

## **Troubles made by western NGO raised protest by Myanmar people**

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Guangming Daily (Beijing) - 5 March 2014

Since 22 February, multi-day demonstrations and protests against the organization “Doctors Without Borders” have broken out in Rakhine state, calling for the government to expel the organization. According to reports in the official newspaper “New Light of Myanmar”, the Ministry of Health has suspended the medical projects by the organization in Rakhine state, while allowing projects in other provinces and states to continue. The international humanitarian aid organization, a Nobel Peace laureate, has encountered a major embarrassment.

The origins of this development began with a so-called “massacre” in January. According to a report in Myanmar Freedom newspaper, the UN reported two violent incidents in Rakhine state in the middle of January, saying that about 40 Rohingya Muslims had been killed by police and Rakhine Buddhists. “Doctors Without Borders” operating in the Rakhine state also claimed that its clinics had treated about 20 injured Rohingya people. Associated Press spread the news to the world, followed by a joint statement from the eager U.S. and UK embassies condemning the violence against Rohingyas in Myanmar and calling for a thorough investigation by the Myanmar government. The story was carried widely in the main western media outlets. On 28 January, upon the completion of a field investigation by a special investigation committee, Myanmar hosted a press conference to publish the results. It pointed out that the violent event originated from a quarrel between a Burmese policeman and 20 Rohingya and the policeman was the only one killed. Therefore, the reports and accusations by western media and organizations about the “massacre of Rohingya” were made up and false. Furthermore, “Doctors Without Borders” could not provide any evidence of the treatment provided to the injured Rohingya. The embassies of the US and UK, as well as the western media, seem to have made a big mistake on this issue.

Subsequently, major protests broke in Rakhine state. Mizzima reported a 5000-people demonstration in Sittwe by Rakhine citizens and monks, calling for the government to expel international NGOs and criticizing their bias on the Rohingya issue and unfair distribution of aid in favor of Muslims. Since 22 February, locals in Sittwe started a series of sit-in demonstrations demanding that “Doctors Without Borders” should leave Sittwe. The President’s spokesperson told the media that the organization’s MOU with the Myanmar government had expired in January 2013; its work is biased and lacks transparency and the organization has hired Rohingya against regulations. To avoid tension in Rakhine state, the government had to end cooperation with the organization, although it will allow it to continue operating in other areas.

The “conflict” between Myanmar people and the international NGO because of these false stories has come to a temporary halt. However, the underlying issues deserve reflection. Looking at the whole event, western media was particularly exercised about the so-called “massacre” in Rakhine state and

the Myanmar government's order for "Doctors Without Borders" to leave the area. They were also selectively blind about the facts published by the Myanmar government, demonstrating their pride and prejudice.

Local media analysis has found that certain western powers and mainstream media have exhibited stereotypical thinking and have sided selectively with one party against the other based on pre-existing biases when the event happened. Their reports and statements of concern were released without verification of the authenticity of the information. This is virtually a double standard. The so-called media freedom praised by the West might be free but definitely not fair.

*Note by Network Myanmar. This is an unofficial translation of an article which reportedly appeared in Guangming Daily (Beijing) on 5 March 2014.*