News



Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar military commander-in-chief, salutes after delivering a speech in early February. A U.N. fact-finding mission said senior military officials in Myanmar must be prosecuted for genocide and war crimes against Rohingya Muslims and other ethnic minorities. (CNS/EPA/Lynn Bo Bo)

by Catholic News Service

View Author Profile

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

Mandalay, Myanmar — August 27, 2018

Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint

U.N. fact-finding mission said senior military officials in Myanmar must be prosecuted for genocide and war crimes against Rohingya Muslims and other ethnic minorities.

The mission, established by the U.N. Human Rights Council in March 2017, found patterns of gross human rights violations and abuses committed in the states of Rakhine, Kachin and Shan, reported ucanews.com.

"Military necessity would never justify killing indiscriminately, gang-raping women, assaulting children, and burning entire villages," the U.N. said in its Aug. 27 report.

"The Tatmadaw's tactics are consistently and grossly disproportionate to the actual security threats, especially in Rakhine state, but also in northern Myanmar," it said using the official name of the armed forces of Myanmar.

Ucanews.com reported the International Criminal Court is also deliberating whether it has the mandate to prosecute Myanmar officials responsible for more than 700,000 Rohingya Muslims fleeing from Rakhine state to Muslim-majority Bangladesh since an August 2017 military crackdown in response to attacks on security posts by suspected Rohingya insurgents.

The United Nations has dubbed the crackdown a textbook example of ethnic cleansing.

"The crimes in Rakhine State, and the manner in which they were perpetrated, are similar in nature, gravity and scope to those that have allowed genocidal intent to be established in other contexts," the report said.

The U.N. also warned Myanmar it has sufficient information "to warrant the investigation and prosecution" of senior officials in the Tatmadaw's chain of command.

The report singled out Min Aung Hlaing, Myanmar's military chief, and five key generals it said should face justice.

During a visit to Myanmar late last year, Pope Francis had a "courtesy visit" with Min Aung Hlaing and other military leaders. Greg Burke, director of the Vatican press office, told reporters the 15-minutes meeting included discussions about "the great responsibility authorities in the country have at this moment of transition."

The U.N. report also found that the government co-run by State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi has allowed hate speech and failed to protect ethnic minorities in the country.

"Through their acts and omissions, the civilian authorities have contributed to the commission of atrocities and crimes," it said.

Advertisement

"Suu Kyi has not used her de facto position as head of government, nor her moral authority, to stem or prevent the unfolding events in Rakhine State," the report added.

The U.N. mission, which has not been granted access to Myanmar, interviewed 875 victims and witnesses of alleged crimes by Myanmar's military, by speaking to refugees living in camps in Bangladesh and those in other countries. It also analyzed documents, photos, videos and satellite images. A full report will be published and presented to the U.N. Human Rights Council Sept. 18.

Amnesty International said the U.N. report brought more damning evidence of the Myanmar security forces' atrocity crimes against the Rohingya and against ethnic minorities in northern Myanmar.

"This report, which adds to a mountain of evidence of crimes under international law committed by the military, shows the urgent need for independent criminal investigation and is clear that the Myanmar authorities are incapable of bringing to justice those responsible," said Tirana Hassan, director of crisis response at Amnesty International.

Myanmar's government and military leaders did not immediately respond to the report.