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Dimitrina Petrova
Executive Director

Mr. Mohamed Mijarul Quayes
Foreign Secretary
People's Republic of Bangladesh
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Segunbagicha,
Dhaka,

15 June 2012

Dear Secretary Quayes,

RE: Concern regarding the closing of Bangladeshi Border to Rohingya Refugees

The Equal Rights Trust is deeply concerned by the recent violence in North Rakhine State, Myanmar, which has resulted in hundreds of refugees attempting to flee the country. A statement published by the Trust yesterday – and enclosed with this letter – calls on all parties including the international community and UN Agencies to urgently act to protect the victims of this violence. ERT's recommendations in this statement to the People's Republic of Bangladesh are reiterated below:

ERT urges the Government of Bangladesh to prevent further escalation of this humanitarian disaster by opening its borders to Rohingya refugees fleeing violence and persecution in Myanmar and refraining from the involuntary repatriation of all refugees and persons of concern. It is essential that full cooperation is given to the international community in providing humanitarian support and protection to displaced communities.

ERT is aware that Bangladesh has disproportionately shouldered the burden of Rohingya refugees who fled Myanmar in the 1970s and 1990s, and at present hosts over 250,000 Rohingya in its territory. As an international organisation committed to promoting equality as a tool of social justice, ERT believes that the international community must share this burden with Bangladesh, and is of the view that resources will be forthcoming for this purpose, and that this issue can be effectively addressed through dialogue with the international community and UN Agencies. In the short term therefore, ERT urges the Government of Bangladesh to respond to this present crisis by opening its borders to refugees fleeing violence and persecution, in the same spirit that neighbouring India opened its borders to Bangladeshi refugees in 1971.

In light of the growing number of voices both within Bangladesh and internationally calling on Bangladesh to uphold its international obligations and provide refuge to those fleeing persecution, ERT hopes that Bangladesh will review its present policy and welcome refugees from Myanmar with immediate effect.

Yours sincerely,

Dimitrina Petrova
Executive Director
The Equal Rights Trust

Enclosed: ERT Statement on Violence in North Rakhine State, 14 June 2012.