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## United Nations expert says there are “elements of genocide” against Myanmar’s Rohingya

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The United Nations Special Rapporteur for Human Rights, Tomás Ojéa Quintana has said “There are elements of genocide in Rakhine with respect to Rohingya.”

Speaking at the London Conference on Decades of State-Sponsored Destruction of Myanmar’s Rohingya, Ojéa added “It is crimes against humanity. The possibility of a genocide needs to be discussed. This conference is very important as it does just that.”

The conference marked the first time top legal experts, academics and activists have met at the London School Of Economics And Political Science (LSE) and initiated the public debate on whether the persecution of the Rohingya by Myanmar should be considered genocide under international law.

Other speakers included Professor Daniel Feierstein, President of the International Association of Genocide Scholars; and Professor Gianni Tognoni, General Secretary, Permanent People’s Tribunal, Rome.

International legal experts presented definitions of genocide, mechanisms and models for justice. Leading human rights researchers and academics as well as Rohingya refugees offered evidence of decades of systematic persecution of Muslim Rohingya in Myanmar.

Dr Zarni, chair of the conference and visiting fellow at the LSE, made a case for what he called “the slow burning genocide” of Myanmar’s Rohingya since 1978 based on three years of extensive archival research and interviews with military officers and Rohingya victims.

The conference concluded with a call for the immediate end to Myanmar’s persecution of Rohingya, which it says amounts to genocide. The message is supported by dozens of concerned individuals and organisations including: Prudentienne Seward, a survivor of the Rwanda genocide against Tutsis and Founder of PAX (Peace for the African Great Lakes), Professor Noam Chomsky of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Columbia University Professor Gayatria Chakravoty Spivak, Oxford University Professor Emeritus and founder of Refugee Studies Barbara Harrell-Bond, London School of Economics Professor Mary Kaldor and Executive Director Youk Chhang of the Documentation Center of Cambodia.

The call notes, “Every aspect of their (Rohingya) lives, including marriage, childbirth and ability to work, is severely restricted. Their right to identity and citizenship is officially denied; in other words, they are not recognized as humans before the law... Rohingya are profoundly vulnerable to all forms of oppression and atrocities.”

It points out that alone of all the country’s more than 130 ethnic groups, only Rohingya are subjected to a policy of forced population control. By denying the Rohingya legal existence, designing extensive structures of discrimination and depriving a large segment of Rohingya population even basic humanitarian services such as provision of water, food and medicine the Myanmar government and people are destroying an entire people.

“Our people have been subject to a national policy of discrimination, persecution and eventual destruction at the hands of security forces and local extremists for the past nearly 40 years. I appeal to the world not to let another Rwanda repeat for Rohingya,” said Tun Khin, President of BROUK, which sponsors legislation at the US Congress calling for the end to persecution of Rohingya.

“The United Nations has taken 20 years to apologise for its failure to recognise and prevent the Rwandan genocide; the international community should not repeat the same mistake in Myanmar,” said Prudentienne Seward.

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