

Monday 19th October

The Rohingya in Myanmar

"I will say to those called 'Not my people,' 'You are my people'; and they will say, 'You are my God.'"
Hosea 2:23

There are an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 Rohingya still living in Myanmar. The majority live in apartheid conditions in Rakhine state, while thousands more live in major cities such as Yangon and Mandalay. With limited access to education, healthcare and employment, many Rohingya continue to risk perilous journeys to escape persecution.

Those remaining are mostly supported by family members abroad or Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs). They face many challenges including a lack of freedom of movement. They must obtain local permissions to travel between villages and towns. Even with permission, it is common to have to pay bribes at checkpoints, or to face harassment or arbitrary arrest. This restriction of movement has led to many dying of treatable problems, as they are often unable to get to hospital to be treated in time.

Fighting between the Myanmar Military and the Arakan Army, a Rakhine ethnic military group, has escalated steadily over the past few years. Many Rohingya, including children, have died from air attacks and landmines. Fighting has further restricted travel and in many areas the government has shut down internet access. This leaves many Rohingya without access to news or means of communication with their families abroad.

Sadly, the response of the local Myanmar church to the Rohingya has been close to non-existent. Most Christians hold to the accepted view that Rohingya are illegal and do not belong in Myanmar. Many feed off the fears and propaganda on social media and see Muslims as dangerous and a threat. Praise God, there are a few local pastors who have growing hearts for the Rohingya. They are doing what they can to educate other Christians, break down racial barriers and reach out to the Rohingya.

- Pray for restrictions to be lifted so that Rohingya might freely travel for work, schooling and to receive medical treatment.
- Pray that local Myanmar believers would reach out to the Rohingya with the love of Christ and for the gospel to reach the rural Rohingya villages in Rakhine state.
- Ask that the Myanmar Government would grant the Rohingya full citizenship and rights and that Rohingya children would have access to education and even university.
- Pray for physical protection for the Rohingya during the Military and Arakan Army conflict and that Rohingya and Rakhine communities would be reconciled.

Source: https://www.pray4rohingya.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pray4Rohingya_Myanmar.pdf

Tuesday 20th October

Prayer brings Freedom

The Rohingya people are so isolated in the Rakhine state in Myanmar, that even living in refugee camps in other countries opens them up to new freedoms. Though their geographical mobility is limited to staying in some camps, they often experience more freedom of movement than in Myanmar, where they have to get government permission to go just a small distance around their village. In a camp in Bangladesh, using electricity is new. The idea of solar power is new. Mobile phone access is new. Having access to health care is new. Rohingyas are experiencing new freedoms!



What if, during this season of experiencing new freedoms, Rohingyas could be introduced to a new life in Jesus Christ? There are a growing number of Rohingya believers, but 99.9% of the Rohingyas are heading for an eternity without Jesus. They have been described as the 'most friendless people in the world.'

Most Rohingyas of this generation will live out their whole lives lacking legal status in any country. No country wants to say they really belong, but they don't need passports in the spiritual kingdom of heaven and there are Rohingya believers in the refugee camps.

The more people from the outside try to help them, the more they are persecuted. But we can pray. The early church prayed;

"Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." Acts 4:29-30.

The result of their prayer was a seismic shift: *"After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly."* Acts 4:31

It will take a major prayer force to see any large movement of the Rohingya to Christ, but your prayers are effective. Let's join together and approach the throne of God with expectation:

- Pray that the Lord would continue to draw Rohingya people into His freedom.
- Pray that as the Rohingya are experiencing new freedoms for the first time, they would become curious about the message of Jesus.
- Pray that the Lord would continue to draw people to Himself, even when the security situation makes it difficult for outsiders to access them.
- Pray that the believers among the Rohingya would speak with great boldness.

