



RESPONSE TO PETITION

Prepare in English and French marking 'Original Text' or 'Translation'

PETITION No.: **421-02569**

BY: **Ms. BLANEY (NORTH ISLAND-POWELL RIVER)**

DATE: **JUNE 20, 2018**

PRINT NAME OF SIGNATORY: **SIGNED BY THE HONOURABLE CHRYSSTIA FREELAND**

Response by the Minister of Foreign Affairs

SIGNATURE

Minister or Parliamentary Secretary

SUBJECT

MYANMAR

ORIGINAL TEXT

REPLY

Canada continues to be seized by the unacceptable persecution of Rohingya communities in Myanmar, and remains deeply concerned by the situation in Rakhine State and the forced displacement of more than 722,000 Rohingya since August 25, 2017.

The return of the Rohingya to their rightful homes in Myanmar must be safe, voluntary, dignified, and sustainable. It is the Government of Canada's assessment that these conditions do not exist at present. Canada continues to call on the Government of Myanmar to grant full and unimpeded access to international and United Nations (UN) organizations to allow monitoring of eventual returns and to provide humanitarian assistance in Rakhine.

Canada's position on the gross human rights violations, including sexual and gender based violence, perpetrated against the Rohingya is firm and clear. There is evidence that violations have been committed systematically and on a large scale. These are crimes against humanity. Canada will continue to advocate for the perpetrators of atrocities and gross human rights violations and abuses to be held to account. Canada will be working closely with domestic, regional, and international partners to establish a pathway towards accountability, including supporting existing efforts. On February 18, 2018, I announced targeted sanctions against Major General Maung Maung Soe, under the Justice for Victims of Corrupt Officials Act. I also announced targeted sanctions against seven Myanmar nationals on June 25, 2018, under the

Special Economic Measures (Burma) Regulations, in coordination with the European Union. Such sanctions are a result of the significant role played by these key military officials in human rights violations against the Rohingya in Myanmar.

Canadian representatives take every opportunity to raise the issue in international forums including the G7, the Commonwealth, and the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC). During my visit to Bangladesh for the OIC Foreign Ministers meeting in May 2018, I visited the refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar and observed the horrific conditions in which the Rohingya live. Canada also remains engaged with Myanmar in order to continue to advocate for the rights of the Rohingya through open dialogue.

The Prime Minister appointed the Honourable Bob Rae as Special Envoy to Myanmar in October 2017. Mr. Rae released his final report on April 3, 2018, with recommendations on how Canada can best support efforts to respond to the needs of those affected and displaced by the recent violence.

Informed by the specific recommendations contained in Mr. Rae's report, Canada announced its Strategy to Respond to the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar and Bangladesh on May 23, 2018. Canada will take bold steps to address the crisis in areas where it can make a difference, focusing on four core objectives: alleviating the humanitarian crisis; encouraging positive political developments in Myanmar; promoting accountability for the crimes committed; and enhancing international cooperation.

Canada will dedicate \$300 million of international assistance funding over the next three years to cover a comprehensive range of humanitarian, development, peace and stabilization, and accountability needs. This will help improve the living conditions for Rohingya refugees in camps and settlements, support host communities in Bangladesh to mitigate the impact of the crisis, and address the needs of displaced and other vulnerable and conflict-affected populations in Myanmar. Since the beginning of 2017, Canada has already provided close to \$46 million in humanitarian assistance for crisis affected populations in Bangladesh and Myanmar. Additionally, as part of the Myanmar Crisis Relief Fund initiative, Canadians generously donated more than \$12.5 million to registered charities to respond to the Rohingya crisis.

Canada's response puts a central emphasis on the needs of women and girls. In line with Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy, Canada supports gender responsive humanitarian action through experienced partners, which comprises psychosocial assistance and critical health-care services, including sexual and reproductive health and gender based violence related programming.

Canada supports efforts to achieve a political solution to the plight of the Rohingya and other ethnic minorities in Myanmar. Through sustained diplomatic engagement and targeted programming, Canada promotes human rights, inclusion, respect for diversity, inclusive democracy and security for all in Myanmar. Canada uses all diplomatic tools at its disposal to ensure that the Government of Myanmar maintains its commitment to the implementation without delay of the recommendations made in August 2017 by the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, chaired by former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan, in order to foster lasting peace and security in Rakhine State.

Canada is also working with international partners to end impunity and supports initiatives that ensure the proper collection of evidence for legal proceedings. Canada is exploring all avenues to bring the perpetrators of gross human rights violations and abuses to justice. Canada has begun consultations with partners to consider several specific actions and initiatives, including advocating for the establishment, or extension, of appropriate types of accountability mechanisms.

Canada will encourage expanded international cooperation in response to the crisis. Canada is spearheading efforts at the UN and in other multilateral institutions to build political will and coordinate international efforts to address this crisis. Canada is continuing to leverage its 2018 G7 presidency to garner and sustain international engagement on the situation.

UN High Commissioner for Refugees is a key partner in Canada's commitment to address the needs of refugees. From January through May 2018, Canada's global, regional and country specific support to the High Commissioner for Refugees totalled \$76.1 million, including \$950,000 to help provide lifesaving and gender responsive humanitarian action to Rohingya refugees and address some of the challenges they may face in the coming months, during the monsoon season. Canada is also a strong voice for increased international solidarity and support for refugees. Resettlement is an important component of Canada's broader humanitarian assistance efforts; however long-term protection issues must ultimately be tackled through a coordinated and multi-faceted approach to addressing the root cause of situations of forced displacement. Canada will work with the UNHCR to determine the appropriate timing for resettlement efforts and to identify families and individuals for resettlement.

Canada stands ready to continue to support Myanmar's peace process, facilitate the continuation of Myanmar's democratic transition, promote human rights for all and contribute positively to reforms with a view to secure and maintain an inclusive, diverse, peaceful and stable society.