

Question for written answer P-007832/2015
to the Commission (Vice-President / High Representative)
Rule 130
Jean Lambert (Verts/ALE)

Subject: VP/HR - Rohingya and white cards in Burma

The Rohingya are not recognised by the Burmese Government as one of its 135 ethnic groups or national minorities. However, the 1982 citizenship law makes full citizenship dependent on membership in a national ethnic group. Despite the longstanding presence of Rohingya in the area that is now called Rakhine, the government considers them to be illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and calls them 'Bengalis', refusing their right to self-identify as Rohingya. The large majority are stateless.

The government recently announced that the white cards issued to Rohingya would expire on 31 March 2015. The cards are not citizenship cards and do not offer their holders freedom of movement or access to all jobs and all university programmes. Nevertheless, the cards have given the Rohingya the right to vote and access to health and education services. With the upcoming elections and the removal of white cards, the Rohingya will become politically disenfranchised.

1. Is the VP/HR aware of this situation, and what action is she taking to encourage the Burmese Government to grant the Rohingya full citizenship rights, not least with elections scheduled this year?
2. What other actions are being taken by the EU to specifically defend and promote the human rights of this vulnerable group?