

## Will Myanmar be the world's next mass atrocity? - Asia and the Pacific Policy Society

Daniel P. Sullivan  
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"Nowhere else in the world are there more known precursors to genocide than Myanmar. The world must act now to demand protection for the Rohingya, Daniel P Sullivan argues.

The world's next mass atrocity may very well take place in Myanmar. Attacks against the ethnic minority Rohingya Muslims threaten to escalate in the run up to elections this November. With few voices standing up for the Rohingya inside Myanmar, the only way to stop the attacks is for the world to speak out and demand their protection.

Violence since 2012 has killed scores and left 140,000 trapped in displacement camps that have been described as open air prisons. Over one million Rohingya face persecution in Myanmar and nowhere in the world are there more known precursors to genocide.

(...)

In order to prevent genocide and to avoid another potential mass atrocity at sea, the world and Myanmar's neighbours in particular, will need to address the root of the problem, the ongoing persecution of the Rohingya Muslim minority by the government of Myanmar.

For decades Burmese authorities at the local and national levels have placed restrictions on the Rohingya's freedom of movement, marriage, childbirth, and on other basic rights. The Bangkok-based advocacy group Fortify Rights has obtained leaked official government documents and found that the abuses could amount to crimes against humanity. Further restrictions are in the works as four new so-called "Protection of Race and Religion" laws move forward.

The government has also blocked access to humanitarian assistance to Rohingya, notably

kicking out Doctors Without Borders for several critical months in 2014. The floods that affected a million people across Myanmar in August 2015 showed the vulnerability of Rohingya in camps near the coast.

(...)

Outside pressure is sorely needed. Myanmar's neighbours in Southeast Asia in particular had been largely silent on the treatment of the Rohingya until thousands were stranded on boats off their shores. Still, some of those in the best position to help refused. Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott flat out refused to take in any Rohingya asylum seekers, citing fear of creating new incentives for more people to take to sea. An obvious way around this is to address what is causing the Rohingya to flee.

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The Rohingya have been driven from their homes, denied humanitarian aid, stranded at sea, buried in mass graves, and now flooded by monsoons. With the end of the monsoon season and the run up to the elections looming, the clock is already ticking on the next round of misery faced by this most persecuted people. The world can and must act."

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