**Genocide Emergency: Myanmar**

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On September 30, a “[High-Level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar](https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/general-assembly-commemorates-slave-trade-remembrance-adopts-resolutions-conflict-diamonds-high-level-talks-rohingyas)” will be held on the sidelines of the United Nations (UN) General Assembly. Genocide Watch urges UN members to take strong measures to sanction Myanmar for its systematic persecution of its Rohingya population.

Since Myanmar's independence from the U.K. in 1948, the Rohingya Muslim minority has faced systematic persecution in Rakhine State. They include the 2012 attacks by the Buddhist Rakhine majority and Myanmar security forces, and the 2016-2017 genocidal military operation carried out by the Myanmar army, the Tatmadaw.

Today, Rohingya civilians in Rakhine State are still being systematically attacked, displaced, or killed by both the [Arakan Army](https://www.hrw.org/news/2025/07/28/myanmar-arakan-army-oppresses-rohingya-muslims) (an ethnic Rakhine armed group) and the Myanmar junta forces, which have been [fighting](https://www.hrw.org/news/2024/08/12/myanmar-armies-target-ethnic-rohingya-rakhine) each other since 2018 for control of Rakhine State. As the Arakan Army gains ground, it terrorizes the Rohingya population, which it accuses of collaborating with the Tatmadaw and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army.

The Arakan Army commits crimes against humanity of extreme brutality against the Rohingya: beheadings, arbitrary detentions and “disappearances”, forced labor, forced conscription, looting and burning, etc. On August 5, 2024, a [drone and mortar attack](https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/genocide-emergency-rohingya-in-maungdaw-rakhine-state-myanmar) by the Arakan Army killed 200 Rohingya people fleeing fighting in Maungdaw, near the Bangladesh border. [2024](https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/report-myanmar/) saw the most atrocities against Rohingya since the genocide of 2016-2017.

**Staying in Myanmar and Living under Apartheid**

Approximately 630,000 Rohingya still live in Myanmar under a system of [state-sponsored discrimination and ethnic segregation](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/myanmar-apartheid-against-rohingya) imposed by laws, policies, and practices aimed at isolating the Rohingya community. Myanmar has [denied Rohingya citizenship](https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13621025.2022.2137468#abstract) since the [1982 Citizenship Law](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-02.htm), which reserves this right to citizenship to ‘national races’ that the law lists as settled in Myanmar before 1823. The list pointedly excludes Rohingya. Myanmar claims Rohingya immigrated from what is now Bangladesh since 1832, despite evidence that they lived in Rakhine State at least a century before that.

During the 2014 census, Myanmar required Rohingyas to self-identify as “Bengali” immigrants, [emphasizing their foreignness and providing grounds for deportation](https://vault.ushmm.org/adaptivemedia/rendition/id_f4f26d53e72a39aafc94ffc178328d4144b7f8ac). In the long-promised elections coming up in December 2025, designed to [legitimize the junta's continued grip on power](https://www.stimson.org/2025/myanmars-december-election-engineering-continuity-through-institutional-redesign/), Rohingyas will be barred from voting.

Since the 1980s, Myanmar has subjected Rohingyas to extreme restrictions on movement. In the [detention camps](https://www.hrw.org/report/2020/10/08/open-prison-without-end/myanmars-mass-detention-rohingya-rakhine-state) where [150,000](https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2025/country-chapters/myanmar?utm_source=chatgpt.com) Rohingya are confined, military and police checkpoints require entry and exit authorizations. These *de facto* concentration camps severely hamper the Rohingyas’ access to food, work, and healthcare.

Myanmar’s discriminatory laws and practices, combined with Rohingyas’ systematic social and political exclusion, have led [Amnesty International](https://www.amnesty.org.uk/files/CagedwithoutaRoof-ApartheidMyanmar-AIreport.pdf), [Human Rights Watch](https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2024/country-chapters/myanmar), and [Genocide Watch](https://www.genocidewatch.com/_files/ugd/137a5c_80211b751dfa4c6694ded16ad58d950b.pdf) to accuse Myanmar of the crime against humanity of apartheid and the crime of genocide. In 2022, the [US government](https://www.genocidewatch.com/single-post/myanmar-s-military-committed-genocide-against-rohingya-u-s-says) declared that Myanmar has committed genocide against the Rohingya.

**Leaving Myanmar and Fearing Repatriation**

Most of the [1.1 million](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=5358961) Rohingya who have fled Myanmar since 2017 have sought safety and shelter in Bangladesh. In the past 18 months, near the border town of Cox’s Bazar, the [Kutupalong](https://www.rescue.org/article/rohingya-crisis-what-know-and-how-help) refugee camp has taken in [150,000](https://www.unhcr.org/news/briefing-notes/unhcr-bangladesh-has-welcomed-150-000-rohingya-refugees-last-18-months) more Rohingya. The camp is unsanitary, overcrowded, and faces a perpetual shortage of water, food, and healthcare.

