



**ANNI Statement: Burma/Myanmar Must Protect Human Rights for All and Ensure Independent Investigations into Alleged Violations in Rakhine State**

(Bangkok, 27 November 2016) - The Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI), together with its member, Progressive

Voice,<sup>1</sup> is deeply concerned over the human rights situation in Rakhine State of Burma/Myanmar. We strongly urge the Government to abide by its international responsibility to protect human rights in its territory, and call on the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission (MNHRC) to undertake its protection mandate with a heightened level of vigilance and independence.

Since security operation was launched in October 2016 in Rakhine State, an estimated number of 30,000 people have been displaced and over 100 people have been killed as a result from this operation.<sup>2</sup> More than 150,000 people, who normally receive humanitarian aid, have been deprived of food and medical aid. Moreover, 3,000 children, diagnosed with malnutrition, have not received treatment. Half of them are at serious risk of death.<sup>3</sup> According to the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), other serious human rights violations are occurring as well, including torture, rape and sexual assault, summary executions, and the destruction of mosques and homes.<sup>4</sup>

Impartial and independent investigations to address the allegations of these serious human rights violations are of vital importance at this stage of the conflict, which was also recognised by the United Nations (UN) Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee.<sup>5</sup> While we welcome the decision by the State Counsellor-headed Committee for the Implementation of Peace and Development in Rakhine State, on forming a task-force to investigate the situation on the alleged human rights abuses,<sup>6</sup> we call on the Government to ensure that this task-force will be independent in its investigation processes and substantially involve a wide range of stakeholders including human rights groups, the UN, and the international community in its efforts. We urge the Government to immediately allow humanitarian and human rights workers, as well as independent observers and journalists, to enter the conflict area to investigate.

Related to human rights protection in Burma/Myanmar, we are also deeply concerned over the failure of the MNHRC to intervene in the situation, which is contradictory to its mandate for greater promotion and protection of human rights in Burma/Myanmar. ANNI therefore wishes to echo one of the points from the last accreditation review of the MNHRC by the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI), in which the SCA encouraged the

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<sup>1</sup> Progressive Voice is a participatory, rights-based policy research and advocacy organization that was born out of Burma Partnership. Burma Partnership officially ended its work on October 10, 2016, transitioning to Progressive Voice.

<sup>2</sup> Myanmar Times, [New taskforce to be formed to investigate Rakhine violence](#)

<sup>3</sup> TIME, [Burma Is Pursuing 'Ethnic Cleansing' of Rohingya Muslims, U.N. Official Says](#)

<sup>4</sup> OHCHR, [Myanmar: UN urges aid access, warns of rights violations after 'lockdown' in northern Rakhine state](#)

<sup>5</sup> ibid

<sup>6</sup> Myanmar Times, [New taskforce to be formed to investigate Rakhine violence](#)

MNHRC to promote and protect the human rights of all, including of Rohingya and other minority groups.<sup>7</sup>

During this fragile time of transition towards a democratic Burma/Myanmar, the MNHRC is needed more than ever to keep up with its mandate and address concerns on human rights violations, including those occurring as a result of armed conflict. The MNHRC should be able to play a role in the peace-making efforts in Rakhine State. Added to this is also the reality that the Chairperson of MNHRC sits as a member of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State led by Kofi Annan.

The recent level of conflict in Rakhine State has made it imperative for the Government of Myanmar to take all necessary measures to put an end to the alleged atrocities in its territory. To make that possible, the MNHRC must take a more active and independent role in ensuring the protection of human rights in Burma/Myanmar, including the monitoring of abuses and violations under all circumstances.

**About the Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI):**

*The Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) was established in December 2006. It is a network of Asian non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders working on issues related to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). ANNI has members that are national organisations from all over Asia. ANNI currently has 33 member organisations from 21 countries or territories. The work of ANNI members focuses on strengthening the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights as well as to advocate for the improved compliance of Asian NHRIs with international standards, including the Paris Principles and General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI).*

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<sup>7</sup> GANHRI-SCA, [Report and Recommendations of the Session of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation \(SCA\)](#)