



Creating safety for the Rohingya in Myanmar

Issued April 2018

On 9 October 2016, unknown assailants attacked border police outposts in Myanmar's northern Rakhine State, murdering nine border police and seizing weapons and ammunition. The Myanmar military forces responded by launching a major military operation, conducting "clearance operations" and sealing the area. The wave of human rights abuses that have followed has created a significant number of refugees in our region.

Since late August 2017, more than 680,000 Rohingya Muslims have fled Rakhine State to escape the military's large-scale campaign of ethnic cleansing. The atrocities committed by Myanmar military in August and September 2017, included mass killings, sexual violence, and widespread arson, amounting to crimes against humanity. Investigation by Associated Press journalists gathered evidence of the massacre of between 75 and 400 Rohingya at Gu Dar Yin village on 27 August 2017. The soldiers brought shovels to dig mass graves and acid to burn off the faces and hands of the dead so the bodies could not be easily recognised. Buddhist neighbours in the village slit the throats of the wounded to finish them off after the soldiers had swept through the village.

It has been estimated that 13,000 Rohingya were massacred by the Myanmar military assisted by local extremists.

Military and civilian officials have repeatedly denied that security forces committed abuses during the operations, claims which are contradicted by extensive evidence and eye-witness accounts.

After the military operations, the tactics of the Myanmar military changed from direct murders and violence to blocking the access of the Rohingya to their rice fields at harvest time to force them to flee through lack of food. They also stole food and livestock to deny the Rohingya food.

Myanmar soldiers have engaged in mass robbery of Rohingya refugees, stealing their money and valuables as they flee the country.

The Rohingya have faced decades of discrimination and repression under successive Myanmar governments. Effectively denied citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Law, they are one of the largest stateless populations in the world. Restrictions on movement and lack of access to basic health care have led to dire humanitarian conditions for those displaced by earlier waves of violence in 2012 and 2016.

As of January 2018 there was an outbreak of diphtheria amongst Rohingya in refugee camps in Bangladesh, with 2,500 people being reported to have caught the disease, including 1,900 children. At least 30 people had died from the disease, which causes extreme swelling of the throat making it difficult to breathe and swallow.

The Australian Government has provided \$31.5 million since September 2017 for humanitarian assistance to Rohingya refugees who have fled to Bangladesh.

The Government of Bangladesh is starting to move to want the Rohingya refugees to return to Myanmar, but human rights organisations are concerned that there

In a small positive sign, the Myanmar military announced in mid-April 2018 that seven soldiers had been sentenced to 10 years in prison with hard labour for participating in the massacre of eight Rohingya men and two boys in Inn Din village in September 2017.

What you can do

Write polite and respectful letters to (a letter to Myanmar will cost \$2.30):

Daw Aung San Suu Kyi
State Counsellor
Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Office No.9, Nay Pyi Taw
Republic of the Union of Myanmar

His Excellency Mr Tha Aung NYUN
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Embassy of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar
22 Arkana Street
Yarralumla ACT 2600

Salutation: Dear State Counsellor

Salutation: Your Excellency

E-mail: mecanberra@gmail.com

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern at the large scale human rights abuses that have been committed against Rohingya civilians by the Myanmar security forces. Ask that effective action be taken to put an end to these abuses.
- Ask that the government of Myanmar should agree to a set of prerequisites for the return of Rohingya refugees, including unfettered, independent monitoring of returnees, free movement, restoration of lost homes and properties, and access to services.
- Ask that the Myanmar government should also take substantive steps to rectify the discriminatory policies which have been used to persecute the Rohingya minority for decades, starting with ending the denial of citizenship.
- Ask that the Myanmar government allow access to independent investigators, the media, and the UN-mandated fact-finding mission and UN special rapporteurs to investigate the allegations of human rights abuses and help prevent further such abuses.

Also write to:

The Hon Julie Bishop MP
Minister for Foreign Affairs
PO Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra, ACT, 2600

Salutation: Dear Minister

E-mail: Julie.Bishop.MP@aph.gov.au

Points to make in your letter:

- Express deep concern at the mass human rights abuses that Rohingya in Myanmar have been subjected to, causing over 680,000 to have fled their homes into neighbouring countries and resulting in the murders of an estimated 13,000 people.
- Thank the Australian Government for the \$31.5 million it has provided in humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya refugees so far.
- Ask that the Australian Government exercise further pressure on the government of Myanmar to end the human rights abuses against the Rohingya and bring those responsible for the massacres and other violence to justice.
- Ask that the Australian Government support an arms embargo and targeted sanctions against Myanmar until the human rights abuses against the Rohingya are ended and the government of Myanmar puts in place safeguards to allow the Rohingya to return to their homes and live in safety.
- Ask that the Australian Government set an example at this time to do more to resettle refugees, by increasing the humanitarian intake to 27,000 per year.