

**Press Conference on Incident in Rakhine State,
Held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
(28-1-2014)**

Union Minister for Foreign Affairs H. E. U Wunna Maung Lwin made clarifications on incident in Rakhine State at the press conference held at the hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Yangon on 28 January 2014. Union Minister for Foreign Affairs said that this press briefing was organized to clarify on the incident that had occurred in Maungtaw Township in Rakhine State. He said that the January 23rd issue of the State-run newspapers also mentioned this incident in accordance with the on-ground inspection and verified information.

He pointed out that some international media and some groups had continued to produce unverified information and illogical opinions. When it comes to International Organizations that carry out their reporting, the information they used in their report should be authentic and from reliable and credible sources. In this regard, the Union Minister went on to explain as follows:

I would like to highlight some of the points prescribed in the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/66/81 A-B (9-12-2011) which stresses that the public information given by UN Agencies needs to be accurate objective and balanced in all four mass media. It also reiterates UN General Assembly's request to ensure that all breaking news items and news alerts are accurate, impartial and free of bias.

President U Thein Sein has instructed to form an independent investigation team to conduct an investigation on that incident. Central Committee for Peace Stability and Development of Rakhine State will send a separate team to the Maungtaw district to investigate. Myanmar National Human Rights Commission has proposed to make a field trip Maungtaw District in a few days. Rakhine Conflict Investigation Commission will also send a separate investigation team to the affected area.

Since the international communities have interest in the reform process taking Myanmar and expressing the recognition and support. Positive cooperation and assistance were rendered to Myanmar Government for that we would like to express our appreciations. At the same time we notice that there are concerns over the recent incidents in Rakhine State.

It is found that these concerns have originated from the unfound news and unverified information.

By Representatives of Pyithu Hluttaw of Buthidaung and Maungtaw constituencies, Dr. Bawshi Ahmad and Mr. ZarhinGir, and Ms. Babra Brista (UNOCHA) and Resident Coordinator of UNHCR Mr. Roka Kodo who had visited the areas and met with the villagers.

In addition, representatives of the Rakhine Conflict investigation Commission had also made an investigation regarding the incident.

Conclusion that this incident which took place on the night of 13 January 2014 was an isolated event and was not connected to any other incidents as alleged by some media. However in expressing concerns by some organizations and countries on the recent incident, they mentioned about death of people, injuries, damage to the village in the events which never took place.

I would like to stress that the Government of Myanmar is giving priority to the peace and stability of Rakhine State. It is important that communal peace and harmony to be prevailed in Rakhine State.

These Agencies and INGOs should communicate to the Rakhine State Government as well as to the focal ministries if they require any assistance. The government is ready to give verification on any news that they want to verify. Comments or opinions based on uncertain information or news can be affected to the cooperation and confidence that have been built between friends and partners."

Later, **Union Minister for Home Affairs H. E. Lt-Gen. Ko Ko** made a clarification. The Union Minister said:

"Ducheertan Middle Village is included in Ducheertan Village-tract, five-mile south of Maungtaw, formed with nine villages with populations of 4870 people and 674 households. The ethnic Rakhine makes up 20 per cent of the total population of the village-tract in which Bengalis are majority, accounting for 80 per cent.

According to statistics of Ducheertan Middle Village where the incident occurred, the village where 1030 people and 140 households are residing in, it is home to the majority of *Bengalis*.

Khayay Myaing Police Post and No. 13 Police Battalion take the responsibilities of ensuring security and the rule of law in cooperation with the village administrators, religious leaders and local people.

The statement of the Ministry of Home Affairs concerning the incident occurred on 13 January was reported in dailies issued on 23 January.

In search of the missing Police Sergeant Aung Kyaw Thein by officials concerned, townselders and search teams the following day, blood-stained pieces of Sergeant Aung Kyaw Thein's torn-up uniform, parts of the sergeant's police equipment, his jungle-boot and an empty M 22 magazine were found in the Arabic school and near the Ismai Mosque situated in the vicinity of the village.

According to what witnesses said, nine suspects on 15 January, six on 17 January and one on 18 January, totaling 16 were detained and investigations are underway after requesting the court to remand them in police custody for interrogation.

For a search and arrest of suspects, officials invited administrators of urban wards in Maungtaw and villages, townselders, mawlawi and locals to hold a meeting at a primary school in the township on 19 January and called for their cooperation in the efforts for the arrest of suspects.

