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Civil society protests in Cox's Bazar against the World Bank loan for humanitarian work

**Why should Bangladesh take a loan to meet the world’s responsibility for the Rohingya crisis?**

Cox's Bazar, 4 June 2024: The civil society of Cox's Bazar protested against the World Bank's offer of a 700 million dollar loan to Bangladesh for the development of the local population affected by the impact of one million Rohingya refugees. This protest was organized by the Cox's Bazar CSO NGO Forum-CCNF in front of the Deputy Commissioner's office at eleven o'clock today.

Assistant Director of Coast Foundation Jahangir Alam moderated the human band while CCNF Co-Chair and Executive Director of Coast Foundation Rezaul Karim Chowdhury, Chief Executive Officer of Dharitri Rakshaye Amara (Dhara) and President of Cox's Bazar District Press club Fazlul Quader Chowdhury, Writer Maqbul Ahmed, CHRDF’s Chief Executive Ilyas Mia, human rights activist Md Abdullah (Max), CNN Bangla Editor Tauhid Belal, Development for People's Community (DPCO) Chief Executive Anisul Islam, cultural personality Ramzan Ali, and senior journalist HM Faridul Alam were present. More than 70 people are present at the protest representing various local social organizations.

In his introductory speech, Fazlul Quader Chowdhury said that Bangladesh has given shelter to one million Rohingya, who are victims of the Myanmar junta, for humanitarian reasons. the local population and the environment have been irreparably damaged by doing this. Until now, various donors and the Bangladesh government have provided humanitarian services to the Rohingyas and the affected local population, but recently we see that the World Bank has taken the initiative to provide a loan of 700 million dollars to Bangladesh to deal with the Rohingya crisis, which is very sad. I condemn such initiatives by the World Bank and call for immediate cessation of such initiatives.

Maqbul Ahmed said, there is no precedence for providing loans to help refugees in any country in the world. By providing such loans to Bangladesh, the World Bank is trying to set an example to force future refugee-hosting countries to take loans. He said that although the UN refugee resolution talks about the shelter and cooperation of refugees, the World Bank is imposing a debt burden on the people of Bangladesh to deal with the Rohingya crisis.

Md. Abdullah Max said, Bangladesh is already burdened with debt. Meanwhile, the per capita debt in Bangladesh is already 580 dollars. We do not want this loan. He also said that 40,000 new children are born in this Rohingya camp every year, which is a matter of concern for Bangladesh. We do not see any progress on repatriation. The UN has completely failed in this regard. International organizations and UN agencies should pressure the UN to ensure repatriation.

Elias Mia said the refugee crises and wars have increased around the world. Aid in previous crises is being reduced to meet the needs of new crises. Aid to Rohingya humanitarian programs has also declined. Under these circumstances, management costs in humanitarian programs should be reduced. Transparency should be brought into financial management.

Tauhid Belal said, that due to the Rohingya crisis, the fishermen of Teknaf are forced to stop fishing in the Naf River, and they are living in extreme hardship. They need humanitarian assistance. It is by no means a loan.

Anisul Islam said that we heard that 25% of the Joint Response Plan (JRP) is allocated for the Rohingya humanitarian program for the locals, and we are sceptical about it. NGOs should disclose the correct account of 25% donation and the district administration needs to take a stronger role to ensure its proper monitoring. In this regard, there is also a lack of transparency in the pool fund management of the international NGO, BRAC. They are strategically excluding local organizations and giving funds to NGOs from other parts of Bangladesh to implement Rohingya humanitarian programs, which is the opposite of the spirit of localization.

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