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July 17, 2018

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Foreign Minister  
Government of Bangladesh  
Dhaka, Bangladesh



HRW.org

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**RE: Rohingya Refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh**

Dear Foreign Minister,

I am writing to seek your perspective on the ongoing Rohingya refugee situation in Bangladesh for a report we have prepared.

Human Rights Watch is an international organization that works in over 90 countries. We have worked on both Bangladesh and Myanmar for several decades. We have been documenting atrocities endured by the Rohingya by Myanmar authorities since the 1990s and have produced numerous documents establishing an ethnic cleansing campaign since August 2017.

We are also aware of the complex situation concerning Bangladesh's current accommodation of Rohingya refugees from Rakhine State. We fully recognize that culpability for this situation falls on the Myanmar government and military, and we are doing our utmost to hold them accountable. It is our sincere hope that the human rights situation in Rakhine State significantly improves, which will allow the Rohingya refugees currently accommodated in Bangladesh to return voluntarily in safety and dignity, but we are not optimistic that this will happen anytime soon.

We also acknowledge the Bangladesh government's need to balance its commendable protection of the Rohingya refugees with the development goals it has for its own citizens. However, we are concerned with several aspects of the current arrangements in the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. Ahead of releasing our report on August 6, 2018, we wanted to ask your views on the following:

**Lack of quality education available to children:** While there are informal education centres, it is important that Rohingya children can pursue a proper education. Are there plans to set up quality, accredited schools and incorporate students into the education system?

**Over-populated and unsanitary conditions:** The camps are extremely overcrowded and are presenting enormous challenges in delivering humanitarian and health assistance. Are there any plans to release more land, particularly in the Ukhiya subdistrict?

**Threats of floods and landslides:** There has been a herculean effort by the authorities to secure the camp site and relocate vulnerable populations. However, after sustained monsoon rain, and because many huts were built on steep, deforested slopes, there is severe risk of landslides. At last count, the UN system estimated that 215,000 refugees are at risk of flooding and landslides, but as of its July 4 report only 19,500 of the 42,000 at highest risk have been moved. What progress have you made to transfer those at risk to safer locations?

**Unsuitable shelters for weather conditions:** While there should be continued pressure on Myanmar to ensure safe returns swiftly, it appears that the refugees will be in Bangladesh much longer than previously anticipate. What are the plans to build sturdy and secure habitation?

**Lack of formal refugee status and restrictions on freedom of movement:** While we appreciate that the authorities have registered refugees and issued them identity cards, we note that the cards only list the bearer as a “forcibly displaced Myanmar national” and not as a refugee. Will you recognize the Rohingya who have fled ethnic cleansing in Myanmar as refugees with the rights that attach to that status, such as freedom of movement?

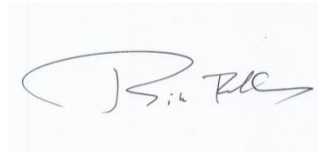
**Relocation to the island of Bhasan Char:** Based on satellite imagery and conditions in the area, including risk from cyclones and tidal waves this island appears to be unsuitable location to house the refugees. Are there plans to ensure independent evaluation of this project? How will the families be identified for relocation? Will they be given the choice to consent to the transfer? Will the government ensure their freedom of movement to come and go from the island?

Human Rights Watch strives to reflect all affected parties’ perspectives in our research and publications. We would be happy to reflect your responses in our press statements.

I would also like to meet you in person to provide you more details on our findings.

We thank you for your time and consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,



Bill Frelick  
Director, Refugee Program  
Human Rights Watch  
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