



Restoring Dignity, Inspiring Change.

**Statement by Monsignor Robert J. VITILLO
Secretary General
International Catholic Migration Commission
re: Award of Aurora Prize to Laureate Mr. Kyaw Hla Aung**

We at the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC) rejoice that Mr. Kyaw Hla Aung was chosen as this year's Aurora Prize Laureate, and are honoured that he designated ICMC to share in the funding attached to the Aurora award. Mr. Aung is an inspiring example of profound commitment to justice that comes at a personal cost. As a lawyer and human rights activist, Mr. Aung has peacefully defended and advocated for the rights of the Rohingya minority and faced long years of imprisonment as a result.

ICMC AND THE ROHINGYA REFUGEES IN MALAYSIA

ICMC Malaysia gives priority to the needs of refugee women and children who are survivors of sexual and gender-based violence and accompanies them as they work to reduce gender-based violence and protect vulnerable women and children in their communities.

The members of our Refugee Women's Protection Corps (RWPC) — our flagship program in Malaysia — are volunteers who respond sensitively and confidentially to the needs of other refugees, and arrange for them to receive emergency shelter, medical care, psychological support, education, safe social spaces to meet, and share experiences.

Refugees from Myanmar, as well as from the Middle East and Somalia, are trained to offer such care and support in their respective native languages. They also lead awareness-raising training among refugee communities and classes for teachers in the Klang Valley and Penang. The program taps into the communities' own resources to combat harmful gender stereotypes, oppose violence and re-assert the human dignity of survivors.

In collaboration with the Religious Sisters of the Good Shepherd in Kuala Lumpur, ICMC also provides a safe shelter in which survivors can access emergency accommodation, psycho-social counselling, and medical assistance.

During 2017 RWPC volunteers received over 300 disclosures of abuse, most of which involved cases of domestic violence. Some 330 survivors of violence and 40 children were provided with emergency shelter for a total of over 1,200 nights; the majority of them were Rohingya refugees.

More than 2,000 vulnerable individuals in Kuala Lumpur, the Klang Valley, and Penang benefitted from ICMC's services. Two hotlines for victims of violence operated in Kuala Lumpur and Penang, with capacity in Arabic, Burmese and Rohingya

IN GRATITUDE FOR MR. KYAW HLA AUNG AND THE AURORA FOUNDATION

ICMC will use the Aurora award to advance our work with Rohingya and other refugees in Malaysia and in our more recent assistance to Caritas Bangladesh, which has taken responsibility to serve more than 100,000 Rohingya refugees there.

We are grateful that the founders of the Aurora Prize have been able and willing to transform pain, grief, and loss, among their family members and others in their communities of origin, into life-giving efforts to prevent reactions of fear, exclusion, and violence in today's world.

ICMC was created to serve uprooted people, including refugees, asylum seekers, internally displaced people, victims of human trafficking, and migrants, regardless of faith, race, ethnicity or nationality. That's what we have been doing for over 65 years and will continue to do in the foreseeable future. In that way, we, too, try our best to transform suffering into life-giving welcome, protection, promotion, and integration of refugees and migrants throughout the world.

We express deep gratitude to Mr. Kyaw Hla Aung for his selfless humanitarian commitment and service to the Rohingya people and deep appreciation for the support of the Aurora Humanitarian Initiative to humanitarians around the world. By joining ICMC's experience, mission, and ongoing commitment to those of Mr. Kyaw Hla Aung and his fellow Aurora laureates, let us pray that we can issue a strong cry of "never again" to the suffering and pain so senselessly inflicted on others and construct a world where justice, peace, and respect for the dignity of the human person, from conception to natural death, will prevail forever and ever.

10 June 2018