

## Myanmar's (Burma) Rohingyas: world's most persecuted and forgotten ethnic minority needs your help

Rohingyas – the Indo-Aryan minority population of Myanmar who are located in the South-West corner of Myanmar, in Rakhine state and lived there for centuries and borders Bangladesh are world's most murdered, hunted, humiliated, dispossessed and displaced people. The military government of Myanmar stripped Rohingyas of their citizenship in 1982 and since been a target of slow persecution.

Faced with relentless persecution many Rohingyas left their homeland and took shelter in several neighbouring countries especially in Bangladesh in the Cox's Bazar district.



Interestingly, Rohingyas heaped their hopes on Aung San Su Kyi and thus been active participants in the NLD's (National League for Democracy party, which Suu Kyi heads) democracy and human rights movements in Myanmar for decades, for which some courted arrest and some were tortured but they remained undeterred and persisted their campaign for "the Lady" with the hope that once elected and once democracy gets established in Myanmar Aung San Su Kyi would give them their rightful claim of citizenship and end their decades long miseries. In 2015 Aung San Su Kyi did win the election but not the Rohingyas. Rohingyas were ecstatic at Su Kyi's victory but only to be betrayed. Their persecution has continued as before and sadly, Aung San Su Kyi has both denied and condoned these violent acts of

Myanmar's military and its Buddhist nationalists against the Rohingyas which has become particularly brutal since August this year.

After having faced years of murder, rape and slaughter of their men, women and children a group of Rohingyas, calling themselves as Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked several military posts with knives, sharpened bamboos and other primitive tools in August this year and killed half a dozen soldiers. Reprisal of the Myanmar army has been the most barbaric so much so that the United Nations have termed the action as 'genocide'.

Figures vary, but since August this year, close to 3000 have been murdered, a large number of women have been raped and/or brutally sexually mutilated, villages have been burnt to ashes, children slaughtered and babies even thrown into the blazing fire of torched houses and burnt alive, triggering an exodus of approximately 630,000 men, women and children into Bangladesh, the neighbouring country. Some took to the river to cross the border and drowned. Close to 200,000 refugee children are now either orphaned or are separated from their parents.



*A Rohingya Refugee kisses her infant son who died while fleeing from Myanmar Army in a boat.*

Bangladesh, a poor country of 160 million where more than half a million Rohingyas have been crammed in 150,000 square kilometres and capacities where its own people struggle to survive are rather limited but has been extremely generous in welcoming and accommodating this sudden and massive influx of refugees. Conditions in Rohingya refugee camps are pitiful - people are hungry, children are malnourished, sanitation is poor, drinking water is scarce and outbreak of cholera looms large (See the ABC report: <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-11-19/australians-helping-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh/9164374?pfmredir=sm>).

Most countries except Russia, China and India have condemned the Rohingya pogrom and cancelled military aid to the country. Regrettably, Australia has been less forthcoming in criticising the Myanmar government. On the contrary, it has continued to train Myanmar's military.

The Rohingya Support Group, Queensland (RSG, Q)

A Rohingya Support Group, Queensland (RSG, Q), a group of concerned people in Brisbane has since formed a team to help Rohibgyas. It has initiated several activities. For example, they have met several Members of Parliament (Honourable Graham Perrett, Member of Morton; Honourable Jim Chalmers, Member of Rankin and Honourable Terri Butler of Griffith) and requested them to lobby the Federal Government to take up the cause with the Myanmar government to ensure their safe return to their homeland and also provide humanitarian aid at refugee camps in Bangladesh. MPs Graham Perrett and Jim Chalmers have since met Julie Bishop, the Foreign Minister and also raised the issue at the parliament. Turnbull government has since provided \$20.0 million in humanitarian aid for the refugees in Bangladesh.



RSG,Q members Submitting a Memorandum to Mr. Graham Perrett, MP



RSG, Q Members submitting Memorandum to Dr. Jim Chalmers, MP



A women delegation of RSG,Q calls on Ms. Terri Butler, MP

RSG, Q hopes that the Turnbull government would show stronger resolve and join other Western countries including United States to encourage Myanmar government to hold the perpetrators accountable for the atrocities and resolve the refugee crisis the soonest.

**RSG, Q has also teamed up with several Brisbane based charitable organizations and individuals and formed a coalition called Justice for Rohingya, Queensland (JFR, Q) and embarked upon fund raising activities for the Rohingya refugees. In this regard, they have organized a Fund Raising Dinner on December 15. The JFR, Q is also asking institutions and individuals to make donations. Money raised will be sent to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh through an Australian humanitarian aid group.**

Enquiries:

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To Donate:

Name: Human appeal International

Bank: CBA, BSB: 062-191

Ac No: 0090-3948

Ref. QLD Rohingya