بسم الله الرحمن الرحيم

The Failure of the UN's Humanitarian Responsibility Towards Myanmar and the Urgent Need for Muslim Ummah Unity

News:

According to a Bernama report published on November 16, 2026, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres addressed his final ASEAN-UN Summit in Manila, describing the humanitarian suffering in Myanmar as having reached "epic proportions." Guterres urged all involved parties to protect civilians, uphold international law, and ensure unhindered humanitarian access, while reaffirming the UN's support for ASEAN's Five-Point Consensus and calling for an inclusive, Myanmar-led political solution. Beyond Myanmar, Guterres commended ASEAN's role in sustaining the ceasefire between Cambodia and Thailand and noted progress on the South China Sea Code of Conduct negotiations. He also emphasized the need to defend navigational freedoms, reform the UN Security Council and international financial institutions to better represent rising economies, and address global challenges such as climate change, rising living costs, and responsible artificial intelligence. Guterres, who will conclude his second and final term on December 31, 2026, noted the expansion of ASEAN-UN cooperation since his first summit in 2017. Malaysian Prime Minister Datuk Seri Anwar Ibrahim also attended the summit to lead Malaysia's delegation. (Source)

Comment:

António Guterres's remarks at his final ASEAN-UN Summit in Manila offer an opportunity to reflect on the United Nations' increasingly questionable role in addressing global humanitarian crises. His description of the humanitarian suffering in Myanmar as having reached "epic proportions," accompanied by calls to protect civilians, uphold international law, and facilitate humanitarian assistance, raises a fundamental question: what has the UN actually achieved in preventing and resolving humanitarian tragedies?

Under the UN Charter, protecting international peace and security, promoting human rights, and addressing humanitarian crises are central commitments shared by the organization and its member states. The UN framework provides several mechanisms for responding to serious violations, ranging from diplomatic pressure and economic sanctions to, under specific legal conditions, collective military action authorized by the Security Council. Yet, the existence of these mechanisms does not necessarily translate into meaningful action.

The problem lies partly in the political structure of the United Nations itself. The dominance of major powers, particularly through the Security Council and its veto system, has made international responses heavily dependent on the strategic interests of a handful of influential states. Consequently, decisions concerning humanitarian intervention and international justice are frequently shaped not only by legal and moral considerations but also by geopolitical calculations. The principles of human rights and international protection therefore encounter significant limitations when they conflict with the interests of powerful states.

This reflects a deeper contradiction within the contemporary international order. While the international system frequently promotes human rights, freedom, and equality, the application of these principles remains uneven. The suffering of oppressed Muslim communities, including those experiencing occupation, displacement, and prolonged political repression, demonstrates how international protection can remain inaccessible to those who need it most.

For Muslims, this situation should encourage a serious reflection on political unity and independence. Reliance on international institutions and initiatives led by Western powers cannot be the sole foundation for addressing the political and humanitarian challenges facing Muslim communities. Greater political coordination, economic strength, and credible military capabilities are essential elements of strategic independence. Such capacities would enable Muslim societies to formulate and pursue their own responses to crises, while engaging with international institutions from a position of greater strength. This failure of the UN further demonstrates the emergency situation for Muslims to unite under the leadership of a global power through the establishment of the Islamic State, the Islamic Caliphate (Khilafah).

Written for the Central Media Office of Hizb ut Tahrir by

Abdullah Aswar