Episode #1. Myanmar reportedly plants landmines in campaign against Rohingya minority

Myanmar’s military was accused last weekend of planting landmines in the path of Rohingya Muslims fleeing Rakhine state on the country’s Western coast. This comes as the government of de facto leader Aung San Suu Kyi -- who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 -- faces worldwide condemnation over what the United Nations calls an ethnic cleansing campaign against the Rohingya.

The violence began on August 25th, when Rohingya militants attacked police stations and a military base in what they say was an effort to protect their ethnic minority. In response, the government began burning villages and reportedly slaughtering Rohingya families, even as they tried to escape. On Sunday, Amnesty International officials said they believed the Myanmar military had placed landmines along the border with Bangladesh, where many Rohingya have fled. Landmines have been banned since 1997 through an international treaty.

Myanmar’s military maintains that it is targeting insurgents, and not civilians. Yesterday, meanwhile, a spokesman for Suu Kyi said that she would skip a meeting of the UN General Assembly next week, where the violence is to be addressed.

Joshua: A Nobel laureate! The Peace Prize winner! Emily, almost 400,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh in the past three weeks. They’ve watched family members get shot. They’ve seen children thrown into the river to drown. And, she remains silent?

Emily: She? Aung San Suu Kyi?

Joshua: Yes, Aung San Suu Kyi. She does not deserve to keep her Nobel Peace Prize.

Emily: But it isn’t possible to take it from her. The Nobel committee has said that it only considers actions taken before the prize is awarded. However--very sadly--the work that Suu Kyi did to promote democracy in Myanmar is completely at odds with what is happening there now.

Joshua: This is genocide, Emily! An analysis conducted by Yale University categorized it as not just an attempt to remove the Rohingya from the country, but as genocide -- the complete destruction of the people! And, what does Suu Kyi say in response?

Emily: Joshua, I found part of the speech that she gave at the Nobel Prize ceremony five years ago. She said: ‘Our aim should be to create a world free from the displaced, the homeless and the hopeless, a world of which each and every corner is a true sanctuary where the inhabitants will have the freedom to live in peace.’ In light of what’s happening now, this is truly heartbreaking.

Joshua: It’s more than heartbreaking, Emily. It is criminal, and it’s inexcusable. I don’t care about the peace prize that she received in the past. This is now, and she should be held accountable. Emily, in this case, silence is a crime!