

Men, women, and children of all ages sit hunched together. Their clothes are raggedy, and they fill each hut and room to the brim. There is no food, no sympathy from guards, and no outside help coming. They make up the 350,000 Rohingya Muslims forced into Myanmar's displacement camps, a fancy term for their deathbeds (Human Rights Watch). Their story is one of great suffering, and a tragic continuation of mass persecutions throughout history. Our experiences have taught us that if we stand by, innocent people will be left to die. While it may be impossible to stop these atrocities without far-reaching and violent intervention, there are other actions we can take to help the persecuted.

Rohingya Muslims have faced ever-increasing discrimination since the 1970s, which in the last 5-6 years has escalated to genocidal levels. Buddhist monks coalesced around their intolerance towards a different faith, spearheading a rampage that left an estimated 44,000 dead (Barron, TIME Magazine). Most remaining Rohingya Muslims have fled to neighboring Bangladesh, where the refugee crisis has ballooned so much that more than 900,000 Muslims are currently in refugee camps (UNOCHA) .

How can we help Rohingya Muslims? First, we can provide them with asylum priority to find refuge within the United States. Second, we can place economic sanctions on the perpetrators of these atrocities.

Asylum priority can save thousands of Rohingya Muslims by giving them a chance to relocate and restart their lives. The Democratic Republic of Congo, a country suffering from it's own ethnic conflicts and a myriad of other problems, can act as a blueprint of success (Igielnik & Krogstad, Pew Research Center). Over the past few years, more than 100,000 Congolese have found refuge in the US, and more than 81% of displaced Congolese have been relocated to camps by the UN across the world (TCU 360). Ethnic conflicts have existed in the DRC for decades, but providing the survivors with asylum and much-needed resources gave them a chance to rebuild their lives.

To get at the root of the problem, we must hold the monks, and government officials supporting them, accountable. More than a decade ago, the US imposed multiple sanctions on Myanmar for the systematic persecution of marginalized religious communities and fixed election results. Within months, there was a decrease in religious and ethnic violence and attempted electoral reform (Human Rights Watch). Although diplomatic relations were reinstated in the early 2010s, the time to reimplement these sanctions is now.

The Rohingya Refugee Crisis is one of many tragedies in the history of humanity. Whether it's the Third Reich, Rwandan militias, or Buddhist monks, religious intolerance and pursuit of power drove them to wipe out entire groups of people. Rohingya Muslims' story does not have to end with a blood-stained conclusion. To ensure their safety and freedom, we must implement sanctions and provide asylum priority for the Rohingya people.

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