

Answer to Question: Myanmar (Burma)

Question:

Kindly give us an overview about the political reality of Myanmar (Burma) and the reasons for the terrible persecution of Muslims there, as well as the regional and international stances towards it, with thanks and appreciation.

Answer: Below is an overview of what is necessary regarding this issue.

1- The population of this country is more than 50 million, including around 20% Muslims who are concentrated in the capital city of Rangoon, the city of Mandalay and the province of Arakan. 70% of the inhabitants are Buddhists and the rest embrace Hinduism, Christianity and other religions. Burma, however, recognizes only a tiny 4% of the Muslims and considers the remaining Muslims as foreigners. Consequently, it works to expel them and neither grants them the country's nationality nor does it recognize any rights for them. Hence, they are exposed to attacks by Buddhists, with the support of the regime to the extent that they are being killed and forced to emigrate.

2- The historians mention that Islam entered the country in 788 CE at the time of the Khaleefah Harun al-Rashid, when the Islamic Khilafah was the leading state in the world for many centuries. Islam began to spread throughout Burma, when the Burmese saw its greatness, truth and justice. The Muslims ruled Arakan province for more than three and half centuries, between 1430 and 1784 CE. In this year, the kuffar got united against the province. Subsequently, the Buddhists occupied it and wreaked havoc in the province, killing the Muslims and shedding their blood, particularly their scholars and da'I, besides looting their resources and destroying the Islamic architectures from Masajid and schools, due to their hatred and fanaticism from their Buddhist ignorance.

3- There existed in the region colonialist division and competition between Britain and France. The British occupied and colonized Burma in 1824 CE, whilst the French occupied and colonized the neighboring Laos. In 1937, Britain separated its colony Burma from "the Government of British India". So, it became a separate British colony to be administered by this government under the name "the Government of British Burma" and the Arakan province was made subservient to this government, under the control of Buddhists.

4- In 1940 during the World War II, a movement known as the, "Thirty Comrades – the Burma Independence Army," was established in this colony. This movement was formed by thirty people of Burmese nationality, who received their training in Japan and vowed to expel the British occupiers. They entered their country with Japanese occupiers in 1941. At that time, Burma was one of the lines of confrontation between Britain and Japan, until Japan was defeated at the end of World War II in 1945. Then, Britain once again managed to extend its colonialization of Burma. In 1942 CE, the Muslims were exposed to massacres at the hands of the Buddhists, which claimed the lives of around one thousand Muslims and led to the expulsion of hundreds of thousands of them out of the country. In 1948 CE, Britain granted Burma formal independence and one year later, i.e. in 1947 CE Britain held a conference preparing for independence and called on all the groups and ethnicities in the country to the conference, barring the Muslims. At the conference, Britain laid down a clause stipulating that rights shall be given to every group and ethnicity within ten years of the independence. However, the Burmese government did not implement that and continued persecuting Muslims.

5- In 1962, a military coup occurred in Burma under the leadership of the military general, Ne Win. He established a military council in the name of the State Council for Restoring Law and Order and ruled the country directly until 1988, with the Council remaining until 1997 under the control of Ne Win. In 1990, elections were held and the opposition National Democratic Party got a majority of the seats. However, the military government did not recognize the transfer of power until a new constitution was drafted and continuous meetings have been held since 1993 to draft a new constitution. In the wake of this coup, the Muslims became vulnerable to the persecution from the fanatical Buddhist military rule, which forced more than three thousand Muslims to migrate to Bangladesh. More than half a million Muslims were expelled from the country in 1978, with more than forty thousand of them, including elderly, women and children, dying due to the harsh conditions imposed on them, according to statistics of the refugee aid agency of the United Nations. In 1988, more than 150 thousand Muslims migrated abroad and more than half a million Muslims became subjected to migration and expulsion from the country, in retaliation for their support to the opposition party, which won a majority of the seats in the Council in 1990. The government of the country turned to looking at the Muslims as strangers and not as the inhabitants of the country, depriving their children of education and of marriage before thirty years of age. It even imposed on them a bar on any marriage for a period of three years, so as to reduce their number and the worst practices were implemented against them by the government. In 1989, the government changed its name from Burma in English, to "Myanmar." There are countries which recognized the second name, whilst some other counties recognize and use only the first name.