Source: <https://www.prayer4rohingya.org/prayer-causes-earthquakes/>

Wednesday 21st October

The Rohingya in Bangladesh

Since August 2017, more than 700,000 Rohingya have fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Now there are at least 1.2 million Rohingya confined to what is the largest and most densely populated refugee camp in the world. Over half of these are under 18 years old. There is currently no viable option for the Rohingya to return to Myanmar. In March 2019, Bangladesh announced it would not accept any more refugees.

The Rohingya face many challenges in the camp. Each year, they battle to survive seasonal monsoon rains and the continuing threat of cyclones. They face flooding and landslides and damage or collapse of their shelters. Illnesses spread easily - any disease outbreak has the potential to affect thousands. Local people are outnumbered by the refugees, leaving many feeling unsafe and fearful of the Rohingya. There is increased competition for the scarce resources in the region leading to tensions with the local community. The Rohingya are dependent on aid for shelter, basic food supplies, clothing and healthcare. There are no formal education facilities and refugees can only access religious schools and basic learning centres. Most people desire to one day return to their homeland. However, they fear further persecution and will not volunteer for repatriation unless they are offered citizenship and official recognition of their ethnicity.

There are a few initiatives among local believers and through organisations to reach out to the Rohingya with aid and the good news. Some local NGO employees are believers who witness in word and deed.

- Pray for wisdom and compassion for the Bangladesh government handling the Rohingya crisis. Pray that God will bless this country for giving them refuge.
- Pray that one day soon in the midst of the pain and suffering the Rohingya will be, “no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens among the holy ones in the household of God.” Eph 2:19
- Pray that the tension between the local community and the refugees will ease and the two communities build bridges for integration.
- Pray for a shield of protection from Covid-19 for all living in the refugee camps.

Source: https://www.pray4rohingya.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Pray4Rohingya_2020_Bdesh-2.pdf

Thursday 22nd October

The Artist Who Couldn't Paint

The following story is from a worker with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh:

“Ismael guesses he’s about 80 years old; he doesn’t know his exact birth date. He told us how, as a child, he loved to paint and, when he was 12 years old, he had travelled from his small village to the big city to enter an art competition – and he won!



After the overthrow of the existing government in 1962, the Rohingya were no longer recognised as citizens of Myanmar and education was not freely available for the ethnic minority. Ismael was kicked out of school in grade eight and banned from practising cultural expressions such as art.

As targeted persecution increased, many young Rohingya men fled across the border to Bangladesh. At 16 years old Ismael left Myanmar. He stayed away for a number of years, living in six different countries. He later returned home to look after his aging parents, eking out a living as a fish farmer.

Following the violence in 2017 and the subsequent military crackdown, Rohingya survivors from a nearby village ended up on Ismael's doorstep. For years, the government had controlled the movement of Rohingya people, banning them from having houseguests without permission. Ismael defied the government sanctions and gave refuge to people whose villages had been destroyed. When the officials found out, Ismael and other men were arrested and brutally beaten. Ismael suffered severe injuries and witnessed others being killed.

The community rallied together and raised enough money as a bribe to have the men released. They immediately set out on foot on the long journey to find refuge in Bangladesh. Ismael was able to receive medical attention and made a full recovery.

Over 70 years since he won the art competition Ismael is returning to his first love of art. He has a job with a Community Art NGO as part of a team that paints murals around the refugee camps. After decades of having his culture systematically crushed, he is now able to earn a living for his family by doing the very thing he loved so much as a child."

- Pray that the murals will bring joy and happiness to those living in the camps.
- Pray that the authorities will allow education for children and youth so they have hope and opportunities.
- Pray for the Rohingya culture to be expressed and passed on from generation to generation.

Source: <https://www.pray4rohingya.org/the-artist-who-couldnt-paint/>

Friday 23rd October

The Rohingya in Malaysia

There are an estimated 200,000 Rohingya refugees living in Malaysia. The majority are single men, working to support family members in Bangladesh and Myanmar. In the past couple of years, there has been an increase in the number of women being trafficked into Malaysia as brides, with marriages being arranged in the refugee camps of Bangladesh. People tend to cluster around big cities where work is available: Kuala Lumpur, Penang, Klang Valley and Johor Bahru have the largest

populations.

