

# Edinburgh removes Freedom of the City award from Aung San Suu Kyi

At the behest of the Lord Provost the City of Edinburgh Council voted unanimously yesterday to remove the Freedom of the City from the Burmese politician Aung San Suu Kyi.

The Lord Provost said : "It's been ten months since this chamber discussed the status of the Freedom of the City for Aung San Suu Kyi. It did so in the light of a humanitarian crisis which was being broadcast and reported on across the world. At that time this chamber instructed me to write making very clear the position of the chamber and asking Aung San Suu Kyi to use her best offices to allow United Nations forces and representatives into the country to try and alleviate what was seen as a humanitarian crisis. I did so in November 2017."

Frank Ross explained that he had written direct and that copies of the letter from November 2017 had also been passed on through diplomatic channels. There had been no response.



Photo of Aung San Suu Kyi By Comune Parma [CC BY-SA 2.0 (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/2.0>)], via Wikimedia Commons

He continued : “In addition to that we have continued to watch the crisis develop and the conditions deteriorate. I will remind the chamber that the definition of the Freedom of the City is an honorary award granted to individuals who have distinguished themselves through work or efforts or to recognise the respect and high esteem in which they are held by the people of Edinburgh.

“In particular this award was in recognition of her personal courage and relentless pursuit of democratic justice. I believe that is no longer appropriate or relevant given the lack of response to our writing. We know the letters have been delivered.

“This is a rare event to propose such action and I am not suggesting the council does so lightly.”

The Green Group lodged an addition to the motion asking for

publicity of the background and reasons for the council's decision and formally calling for the immediate ending of violence.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in Northern Rakhine and neighbouring Bangladesh where there are refugee camps has given rise to many calls from the United Nations and other bodies to stop the violence and to allow the safe return of those who have fled from Rakhine.

According to the United Nations, more than 700,000 Rohingya refugees are sheltering in camps across the border in Bangladesh, after being driven from their homes in northern Myanmar since last August.

The award was made to her by Edinburgh in 2005 when she was living under house arrest and making her voice heard about democracy in Burma. But she has refused to speak out now about violence against the Rohingya by Burmese military.

Glasgow City Council stripped the Nobel Peace Prize winner of the Freedom of the City of Glasgow in November last year, and many other honours have also been revoked.

The text of the letter written by the Lord Provost is below:



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