June 20, 2018

Honorable Kazi Reazul Hoque
Chairperson
National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh
BTMC Bhaban (8th Floor)
7-9 Kazi Nazrul Islam Ave, Kawran Bazar,
Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh
chairman@nhrc.org.bd
krh_bnhri@yahoo.com

Re: Open Letter to the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh regarding Rights of Rohingya Refugees

Dear Honorable Chairperson,

Today, on the occasion of the World Refugee Day, the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI), whose Secretariat is at the Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA), would like to request the National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh (NHRCB) to protect and promote the rights of Rohingya refugees, particularly those staying in refugee camps in Bangladesh.

FORUM-ASIA and its civil society members in Bangladesh organised a fact-finding mission from 24-29 March 2018 to collect first-hand information about the human rights and humanitarian situation in Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. The mission visited seven locations of the camps and interacted with over 80 Rohingya men and women.

The key findings from the mission[1]are discrepancies in humanitarian aid distribution, including the lack of awareness about services available within camps that resulted in poor water supplies and waste management systems, absence of gender-sensitive services for survivors of sexual assaults and violence, and lack of education opportunities for refugee children.

ANNI would like to request the NHRCB to recommend the Government of Bangladesh to respect, protect, and fulfill all human rights of the uprooted Rohingya refugees, including their immediate needs of basic health, sanitation and hygiene in the camps. The survivors of gender-based violence are in need of special services, including reproductive health care and

[1] The mission report is available in this link: https://www.forum-asia.org/uploads/wp/2018/06/Rohingya-Bangladesh-Report-June2018.pdf

psychosocial counseling. Refugee children are deprived of formal education, which is necessary for them to prepare for future.

Our fact-finding mission report indicated that the refugee camps are even more vulnerable during monsoon season as their locations and design are not durable when strong winds and rainfall hit. As of 19 June, the monsoon rains have caused serious floods and landslides that damaged 3,300 shelters in the camps according to the development agency Oxfam[2]. A speedy action is required to relocate those refugees to secured places and initiate preventive measures for a possible outbreak of cholera and other water-borne diseases. This requires both government and non-governmental agencies to further enhance their coordination and streamline their operation to address these pressing needs.

Rohingya refugees especially women and children are at high risk to human trafficking and violence due to their vulnerability. NHRCB should consider working with civil society organisations and authorities working in the camps to launch a campaign against human trafficking as well as against child marriage, dowry, and violence against women, which were reported to take place within the camps.

ANNI would like to appreciate that the people and the Government of Bangladesh have been supporting the Rohingya refugees with shelters and other basic services. We would like to ask the NHRCB to ensure this support continues and the gaps are addressed as soon as possible. We would also like to urge the NHRCB to use its influence to make sure that all key decisions that have implications to Rohingya refugees, including the repatriation process, should involve the meaningful participation of refugees themselves. A repatriation process designed without refugees' participation contradicts international human rights laws, principles, and practices, and thus fails to ensure that the process is informed, voluntary, safe and sustainable.

Yours Sincerely,

John Samuel
Executive Director
Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development (FORUM-ASIA)
The Secretariat of the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

[2] https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/rohingya-refugees-unprepared-monsoon-rains-flooding-and-landslides-continue

About the Asian NGO Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI)

The Asian NGOs Network on National Human Rights Institutions (ANNI) was established in December 2006. It is a network of Asian non-governmental organisations and human rights defenders working on issues related to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs). ANNI has members that are national organisations from all over Asia. ANNI currently has 33 organisations from 21 countries or territories. The work of ANNI members focuses on strengthening the work and functioning of Asian NHRIs to better promote and protect human rights as well as to advocate for the improved compliance of Asian NHRIs with international standards, including the Paris Principles and General Observations of the Sub-Committee on Accreditation (SCA) of the Global Alliance of NHRIs (GANHRI).