Man Without a Country: The Case for Rohingya Refugees

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***Resolved:* *The United States federal government should substantially reduce its restrictions on legal immigration to the United States.***

Case Summary: The Rohingya are an ethnic and religious minority group living in a region of Myanmar (also known as Burma). They have been relentlessly persecuted by the government, stripped of their citizenship, killed and chased out of their villages, and rejected by other nations when seeking asylum. Many end up in camps in Bangladesh, where conditions are terrible and the poor Bangladeshis cannot afford to feed them. The Trump administration has lowered the number of Rohingyas being allowed to enter the US as refugees, a terrible policy that needs to be reversed. Resettlement in safe places, like the US, is the only workable solution to the Rohingyas' plight, since their own country rejects them and neighboring countries cannot care for them.

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Man Without a Country: The Case for Rohingyas

Myanmar, also known as Burma, is a troubled country whose government has disowned and begun an active campaign of persecution against an ethnic minority known as the Rohingya. Saving these innocent victims compels us to affirm that: The United States federal government should substantially reduce its restrictions on legal immigration to the United States.

OBSERVATION 1. DEFINITIONS

Rohingya

CNN 2017 Who are the Rohingya? 5 Sept 2017 <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/05/asia/rohingya-myanmar-explainer/index.html>

The Rohingya are a Muslim ethnic-minority group that has lived as a people in Myanmar for centuries. Today, more than a million of them live in the country, most in the western coastal state of Rakhine, where they make up around a third of the population. They speak their own language, which isn't recognized by the state.

OBSERVATION 2.  THE HARM. Oppression, Displacement and Death.

**We see this in 4 sub-points**

A. Human rights denied

Encyclopedia Britannica 2017 (entry written by Elaine Chan. Ethical note about the date: the article is undated but refers to events in 2017 "Rohingya") <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rohingya>

Almost all Rohingya in Myanmar are stateless, unable to obtain “citizenship by birth” in Myanmar because the 1982 Citizenship Law did not include the Rohingya on the list of 135 recognized national ethnic groups. The law had historically been arbitrarily applied in relation to those, such as the Rohingya, who did not fall strictly within the list of recognized ethnic nationalities. Since 2012, other developments, including a series of proposed legislative measures (some of which were passed by Myanmar’s parliament), resulted in further restrictions on the limited rights of the Rohingya.

B. Military crackdown

CNN 2018. (journalist Euan McKirdy) 17 Jan 2018 " Concerns over 'premature' plan to repatriate Rohingya refugees" <https://www.cnn.com/2018/01/17/asia/bangladesh-myanmar-rohingya-repatriation-plan-intl/index.html>

Earlier in January the Myanmar military [admitted involvement](http://cnn.com/2018/01/11/asia/myanmar-mass-grave-intl/index.html) in the [the killing of 10 Rohingya Muslims](http://www.cnn.com/2017/12/20/asia/myanmar-grave-journalists-intl/index.html) found in a mass grave last month in Rakhine State. Refugees have fled into Bangladesh with accounts of mass killings, systematic rape and torching of villages at the hands of the military and local vigilantes. The Myanmar government says the bloodshed resulted from a military crackdown on militants who carried out coordinated attacks on border posts and that civilians were not targeted. Both the UN and the United States have labeled the violence ethnic cleansing. Myanmar is a predominantly Buddhist country in which Rohingya Muslims represent only a small fraction of the overall population.

C. Thousands killed

Australian Broadcasting Corp. 2017 (ABC; written by journalist James Bennett) 14 Dec 2017 Rohingya death toll likely above 10,000, MSF says amid exodus <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-12-14/rohingya-death-toll-in-the-thousands-says-msf/9260552> (brackets added)

"Extrapolating the data, essentially we can say that you know, our most conservative estimate is that between 9,000 and 13,700 people died," MSF [Medicins Sans Frontiers / Doctors Without Borders] Australia Executive Director Paul McPhun told the ABC. He said about 71 per cent died violent deaths, "so they were shot, they were burnt to death and clearly you know this was the result of the military campaign during that period". The rest died of starvation or other causes fleeing the violence, MSF said. The organisation also said at least 1,000 children under the age of five were among the casualties.

D. Stateless refugees

Andrew Buncombe 2017 (journalist) 27 Oct 2017 Rohingya crisis: Death toll of Muslims killed by Burmese army 'may be extremely high', says UN <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/asia/rohingya-crisis-death-toll-burma-army-rakhine-muslims-un-myanmar-a8022931.html>

In 1982, military ruler Ne Win introduced a law that effectively rendered them stateless and set controls on where they could live, the jobs they could do and who they could marry. The country's transition towards democracy has done little to help them, indeed it may have worsened their plight; countless thousands have fled by boat, putting their lives in the hands of people smugglers and put out to sea in unsafe boats, trying to reach countries such as Malaysia or even Indonesia.

