

Unofficial Translation

Statement published on 12 July 2012 by the President's Office following a meeting on 11 July 2012 with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees António Guterres

Matters discussed at the meeting included refugees from the fighting in Kachin State, the return of Kayin (Karen) migrant workers who wished to return home voluntarily and the situation in Rakhine State.

The President said that Bengalis came to Myanmar because the British colonialists invited them in prior to 1948, when Myanmar gained independence from Britain, to work in the agricultural sector. Some Bengalis settled here because it was convenient for them to do so, and according to Myanmar law, the third generation of those who arrived before 1948 can be granted Myanmar citizenship.

He added that, if we look at the situation in Rakhine State, some people are the younger generation of Bengalis who arrived before 1948, but some are illegal immigrants claiming to be Rohingyas and this threatens the stability of the State.

The Government has been looking seriously for a solution to this problem. The country will take responsibility for its native people, but it cannot accept illegal immigrant Rohingya in any way.

So in the end the solution to the problem is to set up refugee camps for them so that UNHCR can look after them. If a third country accepts them, we will send them there.

He added that the Minister for Border Affairs has been negotiating with UN organizations in Rakhine State.

[The Burmese text was originally carried at <http://www.president-office.gov.mm/briefing-room/news/2012/07/12/id-172>]

See also "[Call to put Rohingya in refugee camps](#)" Radio Free Asia 12 July 2002. Here is an extract from this report:

Extract begins

In his statement, Thein Sein outlined the legal distinction between those who came to Burma before the country's independence in 1948 - often called "Bengalis"- and those who came after.

"In Rakhine state now, there are two distinct generation groups. The first group is those born from the pre-1948 Bengalis. Another generation group, under the name Rohingya, came to Burma later."

He said those who were brought over to Burma during British rule between 1824 and 1948 were welcome in the country.

"Before 1948, the British brought Bengalis to work on the farms, and since there were ample opportunities to make a living here compared to where they came from, they didn't leave," he said.

"According to our laws, those descended from [the Bengalis] who came to Burma before 1948, the 'Third Generation,' can be considered Burmese citizens," he said.

Extract ends