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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by Stichting Global Human Rights Defence, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[03 June 2019]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.



UN investigation needed: Forced religious conversion of Rohingya Hindus

Global Human Rights Defence (GHRD) has investigated the violence faced by minority (Hindu) Rohingyas in Myanmar and condemns the attacks carried out by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). The situation of Hindu Rohingyas is worsening and there is an immediate need to ensure protection for the minority community. GHRD has collected the following information through independent fact finding and investigation and would like to bring it to the attention of the United Nations.

Attack on 27 August 2017 in Myanmar

On 27 August 2017, a group of 50 - 70 Muslim men, allegedly belonging to the ARSA, set up a blockade before the Hindu village at the Fakirabazaar in Myanmar. The men, who spoke in Burmese and Bangla languages, were covered in black masks and went from door to door abducting the male members of the Hindu families, beat them and then slaughtered them with sharp weapons. A total of 122 people belonging to the minority community were killed as a result of the violence.

The Hindu women were then questioned by the attackers about whether they would convert to Islam. The women were forced to agree to the demands of the perpetrators in order to save their own lives. They were then taken to the forest along with ARSA men, forcefully converted to Islam and forcibly married to the perpetrators. The women then accompanied the men into Bangladesh as their wives. On arrival in Bangladesh, the members of the Hindu community were able to identify them and rescue them from the perpetrators, with the help of the local minority community in Bangladesh. There are currently 532 Rohingya Hindus settled near the Kutupalaong Hindu Camp near Loknath Temple, Ukhiya, Cox's Bazaar in Bangladesh.

Forced conversion and marriage of underage Hindu girls

On 20th September 2017, 2 underage girls belonging to the minority community were abducted in Myanmar by certain members of the majority Muslim community, and forcibly converted and married to adult men. The girls were identified by members of the minority community when they were on their way to the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh. The community members informed the local Hindu community in Bangladesh, who managed to secure the release of the minor girls.

GHRD has reports of 9 women (7 minor girls and 2 women) from the minority community who have been raped in the camp. Women have been forced to stay inside the premises, unable to move around, because they fear for their life if they go out alone. There is an immediate need to ensure security for the minority Hindu Rohingyas.

Violence and religious discrimination within the camp

On 7 October 2017, a few men belonging to the majority Muslim community who are alleged to have links with the ARSA, approached members of the minority Hindu community who had sought refuge in the camp. The perpetrators claimed that that when the minority community fled to Bangladesh, they had left their cattle and other belongings in Myanmar, which has been taken over by their relatives who lived in Myanmar. The perpetrators invited some members of the Hindu community to come to their camp in Bhalukali, so that they can be compensated for their loss. 11 members of the Hindu community went to the Bhalukali camp which is 5-6 kms away from the Hindu camp.

When the Hindus arrived at the Muslim Rohingya camp, 35-40 men belonging to the majority community barricaded the exit, and they started beating and kicking the Hindus. When one of the members of the majority community tried to stop the perpetrators, the

attackers turned on him. 7 of the Hindus were able to escape in the resulting chaos, however, 4 of them were captured by the perpetrators.

The perpetrators claimed that they will release the captured persons if they receive money from the Hindu community. Of the 4 people captured, 2 minor boys managed to escape and return to the Hindu camp, while the other 2 men were killed by the perpetrators.

In April 2019, 2 men from the Hindu Rohingya community were physically attacked by men belonging to the majority Muslim Rohingya community when they had gone out to the market.

Inability to approach the police and other local authorities

The minority Hindu Rohingyas are unable to approach the police authorities, as they do not have the necessary documents and they fear that they will be deported back to Myanmar if they approach the police to seek a legal remedy for the crimes committed against them.

Additionally, they also fear that the members of the majority community would try to seek out the women to ensure that they are repatriated with the perpetrators. As a result of this, the victims are unable to seek justice from the police and local authorities.

Minorities living in fear

The Hindu minorities are currently living in a state of fear. Members of the Hindu community are threatened by the majority Muslim Rohingya community to not carry out pujas. They are constantly living under a state of fear and are unable to freely exercise their freedom of religion or belief.

Recommendations

GHRD would like to propose the following recommendations;

- ARSA members are present in the majority Muslim Rohingya camps and are actively working. This raises serious security concerns for the Rohingya Hindu minorities who constitute the most vulnerable community in Bangladesh and Myanmar. There is an immediate need to ensure greater security for the minority Hindu Rohingya camp in Bangladesh.
 - There is also need for greater humanitarian aid and assistance for the Hindu minorities, as they are in need of food and other essential supplies.
 - GHRD also calls upon the UN Human Rights system to investigate the international crimes committed by ARSA and hold the non-state actors responsible for their actions.
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