

Why are so many Rohingya migrants stranded at sea?



1) The Rohingyas - a distinct Muslim ethnic group who are effectively stateless - have been fleeing Myanmar for decades. But a combination of factors means many are now stranded in rickety boats off the coasts of Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia with dwindling supplies of food and water.

2) Also on the boats are thousands of economic migrants from Bangladesh fleeing grinding poverty at home.

Why are the Rohingyas fleeing Myanmar?

3) While the Rohingyas say they are descendants of Arab traders who have been in the region for generations, Myanmar's governments say they are not a genuine ethnic group but are actually Bengali migrants. Successive Myanmar governments have been introducing policies to repress the Rohingya since the 1970s, according to Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (Brouk).

4) They are denied basic services and their movements are severely restricted. The repression of the Rohingyas has gradually intensified since the process of reforms introduced by President Thein Sein in 2011, Brouk says. In June and October 2012 there were large scale attacks on Rohingyas in Rakhine State following the gang rape of a Buddhist woman.

5) In addition, the government in March revoked temporary registration certificates issued to hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas, meaning they can no longer vote.

6) So inflammatory is the Rohingya issue that opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi has been criticised for failing to raise it.

7) In the past three years, more than 120,000 Rohingyas have boarded ships to flee abroad, according to the UN refugee agency. It says 25,000 migrants left Myanmar and Bangladesh in the first quarter of this year, about double the number over the same period last year. Between 40-60% of the 25,000 are thought to originate from Myanmar's western state of Rakhine.

Why are they stranded at sea?

8) As many as 8,000 migrants from Bangladesh and Myanmar are believed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) to be stranded at sea.

9) The Thai government has recently begun to crack down on smugglers who have traditionally taken them to camps in southern Thailand and effectively held them ransom. As a result the smugglers are now reportedly abandoning them at sea. Not only are countries in the region unwilling to let them land, fishermen are being told not to help them.

What is the attitude to Rohingyas among countries of the region?

10) "Extremely unwelcoming," says Chris Lewa of the Rohingya activist group Arakan Project. "Unlike European countries - who at least make an effort to stop North African migrants from drowning in the Mediterranean - Myanmar's neighbours are reluctant to provide any assistance."

- **Thailand:** Its navy says that it has given aid to migrant boats in its waters and has indicated it may allow refugee camps on its shores. But it is turning boats away and does not want permanent settlers.
- **Malaysia:** This is the choice of destination for most Rohingya travellers because it is predominantly Muslim and short of unskilled labourers. But Malaysia has ordered its navy to repel them.
- **Bangladesh:** Sometimes allows them to live in camps on its south-eastern border and sometimes sends them back to Myanmar. It is estimated there are currently about 200,000 Rohingyas living in refugee camps, many in squalid conditions.

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ricketty: ぐらぐらする *grinding*: (貧乏等が)ひどい *descendant*: 子孫 *inflammatory*: 怒りを煽る *repel*: 追い払う *squalid*: 不潔な

☆Ice breaker for active discussion☆

1. What is Rohingya? Why are they stranded at sea?
2. Why aren't they welcomed by neighboring countries?
3. What could be the possible barriers for any country when accepting refugees?
4. What are the possible effects of a huge number of refugees entering in a country?
5. What role can the International Community play in solving this issue?
6. Which neighboring countries do you think should give Rohingya a helping hand?
7. Make sentences using the following words: strand, ricketty, descendant, Inflammatory, repel, squalid, refugee and repression.

バングラデシュ国境に接するミャンマー西部住むイラム教徒の少数民族ロヒンギャ族。推定人口は約80万人の多くは貧困のためバングラデシュから移住してきたとされる。ミャンマー政府は彼らを土着民族とみなさずベンガル人と呼ぶ。ロヒンギャの人々は差別に耐え切れず、数年前から数万人がバングラデシュなどに逃避してきた。しかし、密航船の多くは沿岸国で接岸を拒否され、何ヶ月も漂流してきた。周辺国は経済的負担増等不満もあり、有効な救済策に至っていない。