

Statement against Severe Rights Violations towards the Rohingya People

9th November 2017

Following social work values and ethics, we at the Japanese Federation of Social Workers issue the following statement against the severe rights violations towards the Rohingya people.

In Myanmar, due to attacks by armed forces and dire conditions in camps affecting the Rohingya people with an estimated population between a few hundred thousand and one million, there is a constant flow of Rohingya people fleeing from the country. UNICEF states that ‘there are more than 500 thousand Rohingya refugees who relocated to Bangladesh from the state of Rakhine in Myanmar to escape violence’, 60 percent of them being children, and warns that their life is in danger.

Japanese Foreign Minister Kono expressed ‘serious concerns regarding the local human rights and humanitarian conditions’ and the Japanese government indicated a policy to provide a support of approximately four million US dollars to the government of Bangladesh for hosting refugees from Myanmar. This should of course be welcomed.

On the other hand, with regard to the problems the Rohingya are facing, while they stem from the domestic political structure such as that under the constitution of Myanmar the national armed forces control the army and the police, it is also a fact that they have evolved into clearly international problems involving neighboring countries, considering that there are not only no signs of improvement on the home front and some Rohingya people have reached even Japan.

In view of the above, the Japanese Federation of Social Workers demands that the Japanese government take leadership in any interventions by the international community regarding this problem and that the East Asian as well as the broader international community take steps to protect the Rohingya people from these severe violations of their rights.

Further on, as members of the International Federation of Social Workers, we hereby declare that we will continue to join in solidarity with international society and engage this problem.

The Japanese Federation of Social Workers is formed by four organizations of social workers (the Japanese Association of Social Workers, the Japanese Association of Certified Social Workers, the Japanese Association of Social Workers in Health Services, and the Japanese Association of Psychiatric Social Workers) that follow the principles of social justice and respect for human rights and engage in practice advocating for people’s rights. In the *Code of Ethics for Social Workers* adopted by the four organizations, ‘Ethical Responsibility to Society’ is described the following way.

1. (Social Inclusion)

Social workers shall protect people from all kinds of discrimination, poverty, oppression, exclusion, violence, environmental destruction, and other factors and strive for an inclusive society.

2. (Engaging Society)

Social workers shall join in solidarity with service users and other professionals and engage society in an effective manner in order to correct injustices in society and solve problems faced by service users.

3. (Engaging International Society)

Social workers shall join in solidarity with social workers all over the world and engage international society in order to solve international problems related to human rights and social justice.