

General allegation

112th session (8-17 May 2017)

Myanmar

48. The Working Group received information from credible sources concerning reported obstacles encountered in the implementation of the Declaration on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in Myanmar.

49. The sources report that hundreds of Rohingya have been detained as part of security operations in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar, and that some of them are considered victims of enforced disappearances.

50. According to sources, a Rohingya militant group attacked border police outposts on 9 October 2016 in northern Rakhine State, and nine border police officers were reportedly killed during the attacks. The sources argue that Myanmar security forces responded by launching a major security operation, conducting “clearance operations” and sealing the area, effectively barring humanitarian organizations, media and independent human rights monitors from entering. The sources report that a wide range of human rights violations were committed during the operations by the security forces against the Rohingya including enforced disappearances. They argue that these violations appear to be part of a widespread and systematic attack against the Rohingya population which may amount to crimes against humanity.

51. According to the sources, 485 people had been arrested in January only, and, on 19 February, 585 people had been reportedly arrested, among whom 39 are “facing trial for killing people, destroying public property and communicating with illegal organizations” while the others remain under investigation. The sources allege that most of those arrested during the operations are held at the Buthidaung prison in Rakhine State, and that an unknown number among them have not been in communication with their families since being arrested. The sources point out that the OHCHR report issued on 3 February also raises concerns about enforced disappearances noting that out of the 205 people interviewed, 45% reported to have a family member missing after they were taken away by Myanmar security forces.

52. The sources mention that the security forces arrested, as part of the operation, village leaders, business owners, religious leaders, Arabic teachers as well as ordinary villagers, and that there are thirteen arrested children including some as young as 10 years old. The testimonies collected by the sources demonstrate that there are people who failed to return home after being summoned to security force headquarters, and that some relatives do not know where their loved ones are being detained, what they have been charged with, or whether they have access to a lawyer.

53. The sources also report that those who speak out about the violations in Rakhine State also risk arbitrary arrest and other reprisals. According to sources, the authorities have intimidated and threatened villagers who have tried to speak out about the situation, and some individuals have fled to Bangladesh after recounting security force abuse to media and others. In Bangladesh, refugees and asylum-seekers also face the threat of arrest and deportation, and disclosure of their identity and the identities of their loved ones can still place them at risk. The sources request immediately disclose the fate and whereabouts of all individuals detained during the security operations in northern Rakhine State and ensure that they are treated humanely, allowed prompt and regular access to their families, lawyers of their own choosing and adequate medical care.