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Agenda item 4

Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the International Educational Development Inc., a non-governmental organization on the roster

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[13 February 2017]

* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

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Human rights in Myanmar*

International Educational Development, Inc. and the Association of Humanitarian Lawyers have worked closely with the successive special rapporteurs on the situation in Burma/Myanmar since the term of the first one, Yozo Yokota. We have submitted numerous written statements and have twice been invited to submit testimony to the US Congress on this topic. We now welcome the continued opportunity to work with Special Rapporteur Lee.

Our attention to Burma/Myanmar has mainly focused on the situation of the ethnic nationalities. We have called attention to the violence against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar in several written statements and raised it in the interactive dialogue with Special Rapporteur Lee at the Council's 32nd session. Anti-Muslim feelings run deep in Myanmar, partly because the Rohingya, who number around one million and are the largest Muslim group in the country, are considered illegal immigrants. That sentiment, among the Buddhist-Burmese majority, is a legacy of colonial times, when large numbers of Indians were brought into Burma by the British. The Myanmar government refuses to use the term Rohingya, preferring to call the group "Bengalis." Abuses against the Rohingya continue unabated as indicated in the statement of the High Commissioner on 3 February 2017. The death count is still rising yet the international community has shamefully taken little action to pressure the much-trumpeted "democratic" government of Myanmar into getting a grip on this out of control mob-rule. Indeed, the government of Myanmar has refused to admit that the violence is even occurring.

We note Special Rapporteur Lee's discussion about other ethnic nationalities in her work at the Council's 32nd session, including sexual violence by Burma/Myanmar armed forces personnel in Kachin State and northern Shan State as well as violent armed clashes. Military clashes continue in Shan State and Kachin State between the Kachin Independence Army (KIA) and several other Kachin militias against government armed forces. Air strikes by the government increased throughout 2016. On 20 November 2016, the KIA began renewed attacks on government forces in Shan State. By mid-December, several thousand Kachin out of what the United Nations authorities estimate more than 100,000 internally displaced Kachin were driven out of one camp and wandering in the area.

We also note renewed clashes in Karen State beginning in September 2016, with some spilling over into Thailand. The UNHCR estimated over 100,000 Karen refugees as of early September 2016. There have also been clashes with the Mon National Liberation Army in the Mon district beginning in June 2016. Although the Mon are party to a cease fire agreement signed in 2012, their situation remained unresolved. The same can be said about the Karenni and the federal government.

Although there is a new government in Burma/Myanmar, the winning political players had never seriously taken up the situation of the ethnic nationalities before. Now, Aung San Suu Kyi is fostering a peace process but it remains to be seen what success it will have. We hope that Special Rapporteur Lee will monitor this initiative. Finally, we urge the international community to ensure that States do not engage prematurely with the new authorities to the detriment of human rights.

Recommendations:

- 1. The Council should extend the mandate of Special Rapporteur Lee, and specifically ask her to monitor the government's peace process.**
- 2. The Council should encourage the Special Rapporteur for Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantee of Non-Recurrence to visit Myanmar to forward its national reconciliation.**
- 3. The Council should call upon the government of Myanmar to take action to protect its Rohingya Muslim population and should consider adopting a resolution on it.**
- 4. All governments should recommit themselves to pressure the government of Myanmar to resolve its conflicts with ethnic nationalities peaceably and with deference to each group's**

sovereignty and limit any military cooperation until the human rights condition of that country has improved.

*Association of Humanitarian Lawyers, NGO without consultative status, also shares the views expressed in this statement.