

Speech Excerpts

Instructions: Read the following excerpts from the September 19, 2017 speech by the leader of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi. As you read, circle any words you do not know. If you notice any statements that conflict with the news article or the personal accounts, underline them.

“When our people voted...in the elections of 2015, they, in fact, entrusted to us the task of carrying out three responsibilities: democratic transition, peace and stability, and development. None of these challenges are easy or simple. Transition for us is a transition to democracy after half a century or more of authoritarian rule...

“I think it is only fitting that I should remind you that today our government has not yet been in power for even eighteen months.... Eighteen months is a very short time in which to expect us to meet and overcome all the challenges....I’m aware of the fact that the world’s attention is focused on the situation in Rakhine State, and... as a responsible member of the community of nations, Myanmar does not fear international scrutiny, and we are committed to a sustainable solution that would lead to peace, stability, and development for all communities within that state....

“Unhappily, on 9th October [2016], eighteen days after the delivery of my address at the General Assembly, three police outposts were attacked by armed Muslim groups. There were further attacks on 11th October and 12th November, and these clashes resulted in loss of lives, injuries, burning of villages, and the displacement of peoples in the affected areas. Many Muslims fled to Bangladesh. Since then, the government has been making every effort to restore peace and stability and to promote harmony between the Muslim and Rakhine communities....

“After several months of seemingly quiet and peace, on the twenty-fifth of August, thirty police outposts as well as the regimental headquarters...were attacked by armed groups....The security forces have been instructed to adhere strictly to the code of conduct in carrying out security operations, to exercise all due restraint, and to take full measures to avoid collateral damage and the harming of innocent civilians. Human rights violations and all other acts that impair stability and harmony and undermine the rule of law will be addressed in accordance with strict norms of justice.

“We feel deeply for the suffering of all the people who have been caught up...in the conflict. Those who have had to flee their homes are many. Not just Muslims and Rakhines, but also small minority groups...of whose presence most of the world is totally unaware....

“Since the 5th of September, there have been no armed clashes.... Nevertheless, we are concerned to hear that numbers of Muslims are fleeing across the border to Bangladesh. We want to find out why this exodus is happening. We would like to talk to those who have fled as well as to those who have stayed.

“I think it is very little known that the great majority of Muslims in the Rakhine State have not joined the exodus. More than 50 percent of the villages of Muslims are intact. They are as they were before the attacks took place, and, we would like to know why. This is what I think we have to work towards, not just looking at the problems but also looking at those areas where there are no problems....

“And for this reason, we would like to invite the members of our diplomatic community to join us in our endeavor to learn more from the Muslims who have integrated successfully into the Rakhine State. If you are interested in joining us in our endeavors, please let us know. We can arrange for you to visit these areas and to ask them for yourself why they have not fled, why they have chosen to remain in their villages, even at a time when everything around them seems to be in a state of turmoil.

“With regard to citizenship, a strategy with [a] specific timeline has been developed to move forward the national verification process.... In some Muslim communities, their leaders have decided that they are not to join in the verification process. We would appreciate it if all friends could persuade them to join in the process because they have nothing to lose by it....

“And as we go forward in our efforts to redress the ills of this nation, I would like to ask our friends who understand and sympathize with both our aspirations and our problems to join us. We would like [you] to join us in a positive, constructive way to find new paths towards peace and stability, towards harmony. We would like you to think of our country as a whole, not just as little, afflicted areas. It is as a whole only that we can make progress.... “We all have to join together. I accept that the real responsibility lies with us, the people of this country. All the people of Myanmar, from the government to each and every single individual within this country, has a responsibility for the development and the progress of this country.”