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PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council Statement in Response to the 53rd Session of the Human Rights Council Panel Discussion on the Ongoing Rohingya Crisis

The Public International Law & Policy Group's Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council releases this statement in light of the upcoming 53rd Session of the Human Rights Council's panel discussion on the measures necessary to find durable solutions to the Rohingya crisis and to end all forms of human rights violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

The Circle recalls that the United Nations has described the Rohingya as “the most persecuted minority in the world.” Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar have faced decades of discrimination and human rights abuses, including deprivation of citizenship, systemic poverty, restrictions on movement and access to health and education, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, forced labor, and sexual and gender-based violence, amongst other violations.

In 2017, the Rohingya endured a campaign of brutal violence and forced displacement at the hands of the Myanmar military, causing an estimated 800,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee their homes in Rakhine State to Bangladesh. The Myanmar military's campaign involved the mass killing of civilians, appalling sexual and gender-based violence, and the razing of hundreds of Rohingya villages.

An estimated 600,000 Rohingya live in Rakhine State and continue to experience systematic persecution and abuses. Widespread violence continues in Myanmar, particularly since the 2021 coup by Myanmar's ruthless military junta. There is evidence of the junta's targeted and indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations as well as the continued denial of rights to the Rohingya, further fuelling Rohingya and other minorities' internal displacement and forcing rising numbers to attempt the life-threatening journey over land and sea to other countries.

The Circle recognizes the PILPG report, *Documenting Atrocity Crimes Committed Against the Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State* which has been cited and drawn from in the years since its publication, including by the International Criminal Court in its decision to launch an investigation into the alleged crimes committed against the Rohingya. PILPG's report drew upon PILPG's unprecedented, large-scale, and comprehensive human rights documentation investigation mission in the refugee camps and settlement areas of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh in March and April of 2018, seeking to account for the abuse and atrocity crimes committed against the Rohingya in Rakhine State, Myanmar. The investigation collected over 15,000 pages of documentation from 1,024 interviews conducted by PILPG and produced a comprehensive legal

analysis of the factual findings alongside international attorneys and international criminal law experts, culminating in PILPG's report.

PILPG's work with the Rohingya and reports from other actors reflect ongoing and escalating violence and human rights violations in Myanmar, which continue to prevent the voluntary, safe, and dignified return of Rohingya to their homes in Rakhine State. In March of 2023, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights reiterated Myanmar's profound violations of human rights, and highlighted an escalating and dire humanitarian emergency and the continued impunity of the military junta in Myanmar. The Office of the High Commissioner's latest report found evidence of the continued persecution of those Rohingya remaining in Myanmar, and concluded that conditions in Myanmar's Rakhine State remain un conducive to the safe, dignified, sustainable, and voluntary return of Rohingya refugees.

Six years after the events of 2017, approximately 900,000 Rohingya refugees reside in the Cox's Bazar region of Bangladesh in the world's largest refugee camp. In Bangladesh, PILPG continues to work with Rohingya civil society leaders to develop plans for community-led documentation of atrocity crimes, aiming to empower the community through capacity building and fostering connections between Rohingya leaders and international justice mechanisms.

In response to the ongoing Rohingya crisis, the PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council:

- Condemns in the strongest of terms the reported ongoing violence and persecution of Rohingya in Myanmar at the hands of the Myanmar military
- Supports the UN Security Council's adoption of resolution 2669 (2022), and echoes the demand for the immediate end to all forms of violence throughout the country, the urgent need to address the root causes of the crisis in Rakhine State, and to create the conditions necessary for the voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees and internally displaced persons
- Expresses concern regarding the latest cut in United Nations World Food Programme food rations provided to refugees in Bangladesh due to lack of adequate funding, which will have a devastating impact on malnutrition, infant mortality, and violence in the camps
- Recognizes the contribution and challenges of the Government and people of Bangladesh to support Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, and acknowledges with positivity the Human Rights Council's upcoming panel discussion on the measures necessary to find durable solutions to the Rohingya crisis and to end all forms of human rights violations and abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar
- Encourages the continuation of diplomatic efforts between the parties concerned, including regional actions to help solve the Rohingya crisis
- Calls upon members to show moral and financial support for the grass-roots democratic and human rights movement in Myanmar, and highlights the importance of democratic political leadership in Myanmar for legislative changes that might establish Myanmar as safe for the return of refugees

- Calls for members to follow the efforts to date to implement targeted economic and political sanctions and arms embargoes on the Myanmar military and security forces and its businesses
- Calls on members of the Human Rights Council and the United Nations to show full and comprehensive support to efforts aimed at seeking justice for the Rohingya people, including efforts to ensure legal accountability at the international level at the International Court of Justice, brought by the Gambia; the International Criminal Court; the investigative work of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar; and efforts taken at the national level in third states, including Argentina, Germany, Indonesia and Turkey.

The PILPG Circle of Former Ambassadors to the UN Human Rights Council remains attentive to international efforts to find a durable, dignified, voluntary, and safe solution to the devastating Rohingya crisis, including the efforts of the Human Rights Council in the upcoming 53rd Session. The Circle calls upon members to continue to work towards implementation and enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights, and to collaborate with the Government of Bangladesh, the wider United Nations, and international and national organizations, in the pursuit of this goal.

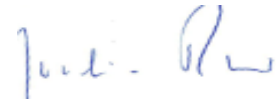
The Circle stands in solidarity with the Rohingya people, and supports all endeavors to achieve justice for the crimes committed against the Rohingya and establish safe, dignified, and voluntary repatriation to Myanmar, when conditions in Myanmar are conducive to this.

June 20, 2023.

Zorica Maric Djordjevic
Former Ambassador of Montenegro, Chair



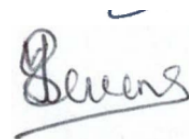
Dr. Joachim Rücker
Former Ambassador of Germany



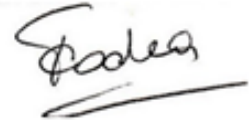
Keith Harper
Former Ambassador of the United States of America



Yvette Stevens
Former Ambassador of Sierra Leone



Filloreta Kodra
Former Ambassador of Albania



Tudor Ulianovschi
Former Ambassador of the Republic of Moldova

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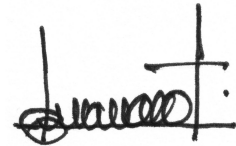
Amanda Ellis
Former Ambassador of New Zealand



Vojislav Suc
Former Ambassador of Slovenia



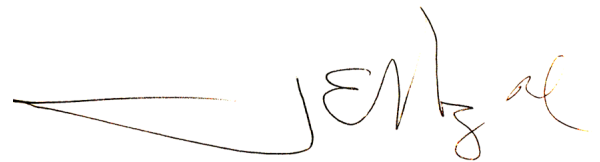
Jorge Lomonaco
Former Ambassador of Mexico



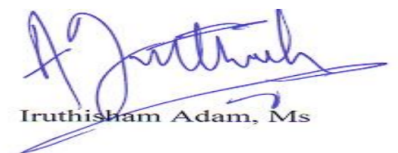
Francisco Villagrán de León
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Juan Esteban Aguirre
Former Ambassador of Paraguay



Dr. Iruthisham Adam
Former Ambassador of the Maldives



Iruthisham Adam, Ms