Recent cuts in U.S. aid funding have created a growing crisis. Rohingya refugees are subjected to draconian [restrictions](https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/04/04/bangladesh-new-restrictions-rohingya-camps) on livelihoods, movement, and education. Refugees are not permitted to hold jobs outside the camp. Schools for children have been shut down. Predatory gangs roam the camps. Human trafficking is rampant. Forced conscription into the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army threatens young men.

Bangladesh is not a state party to the Refugee Conventions. Bangladeshi authorities do not recognize the Rohingya as refugees and do not grant them asylum. Bangladesh’s official policy is to organize their repatriation to Myanmar. But most Rohingya refuse to return to Myanmar under the rule of the Myanmar military junta that has repeatedly committed genocide against them. A symbolic [repatriation of 1,100 refugees](https://www.spf.org/apbi/news_en/b_240627.html#:~:text=In%20an%20attempt%20to%20initiate,Rohingya%20refugees%20to%20Rakhine%20State.) to Rakhine State took place in May 2023. Several Rohingya activists argued this operation was only meant to [appease the International Court of Justice's investigation](https://www-tandfonline-com.scpo.idm.oclc.org/doi/pdf/10.1080/13642987.2024.2434915) into genocide.

In May 2025, India [detained and deported](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/05/alarmed-reports-rohingya-cast-sea-indian-navy-vessels-un-expert-launches) at least 40 Rohingya refugees living in New Delhi, most of whom held identification documents issued by the UN Refugee Agency. Indian authorities [forced them onto an Indian naval ship before abandoning them](https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2025/06/india-stop-unlawful-deportations-and-protect-rohingya-refugees/) in international waters in the Andaman Sea, near Myanmar. The refugees, including children and elderly people, were only given life jackets with no choice but to attempt to swim to an island in Myanmar territory. Such violations of the principle of *non-refoulement* must cease.

**Starvation is the** [**New Weapon of Genocide**](https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/starving-death-latest-phase-rohingya-genocide-june-2025)

Since November 2023, the Myanmar junta has imposed a blockade on almost all humanitarian aid in the areas it still controls in Rakhine State. The Arakan Army prohibits traditional Rohingya fishing and farming in areas they control. These deliberate policies threaten more than [2 million](https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2025/03/third-myanmars-population-faces-food-insecurity-un-human-rights-experts) people with starvation, including all the remaining Rohingya in Rakhine State. The destruction of agricultural equipment, the sowing of landmines, and danger from unexploded ordnance have paralyzed farming. Rakhine State is in the grip of [rising famine](https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/11/1156676).

The survival of Rohingya people confined to internment camps in Myanmar depends entirely on international humanitarian aid. In regions where they have lost control, the Myanmar junta refuses to allow the entry and distribution of food and medicine. More than [25,000](https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/starving-death-latest-phase-rohingya-genocide-june-2025) people in Pauktaw Township are cut off from humanitarian aid, already causing the starvation deaths of 25 Rohingya adults and an uncounted number of children.

Denial of humanitarian access is [one of the official tactics](https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/2023-03/myanmar-factsheet.pdf) of the Tatmadaw's strategy. This tactic consists of deliberately targeting unarmed civilians to crush them and prevent or deter them from supporting or joining the resistance. When starvation deliberately targets a specific group defined along ethnic and religious lines, as is the case for the Rohingya community, it becomes a weapon of genocide.

The Myanmar junta has imposed an apartheid system against the Rohingya. Their Myanmar citizenship is denied by law. Their freedom of movement is prohibited. All humanitarian aid to Rohingya is obstructed. Myanmar’s genocide against the Rohingya continues. **Genocide Watch considers Myanmar to be at Stage 3: Discrimination, Stage 5: Organization, Stage 8: Persecution, Stage 9: Extermination.**

Genocide Watch urges UN member states to use the “High-Level Conference on the Situation of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar” to adopt plans for action to stop Myanmar’s crimes against the Rohingya.

**Genocide Watch recommends that:**

* Members of the UN with universal jurisdiction over crimes against humanity and genocide should charge, arrest and prosecute Myanmar leaders for their crimes if they enter their territories.
* The International Criminal Court (ICC) should seek action by states-party to the Rome Statute to enforce the ICC’s November 2024 arrest warrant against General Min Aung Hlaing for the crimes against humanity of forced deportation and persecution of the Rohingya during Myanmar’s military operations in 2017.
* Myanmar's neighboring countries should take effective measures to ensure the safe passage and protection of Rohingya refugees fleeing genocide in Myanmar.
* Bangladesh authorities must stop pressuring Rohingya to return to Myanmar.
* Bangladesh should recognize Rohingya living in camps near Cox’s Bazar as refugees.
* Bangladesh should allow full access to education, work, and free movement for Rohingya refugees.
* Donor nations should pledge and deliver substantially more humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees.