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Mr Josep Borrell Fontelles
High Representative of the Union for Foreign
Affairs and Security Policy
Vice-President of the European Commission

Mr Janez Lenarčič
European Commissioner for Crisis Management

October 21, 2020

Dear High Representative,

Dear Commissioner,

We write to encourage the EU, as one of the co-hosts of the October 22 donor conference raising humanitarian funding for the Rohingya crisis, to prioritize efforts to end the denial of Rohingya children's right to quality education, within an aggressive timeframe.

We applaud the EU's support for education for the Rohingya and globally, and its work at the upcoming conference to close the \$500 million gap in humanitarian funding for the Rohingya crisis this year, with additional funding needed for the Covid-19 response.

But even if donors fully fund the budgets of existing humanitarian education programs, and even if these education programs are fully re-opened after the closures and severe disruptions linked to Covid-19, Rohingya children will continue to be denied their right to education unless donors insist that funding for education go to implementation of a formal curriculum, as promised by the Bangladesh government.

There must be a paradigm shift in the international community's response to education for Rohingya children. International human rights law obliges countries to ensure that all children benefit from their right to quality education without discrimination. The core humanitarian principles set out by the International Network on Education in Emergencies oblige humanitarian actors to ensure that refugee communities play a leading role in the design, implementation, and monitoring of education responses. With regards to Rohingya children's education, these laws and standards have not been upheld.

In central Rakhine State, in Myanmar, around 65,000 Rohingya children are being detained in camps where they are for the most part provided, at best, with only basic instruction at "temporary learning centers." Access to



secondary education is limited to a single government school with 600 students, taught by only 2 teachers and 4 volunteer instructors. Rohingya students were expelled and barred from the last accessible university in Sittwe in 2012.

There are nearly 400,000 school-age Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh. None of these children has access to certified, formal primary or secondary education, or to university or college. More than three years after the latest wave of Rohingya refugees arrived, there is no agreed plan between the government and humanitarian agencies that would remove these barriers to education. For more than a year after their arrival in Bangladesh in August 2017, Rohingya children had no access to education, including structured non-formal education. Since mid-2019, younger children have been instructed in a “learning competency framework approach,” which is not formal or accredited and which comprises only a few years of lessons.

The Bangladesh government has also detained more than 300 Rohingya refugees, including at least 33 children, on the remote island of Bhasan Char. These children are being denied any form of education whatsoever. Ignoring pleas from the refugees to be reunited with their families back in the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh has instead pushed ahead on plans to relocate some 100,000 refugees to the island absent a UN expert assessment of the habitability of the island and determination of whether the refugees’ rights will be protected, including access to education.

Rohingya refugees have consistently stressed the high value they place on their children’s education, and their strong preference for studying the Myanmar curriculum. Rohingya refugees in the camps themselves established a network of unofficial schools that teach the Myanmar curriculum, with around 10,000 students, without any funding or support from the international community. In January 2020, the Bangladesh government approved a “pilot” program to allow 10,000 children to study the Myanmar curriculum, from classes 6 through 9. There is no public information as to whether Myanmar will support the accreditation of refugee students’ education in Bangladesh, whether Bangladesh will certify or recognize the students’ progress, or when the program will be scaled up to reach all Rohingya children. There is no information as to what training or vocational programs will be made available to Rohingya refugee youth who have aged out of available education programs.

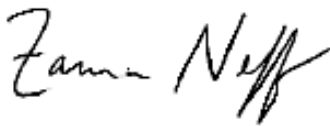
Bangladesh authorities are building fences around refugee camps, which severely restricts Rohingya’s freedom of movement and creates safety concerns in the event of evacuations, without showing that such severe restrictions are necessary and proportionate. The authorities have cited concerns about the deterioration of the security situation in the refugee camps as a purported justification for the fencing, but have essentially blocked education for Rohingya youth who fall into the age range most at risk of criminal activity in the camps.

Bangladesh also bars formal education, including in refugee camps and at public and private schools, to Rohingya refugees who entered in the 1990s or before, and to their children born in Bangladesh.

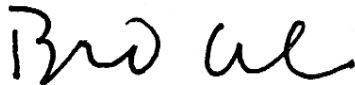
We therefore encourage you to make four public demands at the upcoming conference, and to design funding policies accordingly:

- That the Myanmar authorities lift barriers to Rohingya children's access to education, including desegregating Rakhine State schools, allowing children to enroll in schools outside the detention camps, and reinstating full access to Sittwe University, and that the authorities coordinate with Bangladesh and humanitarian agencies to accredit education in the Myanmar curriculum for Rohingya refugee children.
- That Bangladesh urgently lift barriers to education for Rohingya refugee children, including restrictions on secondary education, enrollment in public and private schools, on formal education beyond a pilot program, and pledge to certify Rohingya's education.
- That humanitarian actors working with Rohingya refugees implement the core INEE principle that refugee communities play a leading role in education programming.
- That Bangladesh returns refugees currently held on Bhasan Char to their families in Cox's Bazar, and upholds promises not to relocate any refugees to the island until UN humanitarian experts have conducted an independent assessment of the island and deemed it safe for voluntary relocation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Zama Neff". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Zama" and last name "Neff" clearly distinguishable.

Zama Neff
Executive Director
Children's Rights Division

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brad Adams". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Brad" and last name "Adams" clearly distinguishable.

Brad Adams
Executive Director
Asia Division