

The Hon. Chrystia Freeland, PC, MP  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario, Canada  
K1A 0G2

June 25, 2019

Dear Minister Freeland,

We, the undersigned senators and civil society leaders, write this letter to urge Canada to take immediate action on the ongoing genocide against the Rohingya people in Myanmar by initiating proceedings before the International Court of Justice. There are now almost 1 million Rohingya refugees who have fled to Bangladesh. As of March 2019, Bangladesh advised the UN Security Council that it will no longer be accepting Rohingya refugees fleeing from Myanmar. For the Rohingya, it is clear that the situation is only worsening.

In his 2018 report “*Tell them we’re human*”: *what Canada and the world can do about the Rohingya crisis / report of the Prime Minister’s Special Envoy*, the Honourable Bob Rae notes, “it is a fundamental tenet of Canada’s foreign policy that those responsible for international crimes, including crimes against humanity and genocide, must be held responsible for those crimes.” As concerned parliamentarians and members of civil society, we strongly believe that those responsible for the genocide against the Rohingya must be held to account by the international community. We firmly believe that Canada is in a position to exercise strong and effective global leadership in response to the genocide by pursuing this matter before the International Court of Justice.

As you know, in September 2018 both the House of Commons and the Senate unanimously passed MP Andrew Leslie’s Motion recognizing the Rohingya situation as genocide. On April 3, 2019, Senator McPhedran gave notice in the Senate that she would move *Motion 476 to Urge the Government to Invoke the Genocide Convention to Hold Myanmar to its Obligations and to Seek Provisional Measures and Reparations for the Rohingya People*. This motion was developed in consultation with civil society and academic experts to reiterate Canada’s commitment to human rights through concrete action to be taken with regard to the genocidal campaign by Myanmar against the Rohingya. Senate Motion 476 reinforces the request made in a letter to you from the All-Party Parliamentary Group for the Prevention of Genocide and other Crimes Against Humanity dated May 29, 2019, which called for Canada to initiate legal proceedings before the International Court of Justice in regard to Myanmar’s breach of the UN Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Genocide.

Senator McPhedran moved and spoke to Motion 476 in the Senate on April 11, 2019. In May 2019, Senators Omidvar, Ataullahjan, Ravalia and Cordy spoke in support and the Senate accepted an amendment by Senator Ravalia to delete the words “to release the jailed Reuters journalists, and” from Motion 476 because fortunately those journalists were released while the motion was being debated. However, since Senator Yonah Martin took the adjournment on May 16, 2019, there has been no further debate on Motion 476, despite numerous attempts.

With the summer recess of Parliament looming, Senator McPhedran, Professor Irwin Cotler, Montreal City Councillor Marvin Rotrand, and civil society leaders Mr. Fared Kahn of the Rohingya Human Rights Network and Ms. Catherine Morris of Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada held a press conference on June 13th explaining the urgent need for the Senate to pass Motion 476. It was hoped that publicly expressing concerns of parliamentarians, academics, municipalities, and civil society would serve as an important reminder that Canadians have not forgotten about the ongoing genocide against the Rohingya and that Canadians welcome decisive leadership by our Government to follow the words of the September 2018 joint House/Senate motion with action to challenge the impunity currently enjoyed by the perpetrator state of Myanmar.

Minister Freeland, as you well know, the joint parliamentary motion in September 2018 made Canada the first country in the world to officially name this genocide. With this open letter, we urge the Government of Canada to take the next step of invoking the Genocide Convention to hold Myanmar accountable, because it is both our moral and legal obligation to do so.

We thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

The Hon. Raynell Andreychuk, Senator for Saskatchewan  
The Hon. Jane Cordy, Senator for Nova Scotia  
The Hon. Mobina Jaffer, Senator for British Columbia  
The Hon. Paul Massicotte, Senator for Quebec (De Lanaudière)  
The Hon. Lillian Dyck, Senator for Saskatchewan  
The Hon. Elaine McCoy, Senator for Alberta  
The Hon. Larry Campbell, Senator for British Columbia  
The Hon. Yonah Martin, Senator for British Columbia  
The Hon. Salma Ataullahjan, Senator for Ontario (Toronto)  
The Hon. Larry Smith, Senator for Quebec (Saurel)  
The Hon. Jean-Guy Dagenais, Senator for Quebec (Victoria)  
The Hon. Paul McIntyre, Senator for New Brunswick  
The Hon. Frances Lankin, P.C., Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Ratna Omidvar, Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Raymonde Gagné, Senator for Manitoba  
The Hon. Diane Griffin, Senator for Prince Edward Island  
The Hon. Gwen Boniface, Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Wanda Thomas Bernard, Senator for Nova Scotia  
The Hon. Lucie Moncion, Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Kim Pate, Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Marilou McPhedran, Senator for Manitoba  
The Hon. Tony Dean, Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Éric Forest, Senator for Quebec (Gulf)  
The Hon. Raymonde Saint-Germain, Senator for Quebec (De la Vallière)  
The Hon. Marc Gold, Senator for Quebec (Stadacona)

