

Myanmar on path to peace and reconciliation, says Suu Kyi

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United Nations: Myanmar's Foreign Minister Aung San Suu Kyi told the United Nations General Assembly that her country is on the path to peace and reconciliation after last year's successful election.

Aung San Suu Kyi

The former political prisoner made her first speech at the UN General Assembly since forming a democratically elected government and called for international understanding as Myanmar grapples with sectarian tensions.

Suu Kyi's appearance Monday at the annual gathering of world leaders at the United Nations is the latest landmark in a personal and national transformation as the country also known as Burma emerges from five decades of military rule.

But she also had to address concerns about the situation in troubled Rakhine state, where longstanding discrimination by majority Buddhists against Muslim Rohingya exploded into bloody violence in 2012.

More than 100,000 people, mostly Rohingyas, are still in displacement camps.

Suu Kyi said the new government was "standing firm against the forces of prejudice and intolerance."

She said that and as a responsible nation, "we do not fear international scrutiny. We are committed to a sustainable solution that will lead to peace, stability and development for all communities within the state."

But Suu Kyi, who has been criticized by some human rights activists for not speaking out forcefully in support of the Rohingya, did not mention the group by name in her speech.

It's a contentious issue among Buddhists in Rakhine, who consider the Rohingya to be illegal immigrants from neighboring Bangladesh and customarily call them "Bengali." Suu Kyi, 71, is the daughter of Myanmar's founding father.

She spent some 15 years in detention, mostly house arrest, when she led the pro-democratic opposition. Political reforms began five years ago, culminating in an election last November, won by her party.

Although a junta-era constitution still bars her from the presidency and the military remains politically powerful, she has the title of state counsellor and effectively heads the government.

The Nobel peace laureate said that through the election, the people of Myanmar exercised their right to fashion their dreams and aspirations for their country.

She said national reconciliation in Myanmar an ethnically diverse country riven by long-running civil conflict is her government's highest priority.