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“A textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” These are the words used by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein describing the treatment of the Rohingya people. What is happening right now in Burma (Myanmar) may very well go down in history as genocide should the world fail to act.

The number of Rohingya fleeing the brutal crackdown by Myanmar's military has now topped 370,000 and is expected to grow. Were these atrocities targeting a minority religious group committed by an entrenched dictatorship, it would be horrific enough. But this is in a country whose de facto leader is Nobel Prize winner Aung San Suu Kyi, a woman who was once revered as a champion of the struggle for human rights.

International condemnation is widespread. Aung San Suu Kyi's fellow Nobel laureates have spoken out, including Desmond Tutu and Malala Yousafzai. In the US, Senator Dick Durbin has introduced a resolution in Congress, “condemning horrific acts of violence against Burma’s Rohingya population.”

Thus far, Aung San Suu Kyi has been unresponsive to the widespread reproach. Her official office has been dismissive, calling news reports of mass rape by the military "fake news," claiming the Rohingya are burning their own villages, and accusing international aid workers trying to assist fleeing refugees of helping “terrorists.”

Despite international outrage over the genocidal acts committed by Burma's military, one other major group has remained mute; the large number of western corporations that quickly moved into Myanmar immediately following the cessation of sanctions, at a time when Burma had not yet established a stable path toward democracy.

In the face of the violence being directed against the Rohingya people, it is the moral responsibility of business leaders, especially those western companies now working in Burma, to use their voices and their economic influence. They have the means to strongly encourage Myanmar's government to immediately cease this ethnic cleansing operation of the Muslim population in Rakhine state.

In this calamity now unfolding, silence makes one an accomplice. For every company that remains silent to the suffering of the Rohingya people and continues forward with business as usual in Burma, they will find themselves on the wrong side of history.

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