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# Indonesia Empowers The Landing Of A Rohingya Refugee Boat

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Source: NY Times

On the 31st of December 2021, the Government of Indonesia allowed a boat carrying approximately 120 Rohingya refugees, mostly consisting of women and children, to [land on its shore](#) under the pressure of international committees and outcry from the human rights groups.

Initially, the plan to be followed by the Government was to provide the refugees with necessary medical assistance and provide them food, water and even help them in repairing their boats as a commitment to humanity, but they would not allow them to seek refuge and would push back their boat into the sea. Human rights organizations were against this decision, and hence they [urged](#) the Government to honour the international refugee conventions as well as its domestic regulation, which covers the duty of the Government to save people who are in danger of sinking in Indonesian waters. Hence, the Indonesian Government reversed its decision after understanding the severity of the conditions experienced by the passengers after being on the sea for more than a month. *“The Indonesian government has decided, in the name of humanity, to accommodate the Rohingya refugees currently adrift at sea near Bireuen district,”* Armed Wijaya [said in a statement](#), who heads a refugee task force at the Coordinating Ministry for Political, Law, and Security.

Several waves of Rohingya refugees arrived in Indonesia in 2009 in Aceh, wherein a total of 391 people were given refuge. In 2012, conflict arose due to the emergence of rape cases, and then in 2013, violence cases were also [reported](#). In August 2013, around 14,000 houses of Rohingya people were destroyed. In 2015, people from Rohingya and Bangladesh [gradually started](#) to get into the Indonesian waters through Aceh. Most of the Rohingya fled their home in 2017 when the country's military launched a clearance operation, wherein over 700,000 people went across the border into Bangladesh; since then, Rohingya have been trying to find refuge in other countries particularly a Muslim- majority ones. With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, Malaysia and Thailand did not acknowledge the refugees, and Aceh became the safe place for Rohingya refugees due to their welcoming attitude in helping the refugees with the necessities. The welcoming attitude of the fishermen in Aceh reflects upon their Islamic solidarity and system of customary maritime law, which prompted the fishermen to assist distressed boats and tow them to shore in spite of [constant reminders](#) from the government bodies to not do so.

Although it's a fact that Indonesia is not a signatory country of the 1951 United Nations Refugee Convention as per [UNHRC](#), Indonesia has always come through with its long tradition of hosting refugees and people who are in need of international protection. A presidential regulation was issued in 2016 by the Government, which provides a legal framework in order to ensure the treatment of refugees on boats who are in distress near Indonesia, and hence they have to [assist](#) in disembarking them. So, it was mainly due to this provision that Indonesia had no choice but to accept the 120 Rohingya refugees and rescue them.

Even though Indonesia has accepted refugees under pressure from the U.N and human rights organizations, it should be kept in mind that the problem of the Rohingya refugees has not been solved fully, and with the recent increase in Covid cases as well as the resistance from Malaysia and Thailand to allow refugees, Indonesia is the best possible spot for the refugees to take shelter in. Therefore, the Government needs to think of the situation at hand and come up with a comprehensive and effective plan as per the situation of their country to handle the refugees.

In spite of what has been [said](#) by the Civil Society Coalition, which is a coalition of nine Indonesian rights groups, i.e., *“the Rohingya ethnic group is a vulnerable, stateless group of people that should be given protection and hence, as a country that upholds human rights and a member of the U.N. Human Rights Council, Indonesia should set an example for other countries.”* But, the fact cannot be denied that [currently](#), over 14,000 asylum seekers and refugees are in Indonesia, and hundreds of Rohingya Muslim refugees have continued to arrive on the Acehne coastline over the recent years. The Government of Indonesia has to look through the situation with the utmost sincerity and urgency so as to solve the uncertainties that lie in the future because, since the outset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the risk to the psychological and mental health of refugees has [increased](#) due to lack of opportunities for self-reliance and self-development. Therefore, there is a need for greater support from the governing body of refugees like UNHRC to work together with the Indonesian Government so as to solve the problems pertaining to the refugees in the country.

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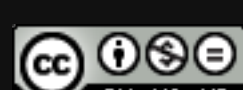
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