



Bangladesh - Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on Friday 19 June 2009

Treatment of Rohingya refugees

MSF in June 2009 note that “Thousands of unregistered Rohingya refugees living in the Kutupalong makeshift camp, Bangladesh, are being forcibly displaced from their homes, in an act of intimidation and abuse by the local authorities” (MSF, (18 June 2009), *Myanmar: Long-suffering Rohingya in Bangladesh face unacceptable abuse*). This article goes on to say that “Sadly, such a desperate situation is nothing new to the Rohingya, a Muslim ethnic minority originating from Myanmar, where they are denied citizenship and suffer persecution and discrimination. Over the past two decades, hundreds of thousands of people have fled their homes to seek refuge abroad, however, few have been granted refugee status. The majority struggle to survive, unrecognized and unassisted in countries like Bangladesh and Thailand.” (ibid)

Page 4 of a *HRW* report from May 2009 says

“While the Rohingya finally gained international media and governmental attention, the reality is that this group was only the latest influx in an annual sailing season for people escaping poverty, misery, and rampant human rights violations in Burma and Bangladesh.⁶ The Arakan Project, a Bangkok-based nongovernmental organization, estimates that more than 6,000 men and boys have made the journey in dozens of fishing boats from Burma and Bangladesh since November 2008” (HRW (25 May 2009) *Perilous Plight, Burma’s Rohingya Take to the Seas.*)

Page 6 of the report says “The Rohingya come from Burma, but for many years have fled repression there to Bangladesh, Thailand, Malaysia, and Indonesia. In total, the Rohingya number about two million people. Approximately 800,000 remain in Burma, primarily in western Arakan State and Rangoon. About 200,000 live in Bangladesh, of which 30,000 live in squalid refugee camps.” (ibid)

Page 8 of the report goes on to say that

“Conditions in the remaining Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh have marginally improved in the past two years, but living standards are still primitive and options for resettlement slim. Thousands more Rohingya eke out a desperate survival around the Bangladesh coastline and border with Burma, with few options—too fearful to return to their own country and faced with little support from Bangladeshi authorities who refuse to register them as refugees or provide them with basic services. According to Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), an NGO which has long provided aid to the Rohingya in Bangladesh, “It is an

impossible choice—return and face imprisonment or try to settle on otherwise unwanted patches of land in a country that gives you no recognition.” (ibid)

Radio Free Asia in May 2009 begins an article saying “Bangladesh is calling on Burma to take "needful" steps to stop a flood of minority Rohingya asylum-seekers over the border” (Radio Free Asia, (29 May 2009), *Steps urged on Rohingya*). The article adds that “Bangladesh hasn't granted refugee status to any Rohingya since 1992.” (ibid)

Page 40 of a paper from *Refugees International* issued in March 2009 says

“There are approximately 28,000 Rohingya from Burma living as recognized refugees in camps in southern Bangladesh, dependent on the UN and the international community. An estimated 200,000 other Rohingya live illegally outside the camps. Burmese discrimination toward its Rohingya Muslim population culminated in the enactment of the Citizenship Law of 1982, in which they were declared “non-national” or “foreign residents.” Burma insists they are Bangladeshi, and Bangladesh that they are Burmese.” (Refugees International (11 March 2009) *Nationality Rights for All: A Progress Report and Global Survey on Statelessness*)

References

HRW (25 May 2009) *Perilous Plight, Burma's Rohingya Take to the Seas*
http://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0509_brochure_web.pdf
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This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Refugee Documentation Centre within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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