The Hon. Rosa Galvez, Senator for Quebec (Bedford)  
The Hon. Mary Coyle, Senator for Nova Scotia (Antigonish)  
The Hon. Marty Deacon, Senator for Ontario (Waterloo Region)  
The Hon. Yvonne Boyer, Senator for Ontario  
The Hon. Colin Deacon, Senator for Nova Scotia  
The Hon. Julie Miville-Dechêne, Senator for Quebec (Inkerman)  
The Hon. Bev Busson, Senator for British Columbia  
The Hon. Paula Simons, Senator for Alberta  
The Hon. Rosemary Moodie, Senator for Ontario

Civil society organizations:

Arakan Historical Society  
Burmese Muslim Association  
Calgary Karen Community Association  
Canadian Council of Muslim Women  
Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East  
Canadians in Support of Refugees in Dire Need  
Canadian Rohingya Development Initiative  
Canadians United Against Hate  
Edmonton Karen Community Association  
Human Rights Research and Education Centre, University of Ottawa  
Innerspeak Media  
Inter Pares  
Karen Community of Canada  
Karen Community of Hamilton  
Karen Community of Leamington  
Karen Community of Lethbridge  
Karen Community of London  
Karen Community of Ottawa  
Karen Community of Regina  
Karen Community of Saskatoon  
Karen Community Society of British Columbia  
Karen Community of Toronto  
Karen Community of Winnipeg  
Law Society of Ontario  
Lawyers' Rights Watch Canada  
Mae Sot Education Project  
Magrath's International Legal Counsel  
Menno Simons College, Canadian Mennonite University  
Montreal Institute for Genocide and Human Rights Studies  
National Union of Public and General Employees  
Nobel Women's Initiative  
Peacemakers Trust  
Project Umbrella Burma  
Quebec Movement for Peace

Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights  
Rohingya Activists  
Rohingya Association of Canada  
Rohingya Human Rights Network  
Rohingya ROSE FC  
Samuels & Co.  
Save Rohingya World Wide  
Shaarei-Beth El Congregation  
Thunder Bay Karen Community Association  
YWCA Canada

As individuals:

Abu Bakkar Siddik  
Aliya Khan  
Areeba Munawar  
Asie Uhlla  
Aslam Bulbulia  
Aung Kyaw Htet  
Brandon Silver  
Brian Rowe  
Catherine Morris  
Dean E. Peachey  
Elizabeth Lee  
Enam Ullah  
Fareed Khan  
Fareed Uddin  
Fiona Jeyachandran  
Frances Deverell  
Gail Davidson  
Gloriana Arnesto  
Hanna Bokhari  
The Hon. Irwin Cotler, Former Minister of Justice and Attorney General of Canada  
Jenny Reid  
Jodi Dueck-Read  
Joey Doyle  
Professor John Packer  
Jon Sears  
Joshua Lam  
K'Nyaw Htoo  
Karima Hefnawi  
Professor Kathleen Mahoney  
Kawli Mullah  
Kirt Mausert  
Kyle Matthews  
Dr. Laura Madokoro

Laurel McBride  
Mary Purkey  
Michael Luce  
Mohammed Ayub bin Mohamed  
Muhd yunus Bin Nazir Ahamed  
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Renee Mulligan  
Dr. Rhoda E. Howard-Hassmann  
Rod Germaine  
Dr. Ross Michael Pink  
Sarra Virji  
Sharjil Hussain, MD  
Professor Sharry Aiken  
Reverend Steve Berube  
Susan Breau  
Susan Hartley  
Yasmin Asgarali Glassford  
Yuriko Cowper-Smith  
Zartasha Zainab