

*****For Immediate Release*****

The UK Atrocity Prevention Working Group welcomes the unanimous findings of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), the United Nation's principal judicial organ, in the case filed by The Gambia concerning the Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in Myanmar (The Gambia v. Myanmar). The 17 judges of the ICJ ruled that Myanmar should take all measures within its power to ensure that further genocidal acts are not committed. Specifically, the provisional measures require Myanmar to:

- Prevent genocidal acts;
- ensure military and police forces do not commit genocidal acts;
- preserve all evidence of genocidal acts;
- and report on compliance with these provisional measures within 4 months, and every 6 months thereafter.

We applaud The Gambia for the historic step of bringing Myanmar before the court. Wherever and against whomever mass atrocities are committed, it is a shared and global responsibility to ensure that vulnerable populations are protected, justice is pursued, and perpetrators are held to account. As with so many innovations in the field of atrocity prevention, this precedent was set by a small country from the global south, and now opens the door for any party to take action in solidarity with any threatened group.

This ruling underlines the continued risks facing the Rohingya in Myanmar. The safety of the Rohingya, and other minorities in Myanmar, must come front and centre of the UK's Myanmar policy: the ICJ found that the 600,000 Rohingya who remain in Myanmar are "extremely vulnerable" to violence and violations.

We urge Her Majesty's Government to support the efforts of The Gambia and ensure that the UK upholds its own responsibilities by working with all parties to ensure the emergency measures imposed by the ICJ to safeguard the Rohingya are met. As a signatory to the Genocide Convention of 1948, the UK shares in this obligation to prevent and punish the crime of genocide. As a permanent member of the UN Security Council the UK has a special responsibility to lead on this matter.

The UK approach to preventing mass atrocities is now crucial: it promises 'a strong commitment to do more', commits the UK to advocating for securing accountability and justice for atrocities committed and supports the deployment of all appropriate tools available to the UN in dealing with atrocities.

Her Majesty's Government must now take concrete steps to uphold these commitments – some of which are set out in its cross-government approach to atrocity prevention - to uphold its international obligations. These include the application of an atrocity prevention framework to the UK's Myanmar policy; introducing early warning and early response mechanisms to identify present and future risks posed to the Rohingya and other minorities in Myanmar; working at all levels, including by applying pressure on Myanmar, to ensure the ruling is upheld; and engaging with civil society expertise, both here in the UK and in the region.

Monday next week, the 27th January, commemorates 75 years since the liberation of the Auschwitz and Birkenau camps, marking a period of sombre reflection upon the rupture of the Holocaust. The very word genocide and the UN Genocide Convention, under which this case was brought by The Gambia to the ICJ, were born out of the atrocities of the Holocaust and of World War II.

If 'Never Again' is to have meaning, governments around the world have a responsibility to help enact this ruling – to bring every point of pressure to bear to protect the Rohingya from the atrocities they have faced, and may yet face.

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