



PEARL Applauds World Court Decision Order to Prevent Rohingya Genocide

(Washington, D.C., January 23, 2020) Today, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) ordered Myanmar to enact measures to halt the ongoing genocide against the Rohingya in a case filed by The Gambia pursuant to the Genocide Convention.

PEARL welcomes this legally binding ruling, which is a blow to impunity and a demonstration of international, namely South-South, solidarity. We are especially inspired by the Gambian Justice Minister Abubacarr Tambadou's personal commitment to protecting people from genocide. We are encouraged that the ICJ unanimously supported Rohingya genocide victims by requiring Myanmar to prevent acts of genocide, ensure its military and police do not commit acts of genocide, prevent the destruction of and preserve evidence of acts of genocide, and regularly report on its compliance with these steps. The orders were sent to the UN Security Council, which is enabled to ensure the implementation of the provisional measures. PEARL urges the Security Council to protect the Rohingya people from genocide — something the Council failed to do for Eelam Tamils in 2009.

Myanmar's oppression of the Rohingya and Sri Lanka's of the Tamil people are rooted in the same extremist Buddhist nationalist ideology pervasive among their respective majority populations. Racism and supremacist ideology occurs in many countries around the world, and it too often turns into identity-based violence and genocide, as seen for decades in both Myanmar and Sri Lanka. The Sri Lankan state also stands accused of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and the same four acts of genocide the ICJ order intends to stop in Myanmar. Over 100,000 Tamils were killed in the post-independence ethnic conflict, including through ethnic pogroms, the deliberate shelling of designated civilian safe zones, and extrajudicial killings, including of hundreds, if not thousands of Tamil detainees.

This ICJ ruling is a ray of hope for victims and survivors of genocide around the world, including Tamils who struggle against persecution, impunity, inaction, and a fear of loss of evidence of the genocide against them. Their pains have only increased under the new president Gotabaya Rajapaksa, an alleged war criminal himself. PEARL hopes this ruling is a turning point in favor of justice. The rights- and rules-based global order cannot allow state-perpetrators of genocide such as Myanmar and Sri Lanka to elude justice — a prerequisite for non-recurrence and peace. We urge like-minded countries, including small states, to increase their pursuit of justice, especially for the most heinous, often identity-based crimes.