

Rights groups urge Burma to revise citizenship law
By Mizzima News
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Recent events in Rakhine (Arakan) State in Burma have many causes, which need to be addressed, but 31 international human rights groups say all sides agree Burma's citizenship laws need clarification.

Speaking in Norway on June 18, Aung San Suu Kyi said: "If we were very clear as to who are the citizens of the country, under citizenship laws, then there wouldn't be the problem that is always coming up, that there are accusations that some people do not belong in Bangladesh, or some people do not belong in Burma."

The Citizenship Law introduced by General Ne Win in 1982 is not compatible with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or with Burma's legal obligations under international treaties, said the human rights groups in a statement.

The law arbitrarily stripped many people in Burma of the right to citizenship, it said.

The 1982 Citizenship Law should be repealed, it said, and replaced with a new law founded on basic principles of human rights. The new law should honour equality and non-discrimination, and help create an inclusive and tolerant Burma, said the statement.

The law should comply with Burma's obligations under the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the Child, to which it is a signatory. Article 7 of this Convention states that a "child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right from birth to a name, the right to acquire a nationality and, as far as possible, the right to know and be cared for by his or her parents."

It said a new law should also be compatible with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which states in Article 15:

"Everyone has the right to a nationality. No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality."

The group called on the government of Burma, the National League for Democracy and all political parties in Burma to support the repeal of the 1982 Citizenship Law, and for it to be replaced with a new law based on principles of human rights and equality.

The 1982 Citizenship Law of Burma can be viewed here:

<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6b4f71b.html>

The statement was signed by Actions Birmanie, Altsean-Burma, Asia Pacific Solidarity Coalition (APSOC), Asian Forum for Human Rights and Development, Association Suisse Birmanie, Burma Action Ireland, Burma Aktion, Burma Campaign Australia Burma Campaign UK, BurmaInfo (Japan), Burma Partnership, Chin Human Rights Organization, Christian Solidarity Worldwide, ESP-Stockholm, Forum for Democracy in Burma, Free Burma Campaign (South Africa), Initiatives for International Dialogue (IID), International Federation for Human Rights (FIDH), Info Birmanie, Institute for Asian Democracy, Norwegian Burma Committee, Odhikar, Open Society Foundations, People's Forum on Burma (Japan), People in Need, Physicians for Human Rights, Restless Beings Society for Threatened Peoples, Swedish Burma Committee, United to End Genocide, and US Campaign for Burma.