



Foreign &
Commonwealth
Office

King Charles Street
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Sir Jeremy Greenstock
Chairman, UNA-UK
3 Whitehall Court
London
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Thank you for your letter of 13 December to Baroness Warsi on behalf of the United Nations Association - UK about the ongoing situation in Rakhine State, Burma. I am replying as Minister responsible for our relations with Burma.

We share your concerns about the unrest in Rakhine State. The British Government continues to be one of the most vocal and active members of the international community in supporting those calling for human rights and democracy in Burma, including in respect to the rights of the Rohingya community in western Burma.

I visited Burma in December of last year, travelling to to Rakhine State to see the situation there for myself. I was able to witness the conditions in five camps and settlements for internally displaced persons, including camps at Myebon and Pauktaw. I also visited Baw Du Pha camp, just outside of Sittwe, to see a project funded by the Department for International Development (DFID), and the World Food Programme's distribution centre. In Sittwe, I spoke to local leaders of both Rohingya Muslim and Rakhine Buddhist communities to listen to their concerns, and also visited the Aung Mingala Muslim quarter and Shwe Zedi Monastery to hear the views of local religious and community leaders.

In meetings with senior members of the Burmese government at both national and local level, I pressed for increased and equitable humanitarian aid access to all communities in need, for those responsible for the violence to be brought to account,

including where security forces have been implicated, and for a long-term solution to the issues affecting the Rohingya to include consideration of the issue of citizenship. I subsequently called on the government to ensure that its coordination efforts include the UN to ensure that humanitarian assistance can be provided more effectively to those in need.

In a meeting with the Investigative Commission set up to probe the cause of the recent violence in Rakhine State, I was informed that they had been given free access to conduct their research, visiting both Rakhine and Rohingya camps. I was told that the publication of the Commission's report has been delayed in order to incorporate findings on the violence of late October. I made clear that investigations into alleged atrocities must be transparent and thorough, ensuring that those who have committed crimes are held to account for their actions.

In addition to UK contributions to programmes run by the UN and EU in Rakhine State, on 31 October the British Government committed £2 million to supply urgent humanitarian assistance to the communities affected by the unrest. Our priority is to support the delivery of aid to these communities, particularly those which are least accessible. The Burmese government has now committed to ensuring that aid reaches those who need it. So far, the government has also allowed independent observers from foreign governments and international organisations to visit the areas affected by the violence.

Please be assured that we continue to raise the plight of the Rohingya at every opportunity. Our Prime Minister has invited President Thein Sein to visit the UK. Should President Thein Sein take up this invitation, the visit will be an opportunity to engage him on the many outstanding issues of concern.

Mikaela Swire
Yours ever,
Hugo

THE RT HON HUGO SWIRE MP
Minister of State