

ARAKAN NATIONAL PARTY BRIEFING PAPER

The Arakan National Party (ANP) is a political party in Myanmar, which represents the interest of the Rakhine people within the Rakhine State and the Yangon Region. The Rakhine people are the Buddhist, ethnic majority in this region. The ANP was founded in early 2014, after the Rakhine Nationalities Development Party (RNNDP) and the Arakan League for Democracy (ALD) signed a merging arrangement to combine the two parties into one unified political party. As such, the 'Arakan National Party' was formed, and it is led by its chairman, Dr. Aye Maung. Currently, the ANP holds the majority of seats in the state assembly.

The ANP promotes an extremely xenophobic rhetoric, and it has a specifically anti-Rohingya and islamophobic platform. In response to the Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar, the ANP does not accept the international community's use of the term, 'stateless.' The ANP aphoristically claims that the Rohingya are a Bangladeshi people, with the same geographical origins, religion, race, perceptions, and traditions as the modern people of Bangladesh. As such, the common belief among the ANP is that the Rohingya should not be living within the Rakhine State.

The ANP aims to:

- 1) Form its own autonomous government;
- 2) Move the Rohingya people into camps or deport them from the region;
- 3) Win the powerful post of Chief Minister of Rakhine;
- 4) Place further restrictions on the Muslim population;
- 5) Have a stronger voice in the new parliament.

Under its 2008 Constitution, Myanmar has a multiparty democratic system, but substantial political power still rests with the military. As the Arakan National Party, we

represent the interest of the Rakhine people, who are deeply rooted in Buddhism and have lived in the Rakhine state for a long time. Of the 48 seats in Rakhine's regional parliament, the ANP won 23 seats and the NLD 12, while the military occupies 12 seats. Due to the general consensus, we believe that the ANP deserve the right to govern our own state. As the current situation holds, we do not believe that our voice is fully represented. Instead, we have been discriminated against by the central government.

In 2017, when the insurgent Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked Myanmar forces in the northern Rakhine State, our citizens and state suffered the major attack and the devastation in the aftermath. The only action that the NLD government has taken in response was to establish an international advisory commission to find long-term problems, which did not solve the problem at hand. We are greatly disappointed on how vaguely the NLD government handled the situation. As victims of the attack, we did not receive the recognition and help that we deserved. The NLD government had also yielded too much to Western pressure and was counting on foreign service to solve domestic problems, which is highly inefficient and detrimental to address problems which require the involvement of local and regional actors. We would like to request from the national government to grant the Rakhine state its own state sovereignty. Religious and ethnic-based nationalism is critical to the protection of race and religion. In order to solve the Rakhine State conundrum, the national government must listen to the Rakhine people's voice.

The Rakhine state is a highly underdeveloped region in Myanmar. Especially since communal violence took place in 2012, the Rakhine state was left in a state of ruins and destruction. In order to accommodate the daily lives of our citizens we need to reconstruct destroyed facilities and infrastructures, such as roads, hospitals, and schools. Implementing these

developmental structures also help to reshape the region to accommodate more security forces, so that not another insurgent attack goes unattended and disregarded. Improving the Rakhine state's economy is an essential step to better the overall economic stability of Myanmar. Rakhine state is surrounded with rich culture and natural resources. Its strategic location creates potential opportunities for tourism, agriculture, livestock and fishery investment in the area. We encourage foreign investment in our state, and we believe international collaboration in the oil and gas industries are important for the development of the Rakhine state. As a whole, Myanmar's economy rests on the resolution of problems in Rakhine. If Rakhine is stable, and peaceful, then other countries will invest in other parts of the country, so we have to focus more on Rakhine.

Freedom of religion ceased to exist in Myanmar in 1988, after a bloody uprising was suppressed. Typically, there is freedom of religious assembly, but the government has imposed restrictions of certain religious activities, specifically in regards to the Rohingya people. Contrary to this, Bangladesh is a Muslim majority nation with Islam being its state religion. Freedom of religion is guaranteed by its constitution, along with equal rights guaranteed to all religious groups. Its High Court upholds policies of secularization, and maintains a strong stance against religious punishment. The Muslim Rohingya have consistently faced human rights violations by the government in Myanmar. Since 1982, a citizenship law has stripped the Rohingya of their citizenship; almost 90,000 people have been displaced in ensuing violence between Rohingya Muslims and Buddhists in the Rakhine State. Many Rohingya are currently in Bangladesh, but the country lacks the necessary infrastructure or resources to support these refugees. Furthermore, as the Rohingya are stateless, neither Bangladesh nor Myanmar seek to offer to them citizenship.

The United Nations accused the government of Myanmar of ethnic cleansing and state-sanctioned violence against the Rohingya. On January 23rd, 2020, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague unanimously ruled on the case brought by The Gambia alleging that Myanmar has breached the Genocide Convention. Within this momentous decision, the ICJ ruled that there was prima facie evidence that Myanmar breached the Convention, rejecting Aung San Suu Kyi's defense of her country's actions. Further, the ICJ ordered Myanmar to implement emergency measures to protect the Rohingya against violence and to preserve evidence of possible genocide. Currently, the United Nations, the United Kingdom, and the United States, along with other various non-governmental organizations, have provided humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees and host communities in Bangladesh and internally displaced Rohingya and members of other affected communities in Burma. This funding has sought to alleviate and address the emergency needs of refugees and host communities, providing life-saving assistance to internally displaced people. No matter what happens, preventative measures, such as international sanctions and the presence of military peace-keepers, may be suggested to be put in place to ensure the safety of the Rohingya. This would go against the will of the ANP, minimizing desired sovereignty over the Rakhine state.

Reconciliation refers to a condition of mutual respect among former enemies, which requires the reciprocal recognition of the moral worth and dignity of others. It is a complex process that takes as long as the roots of injustice go back. Myanmar comprises over 100 different ethnic groups, but the Bamar people are predominant. Beginning with the establishment of military rule in Burma after release from British colonialism, ethnic violence and gross violations of human rights have occurred in Myanmar. Decades of civil war, policies of forced displacement, mass arrest, and shoot-on-sight forced the minority groups to flee. Hostilities cease

to end, as civil unrest and memorialization of past cruelty perpetrates modern society. The government of the Rakhine state does not seek reconciliation with the Rohingya, but, instead, desires their removal from the territory through deportation. However, the Rohingya are stateless, and neither the government of Myanmar or that of Bangladesh seek to render the Rohingya citizens.

Myanmar and Bangladesh are currently working on efforts to repatriate some of the hundreds of thousands of dislocated people from refugee camps around Cox Bazar. We strongly recommend against this proposal. Rakhine state is already struggling to support its citizens at the moment; having an influx of refugees into Rakhine would increase the burden on the state. There would be very little job opportunities for the refugees. Although we support the building of refugee centers for the stateless individuals, we think that it would only be a temporary solution. In the long term, we do not believe that it is sustainable for the Rohingya to stay in the Rakhine state, and we would want more autonomy to govern our own state.