

Brooklyn Technical High School

Returning Rohingya Refugees Home Safely

Rise for Rohingya

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727,000. To ignorant bystanders, this number represents nothing; to Rohingya refugees this number represents everything. 727,000 represents the violence, discrimination and atrocities committed by the Myanmar government. 727,000 represents genocide.

To escape persecution, Rohingya refugees flocked to camps in Bangladesh where they rely on foreign aid. What's next for the refugees? A repatriation list was recently made. However, many refugees whose names were on the list refused to return. Why should they willingly forfeit their sanctuaries, regardless of squalid conditions, to return to Ground Zero of the violence? Progress must be made to ensure that the cycle of violence would not repeat beforehand.

Rohingya Muslims should be granted what's owed to them: citizenship. Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, or UDHR, states no one could be "deprived of [their] nationality."¹ Myanmar ratified this document which implies that they support this article. Despite this, Myanmar has neglected their duty and chooses instead to pursue unjust human rights violations by denying the Rohingya citizenship. Myanmar ambassador, Huan Lin, claims, "If a person or a group wishes to be recognized, [they] must have a cultural background, historical background and a linguistic background."² Contrary to Huan's beliefs, the Rohingya could trace their origins to the fifteenth century. Additionally, 135 other ethnic minorities were granted citizenship; the Rohingya were the only outlier.³ Thus, it is imperative to grant the

¹ "Claiming Human Rights." *Article 15*, UNESCO, 4 Jan. 2010, [www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article\)15.html#at16](http://www.claiminghumanrights.org/udhr_article)15.html#at16)

² Rageeb Mahtab, "A Question of Genocide? The Rohingya Crisis One Year On." YouTube. Online video clip, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MTqo8xtDpo> (Accessed 20 April 2019).

³Hunt, Katie. "Rohingya Crisis: How We Got Here." *CNN*, Cable News Network, 13 Nov. 2017, www.cnn.com/2017/11/12/asia/rohingya-crisis-timeline/index.html.

Rohingya citizenship. This will accomplish one thing: allowing the Rohingya to vote. The current Rohingya is voiceless--silenced by the injustice of the government. By giving the Rohingya vocal cords and a political platform, significant progress would occur.

Myanmar's crimes must be acknowledged by the government. The Holocaust ended with the deaths of approximately six million European Jews. After the war, Germany took full responsibility. For example, memorials were established to honor the fallen Jews and January 27th was declared Holocaust Memorial Day.⁴ The steps taken by the German government ensure that history would not repeat itself. In contrast, Myanmar has taken little to no steps towards accountability. Internal investigations carried out by the military cleared itself and the government of any wrongdoings.⁵ By denying responsibility, Myanmar blockades any progress because if there's no problem then there's no solution. Therefore, if repatriations were to occur, the Rohingya Crisis is not guaranteed to end; the cycle of violence might very well start again.

The key to ending the sufferings of 727,000 people is the cooperation of the Myanmar government and military. However, the aid of people, such as high schoolers, is just as important. People who want to rise for Rohingya could donate necessities, such as toiletries, and spread awareness through social media and attending protests. Until the Rohingya feel safe enough to return home, the crisis is not over.

⁴ "How Germany Remembers the Holocaust." *The Local*, The Local, 19 Oct. 2016, www.thelocal.de/20161019/how-germany-remembers-the-holocaust-world-war-two-nazis-jewish-history-germans.

⁵ Sullivan, Daniel. "5 Key Priorities to Address the Rohingya Crisis." *Refugees International*, Refugees International, 22 Aug. 2018, www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2018/8/22/5-key-priorities-to-address-the-rohingya-crisis.

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