



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

## The Muslim Community Center, Inc.

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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** – MCC Holds Forum on Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar

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**The Muslim Community Center (MCC)** of Silver Spring, Maryland, one of the oldest Muslim faith-based organizations in the Washington, DC area, hosted a forum last month to inform and educate community members about the crisis facing the ethnic Rohingya Muslim population in Myanmar.

Informative presentations were delivered by Adem Carroll, New York and United Nations Program Director for Burma Task Force USA; Bilal Raschid, a Burmese Muslim, architect and civil engineer, and former democracy activist for decades in Myanmar; Mir Ali, President of the Bdesh Foundation, a charity group that is building and improving refugee camps in Bangladesh for Rohingya refugees, and Michael DeLong, a member of the International Campaign for the Rohingya, which is working to advocate for them with governments, international organizations, corporations and civil society.

Carroll gave community members a brief history of the 1.3 million Rohingya people and their ancestral home of Rakhine state in Myanmar; because the Myanmar government regards them as “illegal” Bangladeshi migrants, it is important to understand that historical records indicate the Muslim presence in Rakhine state as early as the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The current extremes of antagonism toward them have roots in discrimination that traces back to Burma’s independence from colonial Britain 1948. Systemic inequities resulted in an oppressive, troubled existence, that exploded into military attacks on the Rohingya in 2016 after former democracy activist and Nobel Peace Prize recipient Aung San Suu Kyi came to power.

Speaker Bilal Raschid offered unparalleled insight into much of the last 30 years’ political turmoil in Myanmar. Both his father and grandfather fought and worked for Burma’s independence; his father was a close friend of General Aung San and served in former Prime Minister U Nu’s cabinets for ten years, being the only Muslim in Burma’s cabinet at the time of the military coup. Raschid has been involved in efforts to restore freedom and democracy to Myanmar for the last 27 years; he explained how his hopes to see justice for the Rohingya were slowly dashed after his friend Suu Kyi came to power, and how she has been unwilling to stand against the same military that first destroyed democracy in her country.

Both Carroll and Raschid described how military attacks on the Rohingya, which have resulted in tens of thousands of deaths and massive displacement, have been falsified or denied by Suu Kyi’s government. Mir Ali described some of the work that is being done to support those who have become refugees across the border in Bangladesh, where the Bdesh Foundation is creating tube wells and sanitary latrines and showers for refugees in camps and launching an ongoing

medical mission there as well. And speaker Michael DeLong from the International Campaign for the Rohingya (ICR) provided information on how we as Americans can affect change by educating others about the situation, and by pressuring our representatives to encourage our government to name this crisis a genocide.

Aside from our prayers for our suffering brothers and sisters, there is much we can do to help alleviate their suffering. Donate to organizations like Bdesb Foundation (<http://www.bdesbfoundation.org/>) who are among the few providing immediate relief to suffering refugees; another is MedGlobal (<https://www.medglobal.org/>), which has a medical mission for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. We can also spread awareness among our groups of the facts of this situation – more information can be found at <http://www.rohingyacampaign.org/> and <https://www.burmapmuslims.org/resources>, and pressure our local and federal governments to take action by designating the Burmese military's campaign as "genocide."

This event was coordinated by MCC's Public Relations Committee, with committee Chair Tasnuva Khan establishing a coalition with the Burma Task Force, Bdesb Foundation and the ICR to continue to engage with community partners and elected officials toward these goals. Khan will be collaborating with this coalition to organize a community lobbying day for the Rohingya next month – please contact her at [pr@mccmd.org](mailto:pr@mccmd.org) for more information on this and other related initiatives.

*MCC's mission is to promote brotherhood and human dignity among all by developing an environment of understanding, compassion, and justice in our personal and professional lives. We strive to serve the needs of the Muslim community and community at large in a manner that promotes its positive image and standing in a changing environment. We aim to represent the Muslim community in interfaith circles, in government, public and media relations, and in the society at large.*

PHOTOS ATTACHED BELOW













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For more information, please email [info@mccmd.org](mailto:info@mccmd.org) or call 301-384-3454