

Rohingya Rights Campaign FAQs

Since August 2017 hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar following unlawful and disproportionate military response to attacks by a Rohingya armed group.

Find out more about the situation in Myanmar and our campaign to help protect the rights of Rohingya people.

Why aren't the Rohingya people safe in Myanmar?

The Myanmar Government do not recognise the Rohingya people as citizens of Myanmar and as such they don't even have their basic rights to education and healthcare upheld. The Rohingya people have been living in Myanmar for generations. Today, they are a people with no home or citizenship. Even their name (the very word '*Rohingya*') is denied them in Myanmar.

Three years ago, religious and ethnic tensions between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists (who make up the majority of the population in Myanmar) escalated into widespread, deadly rioting. Since August 2017 the violence has intensified and the Myanmar Military have killed thousands of Rohingya people, raped women and girls, forced starvation and burned hundreds of villages in a targeted and deliberate manner. Hundreds of thousands have been forced to flee.

The UN has called the situation a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing”, referring to the security forces’ operation in Rakhine State since 25 August 2017. Does Amnesty agree?

Yes. What we are seeing in Rakhine State can be described as ethnic cleansing, with the Rohingya targeted for their ethnicity and religion. In legal terms, these are crimes against humanity that include murder, rape, torture and deportation or forcible transfer of population.

How do we know that this violence has been carried out by the Myanmar Military?

Amnesty International has a long and well respected reputation of generating factual and unbiased research. The research conducted to date has been comprehensive in documenting the crimes against humanity. The Myanmar report released in June 2018 found that the ethnic

cleansing of the Rohingya population was achieved by a relentless and systematic campaign by Myanmar security forces

The findings of this report was based on more than 400 interviews carried out between September 2017 and June 2018, including during four research missions to the refugee camps in Bangladesh and three missions to Myanmar, one of which was to Rakhine State. Interviews were conducted during this research with survivors and direct witnesses to crimes; humanitarian aid workers in Bangladesh and Myanmar; medical professionals in Bangladesh; analysts of the Myanmar military; diplomats; journalists; and local administrative officials in Myanmar. As well as people from different ethnic and religious communities from northern Rakhine State, including Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim group; ethnic Rakhine, Mro, Khami, and Thet, all predominantly Buddhist groups; and Hindu.

The report also drew on an extensive analysis of satellite imagery and data; forensic medical examination of injury photographs; authenticated photographic and video material taken by Rohingya in northern Rakhine State; confidential documents, particularly on the Myanmar military command structure; and open source investigations and analysis, including of Facebook posts related to the Myanmar military. The evidence speaks for itself

Why are we focused on the military funding and not the refugee crisis?

The situation for the Rohingya people is the worst human rights crisis in our region and is a complex and volatile situation. Of course Amnesty International is concerned about the situation in Bangladesh. But the refugee camps in Bangladesh are a direct result of the ethnic cleansing in Myanmar. AIA is focused on dealing with the root cause and bringing about long-term systemic change for the Rohingya People and ultimately pushing for an end to the the systematic dehumanisation of the Rohingya people living in an apartheid state.

Isn't Myanmar a relatively new democracy shouldn't we have a relationship with them to support this transition?

Myanmar's historic elections in 2015 has set them onto the path of democracy and the country is changing fast, but the army doesn't seem to be changing with it. The Myanmar military operates free from independent oversight. Under Myanmar law, it has control over its own judicial processes. Soldiers almost never face credible investigation, much less prosecution, even for war crimes. The army also still controls the key government ministries of Defense, Border Affairs, and Home Affairs. So whilst Australia should encourage its neighbour to continue on the path to democracy. Australia can not turn a blind eye to war crimes during that transition. Those responsible for these crimes against humanity should be held to account.

How will stopping funding the military change things for the Rohingya people?

Australia is one of the largest humanitarian aid donors to Myanmar and close regional ally in the Asia Pacific with a seat on the UN Human Rights Council. Australia needs to be a leader in human rights and our region and not provide funding to proven war criminals. By continuing to prop up the Myanmar military Australia is giving them the green light to continue their behaviour.

Amnesty's research shows that these crimes against humanity are not the actions of a few rogue soldiers or units, but part of a tightly controlled operation, involving members of the military and Border Guard Police at all levels. These people need to be held accountable. Australia needs to join with other world leaders and cut ties with the Myanmar military.

What about Aung San Suu Kyi?

Our research indicates that most of the institutions which maintain and enforce this system of discrimination and segregation are under the authority of the Myanmar military, which is wholly independent of the civilian government and retains considerable political and economic power in the country. The civilian arm of the government - de facto led by Aung Sun Su Kyi - still has, however, the power to address many of the violations we have documented in this report, and crucially, to speak out against racism, discrimination, violence and intolerance.

Yet, the solutions ASSK and her government have represented so far to address the situation in Rakhine State focus on development and stability while failing to ensure respect for human rights. While development and security are important factors, it is time for a reality check. The situation in Rakhine State is a human rights crisis. Solutions for the situation must tackle the root causes of the crisis and this includes full respect for an protection of human rights, and ensuring accountability.

International attention has heavily focused on ASSK, as the de-facto leader of the civilian-led government. This is to an extent justified, not least because of her past record as a champion of human rights. However, while she is failing to acknowledge the scale and gravity of the situation, apportion any blame to the army or use her influence to stop the violence, ultimately she has very little power over Myanmar's security forces.

Senior General Min Aung Hlaing has been shielded by the international attention on her. It is time this changed, and that we expose him and other Myanmar military leaders.

The Rohingya are not really from Myanmar the Burmese have the right to send them back

The reality is that the Rohingya in Myanmar have been there for decades but have faced long-term, entrenched discrimination and segregation punctuated by waves of large-scale violence, have lived in squalid conditions, and the government has a responsibility to protect and respect the human rights of all people in the country, regardless of their race, religion, ethnicity or other status.

Rohingya refugees who wish to return home to Myanmar have a human right to do so, however, they must also be provided with viable alternatives to returning, including the option to seek and receive international protection.