

## **Eight Years On: Genocide Against the Rohingya Persists**

Today marks eight years since Myanmar's security forces carried out coordinated attacks against the Rohingya population in Rakhine State, burning entire villages, killing thousands of men, women, and children, and subjecting women and girls to widespread sexual violence. More than 700,000 Rohingya were forced to flee to Bangladesh. These atrocities shocked the world, but they were not isolated. They were the culmination of decades of persecution, the stripping of citizenship, apartheid-like restrictions, and state led efforts to erase the Rohingya from Myanmar. Genocide is a process, and for the Rohingya, that process began long before 2017.

For years, the international community witnessed the persecution escalate, and still it did nothing.

The 1982 citizenship law rendered the Rohingya stateless, denying them recognition in their own country. In the decades that followed, they were confined, denied education, healthcare, and livelihoods, subjected to marriage and family restrictions, and regularly targeted with violence and harassment by security forces. Waves of violence in 2012 forced more than 100,000 Rohingya into displacement camps where they remain today. Hate speech and propaganda from state authorities, nationalist monks, and online platforms dehumanized the Rohingya, portraying them as outsiders and enemies.

The structures of genocide were in plain sight. Still, the world did not act.

When security forces launched "clearance operations" in 2016 and 2017, burning villages, killing civilians, and engaging in widespread rape and torture, the international community once again failed to respond with the urgency required. Even as hundreds of thousands crossed into Bangladesh with harrowing testimonies, many governments hesitated to call the crimes by their name: genocide.

Still, the world did not act to prevent further atrocities.

Since the 2021 coup, the situation has only worsened. The military junta has intensified its persecution of the Rohingya, imposing severe restrictions on movement, blocking humanitarian aid, and conscripting Rohingya into forced labor and military service. Arbitrary arrests, torture, killings, and sexual violence continue with total impunity. At the same time, the Arakan Army has also targeted Rohingya communities, carrying out extrajudicial executions, forced displacement, arson, and spreading anti-Rohingya propaganda and hate speech. An estimated 150,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh since mid-2024. And still, the world has failed to act to prevent the ongoing genocide.

Today, more than a million Rohingya remain trapped in Bangladesh, denied legal status and rights, facing shrinking aid, food insecurity, and the loss of education and livelihoods. Across the region, Rohingya continue to die at sea or are detained and turned away from safety. Inside Rakhine State, they remain under siege, confined, deprived of humanitarian assistance, and subjected to systematic persecution by both the junta and the Arakan Army.

International justice efforts are underway. The International Court of Justice is hearing The Gambia's genocide case against Myanmar, the International Criminal Court is investigating crimes against humanity against the Rohingya, and courts abroad are pursuing cases under universal jurisdiction. These processes are critical, but they remain slow, and survivors of genocide cannot live on promises of justice tomorrow while they continue to suffer today.

If states truly wish to honour their obligations under the Genocide Convention, they must act not only to punish, but to prevent. Prevention means restoring aid and ensuring protection for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and across the region. Prevention means halting the ongoing crimes of the junta and the Arakan Army. Prevention also requires protecting other Muslim communities in Myanmar, including the Pathi, Panthay, Pashu, Kaman, and Myaydu, who face systematic persecution and attacks amounting to war crimes and crimes against humanity, which also may amount to genocide. Prevention means dismantling the entrenched structures of persecution, propaganda, and apartheid that sustain genocide against the Rohingya.

Eight years on, remembrance without action is complicity. If "never again" is to mean anything, states must act now, decisively and urgently, to end the ongoing genocide and secure justice, safety, and dignity for the Rohingya people.

## **Background on the Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN)**

Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) is based in London and operates across Burma/Myanmar works for human rights, minority rights and religious freedom in Burma. BHRN has played a crucial role advocating for human rights and religious freedom with politicians and world leaders.

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