OBSERVATION 2. INHERENCY

FACT 1. Refugee Camps growing but not solving

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya are in refugee camps but they're not safe there

UN High Commission for Refugees 2018. (the UN Refugee Agency) 16 March 2018 "UN launches 2018 appeal for Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi host communities" <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2018/3/5aabd2564/un-launches-2018-appeal-rohingya-refugees-bangladeshi-host-communities.html>

Almost seven months on, refugees from Myanmar continue to arrive. And the situation in Cox’s Bazar remains fluid. The Kutupalong-Balukhali site, where some 600,000 refugees are now living, is today the largest and most densely populated refugee settlement in the world. Precarious conditions for the refugees and the ongoing emergency response are about to be further challenged by the approaching monsoon season and rains. More than 150,000 Rohingya refugees are in places at risk of landslides and floods, in what could become a disaster on top of the current emergency.

FACT 2. Not welcome in the US

Dramatic reduction in Rohingyas admitted to the US under Trump

Amanda Catanzano & Nazanin Ash 2017. (Catanzano is the[International Rescue Committee](https://help.rescue.org/)'s senior director for international programs policy and advocacy. Ash is the vice president of public policy and advocacy.) CNN The US must take a lead in the Rohingya crisis 20 Nov 2017 <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/20/opinions/us-needs-to-lead-on-rohingya-crisis-opinion/index.html>

Over the last decade, the United States has welcomed more than 19,000 Rohingya refugees, including more than 3,000 last year. But President Donald Trump's drastic reduction of refugee admissions means only 1,000 Rohingya are expected to make their way to safety in the United States this year. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already voiced her skepticism of US commitments to help the Rohingya, noting that Trump "has made clear how he feels about refugees."

FACT 3. Not welcome anywhere else

Neighboring countries don't accept Rohingya refugees

CNN 2017. (journalist Angela Dewan) 13 Sept 2017 " Who are the Rohingya and why are they fleeing?" <https://www.cnn.com/2017/09/05/asia/rohingya-myanmar-explainer/index.html>

Amnesty International estimates around [half a million undocumented Rohingya](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2016/11/bangladesh-pushes-back-rohingya-refugees-amid-collective-punishment-in-myanmar/) live in Bangladesh. The country sometimes allows the Rohingya to live in camps on its border, but on other occasions, it simply sends them back to Myanmar. Those who stay live as illegal immigrants, which usually means a life of poverty, without the right to work or access to education. Other countries in Asia have been just as unwelcoming. In 2015, groups of Rohingya were stranded at sea in Southeast Asia, as [Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia pushed them back and forth](http://cnn.com/2015/05/15/asia/thailand-malaysia-rohingya-refugees/index.html)between each other, refusing to take them in. Indonesia even ordered its fishermen to stop rescuing them.

OBSERVATION 4. Our PLAN to be implemented by Congress and the President

1. Increase immigration quotas for Rohingya refugees to 20,000 per year.

2. Plan takes effect the day after an Affirmative ballot.

3. All Affirmative speeches may clarify.

OBSERVATION 5. SOLVENCY.

A. US resettlement of Rohingyas is key to saving lives and reversing the crisis

Amanda Catanzano & Nazanin Ash 2017. (Catanzano is the[International Rescue Committee](https://help.rescue.org/)'s senior director for international programs policy and advocacy. Ash is the vice president of public policy and advocacy.) CNN The US must take a lead in the Rohingya crisis 20 Nov 2017 <https://www.cnn.com/2017/11/20/opinions/us-needs-to-lead-on-rohingya-crisis-opinion/index.html>

There is no substitute for the powerful symbolic and life-changing nature of refugee resettlement. Over the last decade, the United States has welcomed more than 19,000 Rohingya refugees, including more than 3,000 last year. But President Donald Trump's drastic reduction of refugee admissions means only 1,000 Rohingya are expected to make their way to safety in the United States this year. Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has already voiced her skepticism of US commitments to help the Rohingya, noting that Trump "has made clear how he feels about refugees." Increasing resettlement opportunities for the most vulnerable Rohingya not only saves lives, it will go a long way toward building trust in America's commitment to support the countries most affected by the latest crisis.

B. US resettlement is the workable, humane answer

Naomi Steinberg 2017 (*Hebrew Immigrant Aid Society Senior Director for Policy and Advocacy.) 20 Oct 2017 "* The U.S. Must Help Protect the Rohingya Fleeing Myanmar" <https://www.hias.org/blog/us-must-help-protect-rohingya-fleeing-myanmar>

In addition, for the most vulnerable of the vulnerable, those for whom returning home or staying in Bangladesh will never be an option, strategic resettlement must be a viable solution. The United States is one of the only countries to resettle Rohingya, and like other refugees welcomed to this country, they have made their new homes here and become proud new Americans. The United States has turned away people seeking safety and freedom from ethnic cleansing before. We as the Jewish community know this history all too well. We must let our elected officials know that our country can never make that mistake again, and that welcoming Rohingya is the right, humane thing to do.