

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MUSLIMS IN MYANMAR: **VICTIMS OF TERROR; UNPROTECTED AND UNWANTED**

Muslims in Myanmar are being persecuted on religious and ethnic grounds by Rakhine Buddhists. By June 2012, 77 people had died in the violence, 109 were injured and nearly 5,000 homes had been burnt down. The government declared a state of emergency. Since then, communal violence has continued, with attacks mostly directed at the Muslim Rohingya population.

Government forces seem to be complicit in the crimes, turning a blind eye to the atrocities. Human Rights Watch said police and troops did not intervene to stop the mobs from beating the Muslims to death, and that some Rohingyas who tried to flee or put out fires at their homes were shot at by paramilitaries.

Violence in the past six weeks has been:

“ primarily one-sided, with Muslims generally and Rohingyas specifically the targets and victims ... Some of this is by the security forces' own hands, some by Rakhine Buddhists, with the security forces turning a blind eye in some cases. ”

Benjamin Zawacki, researcher for Amnesty International

Myanmar has a diverse ethnic and religious make-up, including at least 800,000 Rohingyas, but they are not recognised as one of its ethnic groups and are denied citizenship by the government because it considers them illegal settlers from neighbouring Bangladesh. Bangladesh also denies the Rohingyas citizenship, arguing that they have been living in Burma for centuries and should be recognised as citizens there instead.

Thousands of Rohingyas attempt to flee every year to Bangladesh, Malaysia and elsewhere, trying to escape a life of abuse that rights groups say includes forced labour, violence against women and restrictions on movement, marriage and reproduction that breed anger and resentment.

The World Federation calls for the government of Myanmar to:

1. **Ensure the safety of its citizens and those inside its borders**
2. **Ensure the immediate cessation of all forms of collusion in these crimes by government forces**
3. **Ensure that the perpetrators of these crimes are brought swiftly to justice**
4. **Ensure such crimes fuelled by ethnic and religious discrimination does not happen again**
5. **Enable access to humanitarian agencies and to invite international monitors**
6. **Accept Rohingyas as citizens and to recognise them as an ethnic group native to Burma**

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

The World Federation of KSMC has conducted humanitarian work in Myanmar for the past 15 years. As a humanitarian organisation with UN NGO status we advocate the United Nations policy of 'Responsibility to Protect' human lives.

For more information please contact:

The World Federation, Telephone: +44 (0)208 954 9881, Email: secretariat@world-federation.org