

October 20, 2020

The Honorable Michael R. Pompeo Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW

Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to you as 35 organizations deeply concerned about the plight of the Rohingya people. We are grateful that the United States will be co-hosting a global donor conference this month to rally support for the ongoing immense humanitarian needs in Burma and Bangladesh for this persecuted ethnic and religious minority. We urge you to use this moment not only to increase humanitarian funding but to publicly acknowledge the reality of what has happened to the Rohingya people and call it genocide.

Such a step would not only acknowledge the truth of what has happened but would also help to rally further humanitarian assistance. It would also demonstrate solidarity with the governments of Bangladesh and other refugee hosting countries, signaling the United States is committed both to accountability and supporting conditions for safe and voluntary return when conditions so permit.

Finally, a genocide determination would send a sense of urgency to spur the kind of multi-lateral diplomatic engagement and pressure needed to ensure that Burma refrains from committing further atrocities against ethnic and religious minorities and, ultimately, creates the conditions conducive to the safe, voluntary, informed, and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to their place of origin.

Recognition of the nature of what happened to the Rohingya is steadily growing. In August, as the world marked three years from the mass expulsion of the Rohingya from Burma, we delivered a petition to you signed by some 9,000 individuals and supported by more than 80 organizations. The petition urged you to publicly determine that the state of Burma has committed genocide and crimes against humanity against the Rohingya people. That call has been echoed by bi-partisan Members of Congress, legal and human rights experts, and numerous faith-based organizations.

The evidence of genocide and crimes against humanity is clear and convincing and has been amply documented by the UN Fact-finding mission, the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum, independent human rights groups, and your own State Department.

As the State Department takes the world stage to kick off the international Rohingya donor conference, this reality must be acknowledged and the opportunity to galvanize international support must not be lost. U.S. leadership matters. Now is the time to call it genocide.

Sincerely,

1. ALTSEAN-Burma
2. Arakan Rohingya Development Association – Australia
3. Arakan Rohingya National Organization
4. Arakan Rohingya Union
5. Burma Campaign UK
6. Burma Human Rights Network
7. Burma Rohingya Association of Japan
8. Burma Rohingya Organization UK
9. Burma Task Force
10. Burmese Rohingya Association of North America
11. Burmese Rohingya Community in Denmark
12. Canadian Burmese Rohingya Organization
13. Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative
14. Christian Solidarity Worldwide
15. European Rohingya Council
16. Fortify Rights
17. Genocide Watch
18. Global Centre for the Responsibility to Protect
19. Global Witness
20. HIAS
21. Institute for Asian Democracy
22. International Campaign for the Rohingya
23. International State Crime Initiative (ISCI), Queen Mary University of London
24. Jewish World Watch
25. Justice for All
26. Progressive Voice
27. Refugees International
28. Restless Beings
29. Rohingya Association of Canada
30. Rohingya Human Rights Monitoring Network
31. Rohingya Human Rights Network
32. Rohingya Khobor
33. Rohingya Society in Malaysia
34. Rohingya Youth for Legal Action
35. Unitarian Universalist Service Committee