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Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina  
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh  
Prime Minister's Office  
Old Sangsad Bhaban  
Tejgaon, Dhaka-1215, Bangladesh

May 21<sup>st</sup> 2020

Dear Prime Minister,

### **AN INCLUSIVE HUMANITARIAN RESPONSE IN THE FACE OF COVID-19**

We hope that this letter finds you well at this time of global emergency.

Around the world, authorities are contending with the spread of COVID-19. The scale of the pandemic's impact on children's health, wellbeing, learning and fundamental rights is enormous. As the Joint General Secretaries of the UK's largest education union, we are deeply concerned by the impact of this crisis on the world's most marginalised children and their communities, especially the Rohingya people.

We recognise the Bangladesh Government's important role in hosting Rohingya refugees who were forced to flee atrocities perpetrated against them in Myanmar. We also welcome the more recent efforts of the Bangladesh Government to work with the humanitarian community in its response to the pandemic. However, we still hold deep concern for the safety and human rights of the Rohingya people.

We write to you after the first case of COVID-19 was discovered in the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazaar over the weekend.<sup>1</sup> As you know, aid workers have previously warned that a humanitarian disaster could occur if COVID-19 were to reach the camps.<sup>2</sup>

It is crucial that the Bangladesh Government's COVID-19 response does not jeopardise the health of Rohingya refugees or place them at greater risk. We write to support previous calls from civil society which ask that any pandemic containment measures do not hinder the ability of aid groups to provide food, water, and health care, or prevent them from protecting the most at risk refugees, including women and girls and people with disabilities.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/may/15/fears-rohingya-refugees-face-disaster-after-covid-19-reaches-coxs-bazar>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/2020/mar/25/coronavirus-threatens-to-turn-aid-crises-into-humanitarian-catastrophes>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/28/bangladesh-covid-19-aid-limits-imperil-rohingya>

We emphasise the importance of an inclusive response which accounts for the specific vulnerabilities of refugees. We urge the Bangladesh Government to provide humanitarian and health workers unhindered access to those in need. This includes lifting restrictions on accessing the internet and mobile communications to improve access to reliable health care information and improve the coordination of humanitarian responses.<sup>4</sup>

This is a time of global emergency. It is imperative that government's in all countries work collaboratively, transparently and inclusively to protect the health and rights of all children and their communities. We stand in solidarity with the Rohingya and the people of Bangladesh.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Mary Bousted  
Joint General Secretary  
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Kevin Courtney  
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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/04/01/joint-letter-re-restrictions-communication-fencing-and-covid-19-coxs-bazar-district>