

Local News

Local organizations raise awareness on crisis in Myanmar

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ELMIRA, N.Y. (18 NEWS) - In Myanmar, also called Burma, more and more of the Muslim minority group-- known as the Rohingya-- are being displaced from their homes in Rakhine state. People around the world are weighing in on the issue. Some of those people were a small group of protesters in Elmira.

"When the people are being killed like that, we must not be silent, we must not be quiet," Zaman Marwat, an Imam of the Islamic Center of Horseheads and President of the Southern Tier Interfaith Coalition, said. "We must say and stand for them, not against them."

Myanmar's army is accused of human rights violations in Rakhine state-- where most Rohingyas are from-- accused of burning down homes, torturing civilians and even performing unjustified executions.

The army claims that it's cracking down on terrorists within the Rohingya community, said to be responsible for attacking military outposts.

Even Myanmar's leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, who was repressed by the former military government in the 90s, and advocated civil rights in the nation's 2016 elections, has received criticism. Critics say she is not doing enough to tackle the issue.

"How can you call people who you are dragging them away, killing them, raping them, torturing them, giving them no rights, take away their citizenship," Marwat said, "calling them terrorists, it fails human thinking."

Even among the protestors, people of different faiths were standing in solidarity.

"I come here as a person of faith," Jane Winters, a reverend from a local church, said. "Here are people that are of no faith, people here of other faiths, but we come here because we care about the world."

Imam Marwat said that this protest was planned as part of an international stand against the crisis in Myanmar, that's on Sunday.