

**UN Forum on Minority Issues
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Statement: UN Forum on Minority Issues

Thank you for the floor. My name is Kyaw Win. I am from Myanmar and I am a Muslim. Many people in power in my home country do not believe that one can be both a Myanmar national and a Muslim. As the executive director of the Burma Human Rights Network, I largely speak on behalf of a community that is being rendered invisible through the denial of citizenship, institutionalised discrimination, and government-backed persecution.

Item 2: Root causes and consequences of statelessness affecting minorities: preventing statelessness through a human rights approach

Despite being entitled to citizenship even according to Myanmar's deeply flawed 1982 Citizenship Law—which has been used to grant citizenship on the basis of ethnicity—Muslims in the country are routinely refused such identity documents. The most severe cases of this have been perpetrated against the Muslim Rohingya community. Muslims are forced to claim foreign nationalities as their ethnicity in an attempt to categorize us as “mixed blood”, if we can attain ID cards at all. Such a classification is linked to further discrimination throughout our lives and the status of second- or even third-class citizens. This conflation of ethnicity and citizenship is a clear violation of our right to a nationality guaranteed in Article 15 of the UDHR, to which Myanmar is a signatory.

We belong to Myanmar, but statelessness is being imposed upon us. This trend continues to gather momentum under the current administration headed by Aung San Suu Kyi's National League for Democracy and the Myanmar military. Myanmar's current political framework, built on the army-drafted 2008 Constitution, is designed so that any group in power must be complicit with the military, which perpetuates a legacy of ethnic Burmese Buddhist hegemony rather than one of inclusivity.

Recommendation: UN member states must place significant economic and political pressure—including comprehensive sanctions—on Myanmar to draft and enact a federal, democratic Constitution that removes the military from any political role in the country. Such a Constitution must be inclusive of Myanmar's ethnic and religious diversity and clearly outline the mechanisms by which the rights of these communities will be protected. Myanmar must also be pressured to create a multi-ethnic, multi-religious commission of grassroots stakeholders to draft a citizenship law in line with human rights norms.