

Rohingya refugee crisis FAQs

Who are the Rohingya people?

- Rohingya people are an ethnic group who are mostly Muslim and have lived in Myanmar's Rakhine state for centuries. Before August 2017 there were approximately 1.1 million Rohingya people in Myanmar.
- In August 2017, there was an escalation in violence, forcing people to leave their homes or the country altogether. It is now unknown how many Rohingya people are still in Myanmar.
- The Rohingya people are often referred to as the most persecuted minority in the world. Because of discrimination, they have been made 'stateless' – this means they aren't recognised as citizens of any country. They have no formal right to services like education or healthcare and their movement is restricted. This persecution has gone on for decades.



Where is Myanmar?

- Myanmar is in South East Asia. It is one of the world's poorest countries.
- It has a population of 53 million who are mostly Buddhist.
- Myanmar was ruled by an oppressive military for almost 50 years, which repeatedly targeted ethnic groups who weren't Buddhist.
- In recent years, the country has moved towards democracy, but the military still have lots of power.

What happened in 2017?

- In 2017, small groups of Rohingya people attacked police checkpoints. The Myanmar military used this to justify attacks against the entire Rohingya population, including children.
- Violence significantly increased from August 2017. In September 2017, 6,700 Rohingya people were killed by the military, and entire villages were destroyed and burned.
- 700,000 Rohingya people were forced to flee their homes to escape the violence – two-thirds were children. The nearest safe place for most Rohingya refugees to go was Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world. Bangladesh struggled to cope with so many refugees arriving so quickly.

What can the UK do about it?

- The UK government is influential within the United Nations, and can bring global attention to situations where groups are committing war crimes against children.



- They can tell the International Criminal Court, which has the power to prosecute people, to investigate the Myanmar military and get justice for the Rohingya people, but so far they have not done this.
- In 2019, The Gambia, one of the smallest countries in the world, brought a case against the Myanmar military to the International Court of Justice, which can't prosecute individual people but can settle disputes between countries. The UK can also intervene in this case to support it, but it hasn't done this yet either.

What can we do to change this?

- We can tell Liz Truss, the Foreign Secretary, that we care about what happens to Rohingya children and their families – and want the UK to stand up for them at the United Nations.
- We can make sure Rohingya people are not forgotten, and we can speak out against the violence and persecution they have experienced.