

Myanmar's "Unpeople Rohingya": Expose the Duplicity of Aung San Suu Kyi

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Aung San Suu Kyi has finally laid her cards on the table. No more bewilderment about why the holder of the Nobel Peace Prize (a worthless honorific most often awarded war criminals), the democracy icon known as "the Mandela of Asia," the holder of dozens of international honorifics as a champion of human rights has remained dead silent on the genocide against Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar.

Media reports the conflict as primarily a religious one between Muslims & Buddhists but Rohingyas have been subject for decades to violent state-sponsored persecution & discrimination conducted by the military, including denial of citizenship (though they have lived in the region for decades), religious persecution, forced labor, land confiscations, arbitrary taxation & various forms of extortion, forced eviction & house destruction, restrictions on travel for health & work, restrictions on marriage, education, & trade. The violence is so extreme & sustained going back decades that hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas flee for asylum to Malaysia & to squalid refugee camps in Thailand & Bangladesh. Myanmar now has forced nearly 150,000 to live in concentration camps.

For years, Suu Kyi dummied up when reporters asked her about the genocide or answered in platitudes urging people to get along with each other or evasions calling for rule of law. Her evasions were taken as diplomacy even though it's really hard to be a champion of human rights if diplomacy is your schtick. Usually daring & fearlessness are essential qualities of such champions, not cowardice or talking with marbles in your mouth.

But now Suu Kyi is the head of state in what is called (without a hint of sarcasm) "Myanmar's first democratically elected government since 1962." She won that election through a loathsome compromise with the military junta & by supporting their neoliberal policies bringing in foreign investment & mining projects at the expense of farmers & rural workers. Some of those farmers & villagers were way ahead of the rest of the world in understanding her betrayals when they booed her out of town for saying the expropriations of their lands & destruction of the environment were "for the greater good."

Now the NY Times reports that in a recent meeting, Suu Kyi advised the US ambassador against using the term "Rohingya" to describe the Muslim people of Myanmar because her government does not recognize them as citizens. Using the same kind of marble-mouthed deceptions she used to blither to reporters, her representative told the ambassador, "We won't use the term Rohingya because Rohingyas are not recognized as among the 135 official ethnic groups." He added, "Our position is that using the controversial term does not support the national reconciliation process & solving problems."

The US government is hardly the champion of human rights in all this. Hillary Clinton & Obama have both made high profile visits to Myanmar & paid homage to Suu Kyi as a human rights advocate. US multinationals are pouring billions of investment into Myanmar. If the US ambassador expresses any concern about genocide against Rohingya, it is only that the genocide not come back to interfere with those investments.

Solidarity with Rohingya Muslims against genocide & for justice means educating about their struggle against genocide & part of that education requires exposing the murderous duplicity & collusion of Suu Kyi.

Mary Scully has fifty years of political activism behind her in the US: antiwar, women's rights, civil rights, Palestinian solidarity (since 1967), in particular. She is running as an independent socialist candidate for US president 2016.

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