



**23 February 2021**

**MEDIA STATEMENT**  
**Repatriation of Myanmar Nationals Stranded in Malaysia**

In the most recent encyclical *Fratelli Tutti (On Fraternity and Social Friendship)*, Pope Francis has reminded the Church that all of us are part of a larger human family and that our human fraternity “transcends the barriers of geography and distance.” In a spirit of fraternal love, the Church cannot turn a blind eye to those in need and the vulnerable irrespective of who they are and where they come from, especially in times of crises. In this Season of Lent, the sacrifices of fasting, prayer, and almsgiving which Lent call us to, must move us beyond individualistic Lenten practices towards cultivating a love and compassion for one another that excludes no one and is open to all. “Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”

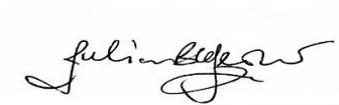
It has been recently reported in several local and international media sources that Malaysia is about to repatriate 1,200 Myanmar nationals from our shores, and amongst them are also refugees and asylum seekers. At a time of grave political uncertainty in Myanmar, our faith tells us that we cannot remain silent and be complicit to this action towards those who have fled due to a grave humanitarian crisis. Guaranteeing personal security to the most vulnerable refugees, migrants and asylum seekers must not only be governed by international laws but also by the “laws of humanity”, which are grounded on mercy, compassion and love.

As committed Malaysians whose faith calls us to the two-fold commandment of love of God and of one another (cf. Luke 10:27), we cannot remain indifferent to the tragedies of human misery. Loving God and one another means that we are firmly committed to building a more just world and restoring humanity where no one is left behind.

We call on the Malaysian government to not subject the lives of these Myanmar nationals into an uncertain and unknown fate by simply repatriating them in these uncertain times. We also ask that an international organisation such as the UNHCR be allowed to verify these individuals so that their personal security can be guaranteed. As caring Malaysians, we should not subject anyone to situations that are marked by fear, uncertainty and unease.

We also call upon all Catholics to offer your fast during this season of Lent for the peoples of Myanmar, for a genuine dialogue among all sides, and for lasting peace and freedom. We unite ourselves in prayer with the people in Myanmar invoking God for peace, reconciliation and harmony in these uncertain times.

*Continue to love each other like brothers [and sisters], and remember always to welcome strangers for by doing this, some people have entertained angels without knowing it. (Hebrews 13:1-2)*



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+ Rt Rev Richard Ng  
Bishop of Miri

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