The Rohingya face many challenges. The state offers no protection or welfare for refugees in Malaysia. The UNHCR is present and works to protect the rights of refugees, but many Rohingya do not have a UNHCR card which puts them at risk of arrest and time in detention. It is technically illegal for refugees to work, leaving the Rohingya open to exploitation. Most men work long hours, earning very little each day. Sadly, many bosses are unscrupulous, often paying less than promised or withholding their salary. People send money to their families in Bangladesh and Myanmar, leaving very little for food and rent.

Rohingya women typically do not leave the home, so do not learn Bahasa Melayu or English. This can lead to isolation and loneliness. Sadly, domestic violence is prevalent within many homes. Rohingya children cannot go to local schools. There are some refugee schools, but they are not accessible to all. Currently very few children have access to education past primary level. Access to safe and affordable healthcare is a challenge for many refugees. Those without a UNHCR card fear arrest and high medical bills. With a UNHCR card people are entitled to a 50% discount at government hospitals and should not be arrested.

There are a handful of local churches committed to serving and loving the Rohingya across Malaysia. Efforts include helping start and sustain refugee schools, medical outreach and teaching English. These churches are a beacon of light in an otherwise bleak situation. Many Christians are still fearful of reaching out to Muslims, or simply unaware of the needs that exist in their city.

- Pray for peace and love to be present in Rohingya homes within Malaysia and for the women living in a country foreign to them to be open to the love of Isa.
- Pray that local believers and Malaysian churches will reach out to the Rohingya and ask that the Rohingya will have a thirst for truth and soft hearts to receive the Father's love.
- Ask that the Malaysian government will give the right to work and access education to refugees.
- Pray for protection and safety for people making the journey to Malaysia who are currently in the hands of traffickers.

Source: https://www.pray4rohingya.org/site/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Pray4Rohingya_Malaysia.pdf

Saturday 24th October

Brothers

The following story is from a worker with Rohingya refugees in Malaysia:

“Tayub greets me with a big hug, saying: “You are my family in Malaysia. You are like my big brother! You have shown me kindness and helped me.”

Tayub arrived alone in Malaysia as a 15 year old boy. His journey and short time in Malaysia had been deeply disturbing and distressing. His family borrowed about £800 against their home to send

their son to Malaysia. They made a commitment to repay the loan within three years. He was held and locked in a room for a month until his family could pay more money for his release.

In Malaysia Tayub managed to find a job on a large construction site. Because of his young age he was able to register quickly with the UNHCR, ensuring him a basic level of protection. Months later he moved to another city, where he now works long hours in a shop with only one day off a month. He still regularly sends us messages.



Each month he faithfully sends most of his salary to support his family in Myanmar. It is three years since he saw his mother and father, or any family members. Being far away from family is one of the things our Rohingya friends say is the most difficult; their culture has such strong family ties.

A few months ago Tayub sent me a message. He was very excited because his younger brother was coming to join him in Malaysia. He was praying for his safety and delighted that he would soon be reunited with his brother. His excitement was soon replaced by worry and concern as he learnt his brother had been arrested in Thailand.

There was no news for a number of weeks. Contact was eventually made and Tayub knows his brother is being held in a Thai detention centre. The dream of being reunited with his brother is on hold for now – it is unknown what the future holds.”

Please pray:

- For safety for the Rohingya who are arrested on the trafficking route to Malaysia.
- That Tayub would know the Father’s love and peace as he awaits further news about his brother and for so many others in similar situations to know the same.
- For justice – that the traffickers would stop exploiting vulnerable people.
- That the UNHCR would be able to work across borders and help people be released from detention centres and reunited with their families.

Source: <https://www.pray4rohingya.org/brothers/>