On 20 January, a clarification on the well-plotted terrorist act was made at a meeting attended by departmental officials, parliamentarians, townselders, ward administrators, mawlawis and locals totaling 1600 at the hall of Maungtaw Township General Administration Department. While the situation at Ducheertan area was stable, false reports of some news agencies appeared. So, the Rakhine State chief minister, UNHCR and UNOCHA representatives and State Hluttaw representatives of Buthidaung and Maungtaw Townships made an inspection tour of Ducheertan village-tract, enquiring of the situation, visiting the places where the incidents occurred and providing necessary assistance to villagers who returned the village.

On 23 January, a team of Sittway-based Investigation Commission on Violence on Rakhine State investigated the Ducheertan incident in order to probe the situation and to demonstrate transparency.

Fleeing villagers are returning their homes. Up to date, a total of 431 people from 75 households have returned home and they are being provided with emergency aid by officials. Police protected properties of villagers as there arose lootings during the time when villagers were away. Strict security measures were taken in order to avoid allegations made against the police by destructive elements who actually destroyed and set fire to houses.

According to investigations, the Police Sergeant and party conducted a regular police patrol together with local administrations. According to information, eleven of those who committed the violence are now in the neighbouring country, seeking awards for the Ducheertan incident from RSOs.

Some UN agencies and foreign news agencies issued reports based on unjustified sources that about eight Bengalis were killed in the vicinity of Ducheertan area on 9 December 2013 and there occurred deaths of 40 people on 13 January, 2014.

In order to probe the situation, the Rakhine State chief minister, State Hluttaw representatives and UN officials and investigation commission members made a field trip, interviewing villagers who returned the village. According to information collected on the ground, it is found that they are false reports. Actions will be taken against any convicted individuals or any organization convicted of any crimes by the Ministry of Home Affairs.

The police sergeant is still missing with his arm and ammunition. Cooperation is invited to inform the police with firm evidences concerning the incident. Investigation will be continued.

There are two points in this case. One is that an act of attacking against law enforcement organizations is a terrorist act. No country and no government accepts such act that breaks the rule of law. Second point is that organizations needs to release reports based on reliable sources. As the situation could be complicated by false reporting that could jeopardize the rule of law, take notice of what local people would not forgive when the truth appeared."

After the Union Minister's clarification, Deputy Minister Maj-Gen. Maung Maung Ohn said that the government has already spent K 26.79 billion on rehabilitation in Rakhine State and implemented the Rakhine Response Plan as of July, 2012. It is needed to fund US\$ 109.3 million to the plan and US \$ 85.9 million have already collected so far.

Afterwards, Rakhine State Security and Border Affairs Minister Col. Htein Lin said they arrived at Ducheertan Village within hours after the conflict happened and they found that only many evidences for killing of Police Sgt. Aung Kyaw Thein, and no buildings nor killings of villagers were happened in the conflict. Rakhine State Chief Minister U Hla Maung Tin, state MPs and representatives from UNHCR and UNOCHA had already met with local villagers.

During the meeting, villagers told them that no villagers were killed in the conflict and some villagers fled the village as they are afraid of being detained by the police. Since 24 January, villagers from the village of Ducheertan have come back to the village and so far 331 villagers from 75 households have already been settled at the village.

Next, Dr Kyaw Yin Hlaing, Secretary of Rakhine Conflict Investigation Commission said that, during the period from 22 to 26 January, the commission had launched the investigation into the allegations made by international organizations and foreign news agencies and interrogated 70 villagers. They found only evidences for killing of Police Sgt. Aung Kyaw Thein and there was no people who were said to be killed living at the village and villages near the Ducheertan village. A villager who was killed in the conflict, according to a villager during the investigation, was found that he was detained by the police. There was also no evidence of recent burial at the burial ground and the allegation that Bengalis, who were killed in the conflict, were buried. It was totally wrong and the commission found only burial ground covered with bushes. Dr Kyaw Yin Hlaing said that the commission would release their statement in the near future. He also asked the international organizations to give firm evidences if they found and called on INGOs to cooperate with the commission and authority concerned as the situation in Rakhine State is fragile.

In addition, Union Foreign Affairs Minister U Wunna Maung Lwin said the government would release its investigation report, assuring that the investigation would be in transparency. He said that the government would arrange a trip for the diplomats to visit the area and a team led by the EU Ambassador would go to the area in the near future.



Union Minister for Foreign Affairs H. E. U Wunna Maung Lwin makes clarifications on incident in Rakhine State at the press conference held at the hall of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Yangon on 28 January 2014. (Photo:MOI)



Union Minister of Home Affairs Lt. Gen. Ko Ko makes clarification about the incidents in Rakhin State. (Photo-Myawady)



The press conference in progress at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Photo: Myawady)

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