

## **Rohingya widow from 2017 ‘clearance operations’ files first complaint in Myanmar seeking \$2 million from the government**

Thursday, 10 December 2020

YANGON, MYANMAR: 10 December, 2020: Human Rights Day. Setara Begum, a 23 year old Rohingya widow, who fled Myanmar during the 2017 Myanmar army (Tatmadaw) ‘clearance operations’ has requested US\$2 million in compensation from the Government of Myanmar for its gross failure to meaningfully address the ‘Inn Din massacre’ in which her husband was killed by the Tatmadaw. The complaint has been filed at the Myanmar National Human Rights Commission by non-governmental organisation Legal Action Worldwide (LAW) and international law firm McDermott Will & Emery UK LLP – it is the first complaint before the Commission by a Rohingya.

Seven Tatmadaw soldiers were convicted and sentenced to prison in relation to the Inn Din massacre, however, they were released after serving less than one year of their sentence. On 11 December 2019, speaking in The Hague, Aung San Suu Kyi publicly stated that ‘[m]any of us in Myanmar were unhappy with this pardon.’

Ms Begum says, ‘[m]y husband was killed and Myanmar has let those soldiers who did that go free. I am seeking justice for my husband and for all Rohingya, who have faced many similar issues.’

The complaint outlines numerous failures in Myanmar’s response to the Inn Din massacre, culminating in the military pardon and release of the only members of the Tatmadaw convicted for involvement in the massacre.

‘Survivors of the shocking crimes committed in Myanmar, including Setara, have seen no meaningful justice in Myanmar; impunity is the norm. At the very least they are entitled to pursue their claims for compensation for the harm they have suffered.’ said Antonia Mulvey, LAW Executive Director.

The complaint builds upon the work of two Reuters journalists who were imprisoned in Myanmar while conducting an investigation that unearthed the facts of the Inn Din massacre. Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo were sentenced to prison for 7 years under Myanmar’s Official Secrets Act for their investigation and only released on 8 May 2019 after more than 500 days in prison following the intervention of human rights lawyer Amal Clooney. They spent longer in prison than the Tatmadaw soldiers convicted for the massacre itself.

The 2017 ‘clearance operations’ by the Tatmadaw saw thousands of Rohingya killed and 700,000 forced to flee across the border into neighbouring Bangladesh. Any compensation received by Ms Begum will be placed in a victims’ trust fund for the benefit of the displaced Rohingya community.

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