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Physicians for Human Rights Welcomes UN Human Rights Council Demands for Demonstrable Commitments from the Government of Myanmar towards Justice and Accountability

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Physicians for Human Rights (PHR) welcomes the adoption of UN Human Rights Council resolution L.23 on the situation of human rights in Myanmar. As an organization that has used science and medicine to document and prevent human rights abuses in Myanmar for more than 15 years – finding evidence of [widespread and systematic violence](#) targeting Myanmar’s Muslim Rohingya minority in northern Rakhine state in late August 2017, as well as broader rights abuses against ethnic and religious minorities – PHR has [advocated](#) for more concerted action from the international community to ensure meaningful accountability for crimes committed in the country.

The Council’s resolution renews the mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar and issues critical demands for the Myanmar authorities to take tangible steps towards justice and accountability for the commission of grave violations of human rights in the country.

With [reports](#) of grave human rights violations ongoing in many parts of Myanmar, the Council’s resolution highlights urgent areas of concern and immediate steps that Myanmar authorities must take to comply with international law. In order to make progress towards justice and accountability for victims of grave rights violations in Myanmar, PHR echoes key concerns raised by the resolution, including:

- The grave concern regarding “the culture of impunity that exists in the Myanmar security forces, and at the continuing forced displacement of civilians, mass and systemic human rights violations and abuses, and killings,” which is particularly [troubling](#) with conflict ongoing in Rakhine, Chin, Kachin, and Shan States;
- The Myanmar government’s [obligation](#) to comply with the order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) to prevent and punish the crimes of genocide, to actively protect the Rohingya as a protected group under the 1948 Genocide Convention, and to ensure the preservation of evidence of any grave crimes committed;
- The need for the Myanmar government to end impunity for crimes committed, citing the deplorable [release](#) of members of the Myanmar military convicted by court martial of the unlawful killings of Rohingya civilians in Inn Din, Rakhine State;
- The call for the Myanmar government to address particular widespread crimes, such as sexual and gender-based violence, and to accede to core international human rights treaties that most states have ratified;¹ and

¹ The resolution specifically calls on the Myanmar government to accede to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.



- The demand that the Myanmar government act to restore “full citizenship and voting rights of all ethnic minorities in Myanmar, including the Rohingya, and to ensure free and fair participation of the Rohingya and other minorities in the elections to be held in 2020 in Myanmar,” and take steps to ensure free and fair elections with the monitoring of the international community, further ensuring the transition to a democratic, representative civilian government.

With such widespread evidence of grave crimes committed across Myanmar – as documented by the United Nations and organizations such as [PHR](#) – it is critical that the Myanmar government take heed of obligations delineated by the ICJ and the Human Rights Council. PHR is dismayed to see regional states on the Council, such as India, Indonesia, Japan, and Nepal, abstain on the resolution. Rather than turning a blind eye to the universal threats of grave human rights violations, states must take even greater action at the national, regional and international level to support justice in Myanmar.

There must be costs and consequences if the Myanmar government fails to comply with the ICJ’s provisional measures and the demands of UN bodies such as the Human Rights Council. PHR continues to call for the UN Security Council to hold regular meetings on the situation in Myanmar and for all states to consider appropriate legal actions, including targeted sanctions and arms embargoes, to protect civilians, especially ethnic minorities, and support the accountability and justice that are necessary for a sustainable peace in Myanmar.