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Islamic Human Rights Commission

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The Islamic Human Rights Commission is an NGO in special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and social Council.

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In this submission, the Islamic Human Rights Commission raises concern in relation to atrocities the Muslims living in Thailand and the Rohingya Refugees, and Asylum seekers are facing.

Executive Summary

In this submission, the Islamic Human Rights Commission provides information under sections B, C and D as stipulated in the General Guidelines for the Preparation of Information under the Universal Periodic Review. Under section B, the Islamic Human Rights Commission gives background information about the struggle of the Malay Muslims living in the southern provinces in Thailand and Rohingya refugees and asylum seekers. Under section C, the Islamic Human Rights Commission raises concern in relation to freedom of religion of Malay Muslims living in Thailand and Nonrefoulement of refugees and asylum seekers. Under section D, the Islamic Human Rights Commission makes a number of recommendations regarding action that should be taken by the government.

B. Background

1. The provinces in Southern Thailand, Narathiwat, Pattani, Yala, and Satun are mainly populated by Muslims. In this region many residents have long complained of discrimination, and oppression throughout their daily lives. The Islamic Human Rights Commission is concerned about the plight of Muslims in Thailand
2. These provinces witness shootings, grenade attacks and car bombings happen almost daily. The violence has claimed more than 3,900 lives since January 2004, with more than 340 people in 2009 alone. About 90 per cent of those killed are civilians.
3. The Thai government has acted contrary to the obligation towards refugees and asylum seekers by refusing to allow them to enter the country.

C. Promotion and protection of human rights on the ground

Freedom of religion

The discrimination against Muslims practicing their religion living in Thailand has been evident throughout the past. On June 8, 2009, at least 10 people were killed, including the Imam, in shootings against Muslim worshippers as they were performing the evening prayer at Al-Furqan Mosque, southern Thailand. Six gunmen disguised themselves with ski masks whilst carrying out these brutal acts. This government has failed to hold the perpetrators accountable for this act of coldly calculated violence. As a result there is an apparent deep distrust of the government.

Nonrefoulement

The hostile policy of Thailand's government can clearly be seen by the treatment of refugees and asylum seekers, as in the case of approving a directive authorising the military to intercept boats carrying ethnic Rohingya from Burma and Bangladesh. Subsequently the military captured several Rohingya crowded boats and sent the vessels back into the open ocean with inadequate supplies of food and water. The Thai government has an obligation under international law of 'nonrefoulement (non-return) of persons to places where their life of freedom is at risk'. Thailand's government has largely failed to fulfil its pledges to make human rights a priority.

D. Recommendations

The Islamic Human Rights Commission recommends that:

1. The government of Thailand should protect their Malay Muslim citizens and allow them to live in peace.
2. The Muslims citizens of Thailand should be given the freedom to practice Islam according to their religious belief, without military interference.
3. The devastating and deliberate attacks on civilians in the southern border provinces must be brought to an end.
4. The government of Thailand must work towards rebuilding relations with the Muslim community in order to regain their trust in the government.
5. The Thai government must abide by the international law of nonrefoulement by protecting refugees and asylum seekers in allowing them into their country.