian air force drops a few thousand tonnes of bombs on Pakistani bases for an hour. Almost 600 Pakistan military men are arrested by the allied force while they retreat.

Field Marshal Manekshaw advises Pakistani soldiers to surrender weapons. He says that the Indian troops have entered Bangladesh. "Surrender if you want to live, or else, you will be killed brutally," he says.

Newly appointed Pakistani Prime Minister Nurul Amin addresses the nation via Radio Pakistan. He asks the nation to stand united against the Indian "attack and intrigues". Criticising the allied force's activities, he says that thousands of civilians have been killed in their attacks.

Air strikes kill five pro-Iran fighters in Syria

AFP, Beirut

Air strikes by unidentified warplanes have killed five pro-Iran fighters in Syria's eastern province of Deir Ezzor near the Iraqi border, a Britain-based war monitor said yesterday.

The strikes late Saturday targeted "positions of Iranian forces and allied militias" on the edge of the town of Albukamal, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

"Five non-Syrian fighters were killed," Observatory chief Rami Abdel Rahman told AFP, without being able to provide their nationalities.

Regime troops, Iranian forces and allied Iran-backed fighters, including

from Iraq, are present in the area on the western banks of the Euphrates River, he said.

According to the Observatory, 10 Iraqi fighters were killed in September in air strikes of unknown origin in the same area.

At the start of that month, air raids killed 18 pro-Iran fighters, the monitor reported.

In June 2018, strikes near the Iraqi border killed 55 pro-regime forces, mostly Syrians and Iraqis, the Observatory said.

An American official said at the time that Israel was responsible, but the Jewish state declined to comment.



Bangladeshi rock star James performs during the opening ceremony of the Bangabandhu Bangladesh Premier League T20 in the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in the capital yesterday.

PHOTO: FIROZ AHMED