OpEd

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June 2016

"The power of identity"

Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi and the new Myanmar Go ernment ha e cautioned the international community again!t u!ing "emoti e term!# that could ma\$e the ten!ion! in %a\$hine !tate more di&&icult to addre!!' (hey are !)ea\$ing about the u!e o& the term "%ohingya# to re&er to the minority Mu!lim)o)ulation who ha e been li ing &or generation! in %a\$hine State o& ma*ority +uddhi!t Myanmar', owe er-terminology in thi! ca!e matter!- becau!e it !ymbolize! the recognition o& a community that ha! long been o))re!!ed' . enying anyone/! identity i! a !eriou! &orm o& di!crimination and neither the international community nor the go ernment o& Myanmar !hould com)romi!e when it come! to recogni!ing)eo)le!/ &undamental right!'

Our identity i! what de&ine! each o& u! 1 a! an indi idual- or a! a grou)' 2dentity tend! to be a!!ociated with race- religion- ethnicity- nationality- culture- gender- !e3ual orientation- and

(he %ohingya in Myanmar ha e been denied a national identity' (hey ha e been !tri))ed of their citizen!hi) I they are !tatele!!'; or many year! they ha e been !ub*ect to !e ere)ractice! and)olicie! of di!crimination and re!triction! to !ome of their mo!t fundamental right!- including the right to freedom of mo ement and the right to marry and found a family' (hou!and! di!)laced by the 2012 iolence ha e been li ing-!egregated- in 2. P cam)! and thou!and! more ha e been com)elled to flee by land or !ea' Many ha e been caught by networ\$! of human traffic\$er! or ha e died while trying to reach other countrie! in the region' 2n Myanmar- a cam)aign of dangerou! antilMu!lim and antil%ohingya "hate!)eech# by e3tremi!t! ha! the)otential to lead to further iolence'

< en the u!e o& the term "%ohingya# to de!cribe thi! religiou! and ethnic grou) ha! become !en!iti e and highly)olitici!ed' 2n &act- the %ohingya are not allowed to e3erci!e their right to !el&lidenti&ication- a right that i! recogni!ed by international human right! law and in the *uri!)rudence o& human right! treaty committee!' 2n!tead- derogatory term! ha e been u!ed to label them a! out!ider!- "&oreigner!# and- well- a! "unde!irable#"</p>

(he new Pre!ident and Go ernment of Myanmar are in a difficult)o!ition' (hey ha e to manage the e3)ectation! both of tho!e who want to)ur!ue and mo!t)robably !trengthen e3clu!ionary)olicie! again!t the %ohingya- a! well a! tho!e who e3)ect them to re er!e thi! trend' Mo!t notably- they ha e to find a way to unite the di er!e)o)ulation! of Myanmar !o that they li e along!ide each other in)eace and without)re*udice' 2n order to !ucceed- they will ha e to addre!! the root cau!e! of the ten!ion! between different communitie! and long!tanding grie ance!- and that will be challenging' +ut when we deny 1 or a!\$!omeone el!e to deny = an im)ortant a!)ect of an indi idual or community! identity- thi! i! tantamount to re*ecting who tho!e)eo)le are a! human being!' (hi! i! not acce)table'

2 !incerely ho)e the new Pre!ident and Go ernment o\(\) Myanmar will loo\(\) to Mandela a! a role model'