

The ROHINGYAS

- AN UNCERTAIN FUTURE



WHO ARE THE ROHINGYA?

- A minority Muslim ethnic group who have lived for centuries in Buddhist-majority Myanmar (Burma)
- "One of the world's most oppressed minorities"

QUICK FACTS

- Denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982 – effectively "stateless"
- Worldwide population = 1.5-2.3 million
- Bangladesh and SE Asia = ± 1.5 million (700,00 arrived in past 6 months)
- Rest of the world = ± 900,000 (mostly in Muslim-majority nations)

TIMELINE

Pre-20th century history



8th Century
Rohingya present in Arakan (Rakhine State)

9th – 14th Century
Under Muslim influence

18th Century
Under Buddhist rule (first refugees fled to Bengal)

1790
Hiram Cox (British diplomat sent to assist refugees) established town of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh (many Rohingya still live here today)

1824-1942
British influence in region

20th century history



1942
Persecution of minorities (including Rohingya) begins - those accused of benefitting from British colonial rule

1945-1950
Increased tension over autonomy and future of Arakan (predominantly Rohingya)

1962
Coups result in more than half century of military rule in Myanmar

1960s and 70s
Formation of Rohingya resistance groups

Late 1970s
Guerrilla insurgencies begin (more Rohingya flee to Bangladesh)

1982
New immigration law redefined people who migrated during British rule as illegal immigrants – applied to all Rohingya

1991
250,000 Rohingya flee "forced labour, rape and religious persecution" at hands of Myanmar army

1992-1997
230,000 repatriated

1997-2004
Further repatriation

Recent history



2012
Sectarian violence – over 100 killed, thousands flee to Bangladesh, 150,000 forced into camps in Rakhine

2013
First mention of "ethnic cleansing" by Human Rights Watch

2014
UN adopts resolution expressing serious concern about situation of Rohingya

2015
SE Asian nations criticised for not assisting Rohingya fleeing by boat

August 2017
Militant group, Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), claimed responsibility for attacks on police and army posts, declared a terrorist organisation, military launched brutal campaign

Estimated 700,000 flee to Bangladesh over six-month period – claim horrendous atrocities

GENOCIDE, ETHNIC CLEANSING OR "WAR ON TERROR"?

[GENOCIDE]

Killing; causing serious bodily or mental harm; deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part

[ETHNIC CLEANSING]

The expulsion, imprisonment, or killing of an ethnic minority by a dominant majority in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity

UN Special Rapporteur stated that the recent military operation against Rohingya bore "the hallmarks of genocide"

Myanmar government refers to operation as a "war on terror"

CHALLENGES OF REPATRIATION

November 2017 - Myanmar and Bangladesh signed initial deal for possible repatriation (based on 1992/93 repatriation pact). Proposed deal DOES NOT INCLUDE guarantee of freedom from persecution and violence, work rights or citizenship

Rights groups and Rohingya raised concerns – lives still under threat, many villages totally destroyed, lack of basic necessities, need for documentation (many "stateless" Rohingya have none)

Bangladesh overwhelmed by numbers and need

Trafficking poses a huge threat

ANY CHRISTIAN ROHINGYA?

According to most sources, Rohingya are considered "unreached" with the Gospel

- ± 300 Rohingya have come to Christ in past 20 years (mostly through witness of one family living in a refugee camp in Bangladesh)
- Christians in Bangladesh and Pakistan are rallying to support Rohingya Muslims, a fellow persecuted minority in South Asia

IMAGE SOURCES:

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