



Sravasti Abbey

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Embassy of Myanmar
2300 S St., NW
Washington, DC 20008

To the Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar:

Sravasti Abbey is a community of monastics in the Tibetan Buddhist tradition near Spokane, Washington, U.S.A. Our mission is to spread peace in a chaotic world, and as Buddhists and monastics we are deeply concerned about the actions of the Myanmar government, military, and Buddhist clergy towards the Rohingya ethnic group.

We are especially concerned about the recent reports of over 400,000 Rohingya civilians fleeing to Bangladesh following attacks by Myanmar military and police, and the destruction by fire of hundreds of Rohingya villages across northern Rakhine state. As a Buddhist country, the Government of Myanmar's actions reflect upon, impact, and affect the faith of Buddhists around the world, as well as how non-Buddhists view Buddhism. We call on you to set an example of the Buddha's teachings by enacting the Buddhist values of nonviolence, tolerance, inclusivity, and respect for all people, including those whom are different from us.

As Western Buddhists, we are especially appalled by reports that Buddhist monastics have been condoning and enacting violence against the Rohingya. Such actions do not embody the Buddha's teachings of love, compassion, and ahimsa, or nonviolence. Notably, the Buddha taught respect and compassion for all living beings, regardless of their ethnic, social, or religious background.

We are aware that the violence in Myanmar is not one-sided. Rohingya militants have engaged in acts of violence and hatred, such as the recent attack by Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army against Government of Myanmar police stations, checkpoints and army base. Yet this cycle of violence speaks to the inability of violence and anger to act as an antidote to violence and anger—it will only bring more pain.

We therefore encourage the Government of Myanmar to do more to enact the Buddhist principles of respect, tolerance, compassion, and loving-kindness. This applies to all citizens, but is pertinent regarding vulnerable minority populations such as the Rohingya. In line with the suggestions of others, we urge your government to specifically:

- Allow human rights investigators and independent monitors to assess allegations of human rights violations against Rohingya refugees, specifically the Fact Finding Mission appointed by the United Nations Human Rights Council;
- End all military and security operations targeting unarmed civilians, specifically extra-judicial killings, destruction of dwellings, and planting landmines in border areas crossed by refugees;
- Reverse the pattern of severe and widespread discrimination against the Rohingya population and end restrictions on movement, citizenship, and employment;
- Take steps to reduce religious tension between Buddhist and Muslim communities by promoting dialogue and cooperation between the military, community leaders of both Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists, and the international community.
- Take robust action against hate speech and incitement of violence by nationalist groups and encourage all faiths to promote messages of tolerance, mutual respect, and peaceful coexistence.

As the Buddha said in the Dhammapada: "Hatred is never appeased by hatred in this world. By non-hatred alone is hatred appeased. This is a law eternal." The Buddha's teachings are clear that that there is no better way to ensure one's well-being and prosperity than ensuring the welfare of one's neighbors.

As Buddhists, we would like to point out Myanmar to our non-Buddhist friends in the U.S. government, military, and society as a shining example of a Buddhist country that lives peacefully according to the Buddha's teachings. At present we cannot do this.

We will keep the welfare and security of all populations in Myanmar in our prayers and aspirations. We look forward to your response about how the Government of Myanmar is responding to this complex and distressing situation.

Warm regards,

The Sravasti Abbey Community

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