

# Urgent appeal to rescue Rohingya refugees adrift in Andaman Seas

Respected Prime Minister Modi, President Widodo, President Wickremesinghe,

We write to you as an international community of South and South-East Asian from across the world with the sincere appeal to rescue the Rohingya refugees currently adrift in boats in the Bay of Bengal, the Indian Exclusive Economic Zone and Indian Search and Rescue Area near the Andaman and Nicobar Islands and off Indonesia .



We are extremely concerned about the desperate and life-threatening situation faced by the Rohingya refugees on the boats. You all are well aware of the unimaginable repression and genocidal conditions that the Rohingyas community has been facing because of their religious identity. The persecution had led nearly one million Rohingyas into displacement into what is one of the largest Refugee camps in Bangladesh. As the condition continues to deteriorate with no effective pressure on Myanmar government to stop the persecution, Rohingyas have been forced to risk their lives, to arrive at safe shores within South and South-East Asia.

In its statement of December 19, 2022, the UNHCR, while welcoming Sri Lanka's rescue of one of the boats on December 18, repeated its appeal for rescue of a boat still adrift in sea in line with legal obligations and humanitarian traditions. A tradition which we have historically contributed to and an obligation which several of our ancestors fought for. May we humbly remind you that our countries refused to accept narrow definitions and criterias of Refugee Convention because we deeply believed in the right to safe harbor for all human beings irrespective of their places of origin and 'found in' destinations.

UNHRC has reported that at least 161 Rohingya refugees have died at sea in 2022 alone and many more lives will be lost if we do not provide safe harbours to those fleeing genocide and persecution in Myanmar.

The situation reminds us all of the dire situation faced by Syrian refugees at the shores of Europe while they tried to reach safe places escaping a war. As South and South-East Asia we share a common history, we have kept our borders open and un-guarded for generations to allow people of all colors, race, faith and religiosity to move without hindrance. Our faith in One World One Humanity has forever taught us to have compassion, kindness, and solidarity with every human being. Our cultures have pride itself for welcoming everyone with open arms. We should refrain from imitating the West and closing our borders especially now when the Rohingyas are in dire need of protection and solidarity.

Our appeal to you is based on the powerful statement issued by the Rohingya Human Rights Initiative on December 20, 2022. The statement, while also expressing gratitude to Sri Lanka, appeals for the rescue of the boat currently at sea. It records that this boat is one of five boats which left Bangladesh in the months of November and December this year. One of the boats has been captured by the Myanmar regime. We deeply appreciate the support that you have very recently extended to the Rohingya refugees on one of the boats that arrived in Aceh on 15th November 2022, saving them from the fate they would have met in the sea otherwise.

Our sincere hope is that once again your governments will rise to the occasion and save the lives of our fellow Rohingya brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, and children.

Warm regards,

- Stichting the London Story, Europe
- AfroLeadership
- Boston South Asian Coalition, United States
- Burma Task Force, Canada
- Center for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation (CARE), New Zealand
- CERAS (Centre sur l'Asie du sud), Canada
- Hindus for Human Rights, United States
- India Labour Solidarity, United Kingdom
- International Council of Indian Muslims (ICIM)
- International Solidarity for Academic Freedom (InSAF) India
- Justice For All, Canada
- 'NEVER AGAIN' Association, Poland
- PAAF, South Africa
- Punjabi Literary and Cultural Association Winnipeg, Canada
- South Asia Solidarity Group, United Kingdom
- South Asian Diaspora Action Collective (SADAC), Canada
- South Asian Network for Secularism & Democracy (SANSAD), Canada
- The Humanism Project, Australia
- Turbine Bagh, United Kingdom
- 12ummah.

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