



Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi speaks at the ASEAN Business and Investment Summit in Singapore on Monday. Picture: REUTERS

Human rights body withdraws award

YANGON - Amnesty International has withdrawn its most prestigious human rights prize from Aung San Suu Kyi, accusing the Myanmar leader of perpetuating human rights abuses by not speaking out about violence against the Rohingya Muslim minority.

Once hailed as a champion in the fight for democracy, Ms Suu Kyi has been stripped of a series of international honours over a Rohingya exodus that began in August 2017.

More than 700,000 members of the mostly stateless group fled across Myanmar's western border into Bangladesh after the Myanmar military launched a crackdown in response to Rohingya insurgent attacks on the security forces. UN-mandated investigators have accused the military of unleashing a campaign of killings, rape and arson with "genocidal intent".

Ms Suu Kyi's administration rejected the findings as one-sided, and said the military action was engaged in a legitimate counterinsurgency operation.

The international human rights group named Ms Suu Kyi as its 2009 Ambassador of Conscience Award recipient when she was still under house arrest for her opposition to Myanmar's oppressive military junta.

In the eight years since she was released, Ms Suu Kyi led her party to election victory in 2015 and set up a government the following year, but she has to share power with generals and has no oversight over the security forces.

Amnesty International said in a statement on Tuesday she had failed to speak out and had "shielded the security forces from accountability" for the violence against the Rohingya, calling it a "shameful betrayal of the values she once stood for".

The organisation's secretary general, Kumi Naidoo, wrote to Ms Suu Kyi on Sunday saying the group was withdrawing the award because it was "profoundly dismayed that you no longer represent a symbol of hope, courage, and the undying defence of human rights".

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