6- The military continued to rule Burma, sometimes directly supported by the English and at some other times through the British agent India. The system of governance in Burma/Myanmar has ostensibly been made closer to the communist one, to win support of Russia and China, thereby drawing a cover over its reality, just as many regimes in the Arab world draw covers over their loyalty to America or Britain, thereby trying to establish good relations with the communists, particularly Russia and China. America had previously protested India's role in supporting the military regime and its close cooperation with it. France's news agency, whilst reporting the Indian Prime Minister, Manmohan Singh's, visit to Burma on 28/5/2012 and concluding a series of the agreements, stated that "India established good relations with Military Council during the nineties of the last century, particularly in the area of security and energy. In 2010, Washington condemned India's silence on the human rights' violations in Burma. Even Suu Kyi, who completed part of her studies in India, where her mother is ambassador, expressed her grief at India's support for the military rule in her country". In November 2007, the news agencies quoted Washington's appeal to both India and China to stop providing the military regime in Burma with weapons. The military regime in Burma granted China military facilities in its ports in the Bay of Bengal and in the Indian Ocean, with the aim of gaining China's support in view of the US attack on it and also it is in China's interest to establish a port in Burma, towards the Indian Ocean. India shares with China a land border of two thousand kilometers, to its north-east, and India also shares a land border with Burma, to the latter's north-western side, which used to follow the government of British India. And after Britain's formal departure from Burma, India became its guardian and so Burma stood under India's protection and support.

7- America raised public opinion against the military rule and focused the attention of public opinion on the leader of the opposition, Aung San Suu Kyi, until she was released in November 2010. Then it increased pressure on the military council and raised public opinion against it so that the Council dissolves itself and hands the reign over to the civilians. But Britain along with the government of India treated the matter shrewdly. They prompted the Council to call for general elections, applying the methods that they are well-versed in... So the elections were held in 2010 in which the Solidarity and Development Party won about 80% of the seats, which is the party of Military. The Military Council dissolved itself and handed the reigns over to the civilians. These

civilians are retired generals, led by the retired General Thein Sein who took over the rule in March 2011.

8- America is still putting pressure on the regime in Burma, in order to dissociate the military regime of retired generals and bring the opposition leader, demonstrating its full support to Aung San Suu Kyi and her National Democratic Party. So, they are publishing future analysis with the possibility of opposing leader winning the general election of 2015. The US Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, paid a visit to Burma on 1 December 2011 and announced that her country would appoint an ambassador for the first time in twenty years and that it would ease sanctions in line with progress of democratic reforms in Burma. On 01/04/2011, partial elections were held over 45 seats and the National Democratic Party, headed by opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, won 43 seats. In spite of this, U.S Secretary of State clarified saying, "it is still early to judge how much progress has been made in the recent months in Burma and whether it shall continue to," (AFP 2/4/2011). In this way the US Secretary of State wanted to exert pressure on the Burmese regime, making the credibility of progress in the democratic process doubtful, because the military in their civil form are the ones who are ruling the country and imposing their control on the political scene of Burma. Under the constitution drafted by the military in the nineties of the last century, a quarter of the seats in Parliament can be appointed by the military, without elections. Thus, America is not satisfied with the political situation in Burma, although they have made progress by getting the opposition leader released, whose party is undertaking political activity. However they are continuously applying pressure on the regime and apparently questioning its credibility, seeking to apply more pressure so that they can dislodge the military, which is loyal to the British government, from power.

9- On the other hand, Britain's position was supportive as its Foreign Minister, William Hague, positively commented on what is happening in Burma and said, "The UK, which is regarded as the largest provider of bilateral aid to the people in Burma, stands ready to support the political process in Burma" (Associated Press on 3/4/2012). Its Prime Minister, David Cameron, after the elections, visited Burma and is considered the first Western head to visit Burma, since the coup of 1962. He praised the Burmese regime saying, "Now there is a government which asserts that it is determined to carry out reformatations and has taken certain measures in this regard and I think this is a good time to come here and encourage these measures," (Associated France Press on 13/4/2012). He met with Burmese president, Thein Sein, who said, "we are delighted at your support on the efforts we are making to promote the democracy and human rights in Burma." And so, Britain is satisfied with the political situation in Myanmar, being supported by it.

