

“Please don’t kill my baby”, begged the mother as the Myanmar police snatched her child away. While the Rohingya crisis continues to worsen, thousands of persecuted Rohingya, a minority Muslim group living in the Rakhine state in Myanmar for centuries, have fled to neighboring Bangladesh and Thailand. The Burmese have refused to recognize the Rohingya as an ethnic group and denied them citizenship. The Burmese continue to rape, torture and murder the Rohingya. Today, over 600,000 Rohingya are living in refugee camps requiring humanitarian aid. High school students can aid by donating food and water for the many malnourished families, providing toiletries to promote good personal hygiene and raising awareness of the Rohingya crisis to evoke empathy and action from political leaders.

As many Rohingya continue to flee to refugee camps, there’s an increased need for food and water. Al-Jazeera's documentary “Al Jazeera Investigates - The Hidden Genocide” shows footage of the destruction of the Rohingya’s burned-down homes and losing all their belongings. High schoolers can organize Rohingya drives in their schools to collect packaged food and packs of water to box and send them over to Rohingya camps, one of which is in Cox’s Bazaar, Bangladesh. Steve Sanford expresses, “With more than 850,000 mouths to feed in 10 camps, some local businesses are struggling to keep up with the demand”, signifying the urgency for others to contribute food to feed the refugees.

Besides food and water, toiletries are in demand as well. An article by the Daily Sabah, “Risk of highly contagious diseases grows in Rohingya refugee camps” states that “One of the biggest concerns is the poor sanitation and lack of hygiene facilities that has sparked growing fears over the emergence of cholera, which spreads through dirty water and can kill if untreated.”

Good hygiene should be encouraged to prevent disease outbreak and high schoolers can help with this by sending toiletries, such as toothbrush, soap or shampoo, that aren't available to the refugees.

These days, the world lacks empathy and many people have decided to remain silent about the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people. Hasina Begum, a Rohingya woman, shares her story with the New York Times, "When I fall asleep, I look for my baby," she said. "I wake up screaming." Begum had witnessed as the Myanmar army officials threw her baby into the fire, then raped her and set the house on fire. Hasina, however, escaped through a hole in the hut. She's not the only one experiencing this trauma; rather there are thousands of more Rohingya women suffering from witnessing their children's deaths. High schoolers can lead and attend protests for the UN to stop this genocide before it's too late.

At this critical time, it is important for high school students to rise for the Rohingya. As Martin Luther King Jr. said, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." Donating food and water, providing toiletries and advocating for the Rohingya refugees, is the first step to ending this atrocity.

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