

## **Wilberforce Lecture Trust**

### **Statement concerning Aung San Suu Kyi and the treatment of the Rohingya by the Government of Myanmar.**

The Trustees have discussed, over several months, if, when and what we should say and do concerning the above.

The question arises because in 1996 the Trust awarded the Wilberforce Medal to Aung San Suu Kyi who, at the time, was imprisoned by the military junta ruling Myanmar. The award, made on the occasion of a lecture by Zunetta Liddell of Human Rights Watch, Asia, recognised Aung San Suu Kyi's courage in resisting the regime and her steadfast defence of human rights and democracy.

Following initial reports of atrocities perpetrated by the Army and Buddhist groups in Myanmar against the Muslim Rohingya minority, the Trust did not respond immediately. We hoped and expected that Aung San Suu Kyi would use her prominence in the government of Myanmar and her international profile to condemn these actions, although we were aware that that she might not have as much power in the government as her status suggests.

We have now come to the conclusion that these hopes were misplaced, and that we should, therefore, express our profound disappointment that Aung San Suu Kyi has not spoken out against the inhuman treatment of and suffering inflicted on the Rohingya. While we note the likely limits of her power, her past actions have amply illustrated the power of speech, and we would have expected her to speak up in these circumstances, in spite of the potential risk to herself.

We have decided that asking for return of the Wilberforce medal would be a pointless gesture, but that we would make this statement available to any person or organisation that requested it.

Information about the Trust, its lectures and awards and its Trustees is available on our website. Search 'Wilberforce Lecture Trust'.

***26th April 2018***

***Ekkehard Kopp & Andy Dorton on behalf of the Trustees of the Wilberforce Lecture Trust***