10- On 3/6/2012, a group of Buddhists attacked a bus carrying Muslims and killed nine of them. In the wake of this mishap, events such as killing and burning of houses and expulsion broke out between Buddhists and Muslims, until it covered several populated areas of Muslims and tens of thousands of them started to migrate from their homes. Bangladesh refused to assist those fleeing to its land, rather it sent them back and closed the borders in their faces. In the same season last year, Muslims got exposed to similar attacks and were forced to flee the country. For decades, every year they are faced with such incidents of killing, displacement and expulsion from their homes, as well as demolition of their houses at the hands of spiteful Buddhists by the support of Burmese regime. The West, led by America, applauds the new regime for releasing the leader of opposition and for democratization of the country, without paying any attention to the sufferings faced by the Muslims. The US Embassy in Burma issued a statement mentioning that the Charge d'Affaires of the Embassy, Michael Thurston, had met with local Muslim organizations in Yangon and with the National Development Party in Arakan separately. Thurston said, "The most important thing now is that all parties should remain calm and that there is a need for more dialogue which can occur only when there is calm." He further said, "The Embassy encourages the Government of Myanmar to investigate the incidents in such a way that it respects the legal process and the rule of law."

(Associated Press of America on 14/6/2012), i.e. America advises the people who are exposed to killing and expulsion that you have to remain calm and you must adhere to dialogue and respect the legal procedures! This is because those who are being killed and displaced are Muslims. But when the Buddhist monks marched in the 20/9/2007 and were repressed by the military regime in Burma, America stood up, raised concern and imposed harsh sanctions on Burma and then other Western countries followed suit. This shows that America is not bothered by the suffering of the Muslims, nor does it pay any heed to it. Moreover, it is only interested in realizing its interests and extending its influence and in general this is the position of the whole West, which is hostile to Islam and Muslims.

11- In summary; the regime in Burma, which in the past was directly controlled by the generals in military uniform, and is now being controlled by the retired generals in civilian dress, is still loyal to the British, who have supported the regime secretly and openly, directly and indirectly, through their agents in India. Also the British have supported the Buddhists in the killing and torturing of Muslims, not only in recent times, but ever since the Islamic rule came to an end in that country. In their method of political deceitfulness, the British have brought the military regime in Burma closer to the communists from Russia and China, in order to gain their support in case the US launches an attack against this regime.

With regards to the US, it supports the National Democratic Party led by Aung San Suu Kyi and made her win the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991. Her father Aung Sang was opposed to the British and was killed in 1947, with the opposition leader accused of killing him. Her father was considered a champion of the independence.

In spite of the political tussle between America and Britain in Burma, they agree to support the Buddhists in torturing the Muslims, without the West being moved by any alleged humane feelings, except in some hollow public statements. However, they protest if the monks are faced with the repression of their protest or get exposed to prison by any rival Buddhist.

As for China, it supports the regime to achieve the economic and strategic interests therein without gaining any political influence in the country.

And as for the rulers in the Muslim countries, they are subservient to America and the West in totality. So they are completely inactive, even the neighboring Bangladesh does not support its Muslim brothers, who are exposed to severe persecution and ethnic cleansing for over hundreds of years. In addition, not only do they not help them but they also clamp down on those who take refuge in Bangladesh and close the borders for them. These rulers instead of responding to the command of Allah (swt), ﴿وَإِنْ اسْتَنْصَرُواكُم فِى الدِّينِ فَعَلَيْكُمُ النَّصْرُ﴾ **“and if they seek your help in religion, it is your duty to help them”** [Surah Al-Anfaal 8:72] respond to America and other Western countries and send troops to other conflict zones, bearing marks of the forces of United Nations on their heads and shoulders!

Good deeds are not expected from these rulers; rather they are bent on evil and the security will not return to the Muslims in that country unless the Khilafah (Caliphate) returns under which they took refuge and sought protection since the rule of Khaleefah Harun al-Rashid and for more than three and half centuries, because it is only the Khilafah which will provide them security and will spread the good deeds throughout the world and the Khilafah is, inshaaAllah, on the horizon.

6 Sha'ban 1433 AH
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