



ROHINGYA MEDICS ORGANISATION

Providing Sustainable Healthcare

www.rohingyamedics.org

Press Release

Fear of deteriorating health of stranded Rohingya at the Bay of Bengal

Rohingya Medics Organisation (RMO) is deeply concerned about the health of the Rohingya people still stranded at Bay of Bengal/Andaman Sea.

RMO is at the frontline of the fight against COVID-19. We are closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in Bangladesh and Myanmar, and its impact on ethnic and marginalised minorities across the world.

RMO is extremely concerned on the recent reports of three Rohingya boats being denied access to Malaysia. Their journey from Bangladesh started three months ago. One boat carrying around 400 Rohingya people has been allowed to dock in Teknaf, Bangladesh, and it was of our great concern to see extremely emaciated and dehydrated Rohingya people being brought to the shore. It is reported that many have died during this dangerous sea journey.

These two boats carrying Rohingya mainly women and children after being refused entry to Malaysia are still stranded in the Bay of Bengal or Andaman Sea.

Human beings will not survive long enough without food and water. Three months of floating in the sea is too long for a human body not to show debilitating health complications.

RMO emphasizes that children in particular are extremely vulnerable to dehydration which can unquestionably be fatal. Rohingya stranded in the sea are not only suffering physically but mentally, too. Living with a death risk every day is a mental torture and no human being should have to go through it.

Although closing the land and water borders as a precautionary measure during COVID-19 pandemic is permissible, exemptions must be made by the governments for people in special humanitarian situations and needs.

Rohingya people living in the refugee camps across Bangladesh and those in Myanmar have been left out to join the fight against COVID-19 alone. Over 1.1 million Rohingya living in the refugee camps in Bangladesh are denied access to life saving information on COVID-19 through the internet shutdown. Therefore, making them vulnerable than ever to COVID-19 crisis.

Similarly, Arakan /Rakhine State, native home to Rohingya continue to suffer internet blackout. Fightings between Arakan Army (Rakhine people) and Myanmar military have displaced thousands of innocent civilians and Rohingya are caught in these crossfires, forcing them to flee their existing homes.



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The current situation of Rohingya people stranded at the sea, is a humanitarian emergency. Therefore, RMO urges that all attempts must be made to search, rescue and allow prompt disembarkment of these two pushed-away vessels.

We call upon the governments of Bangladesh, Malaysia and other neighbouring countries to come together and act immediately to open its water/land borders and provide these stranded Rohingya with food, water, medical assistance and shelter. These people are no threat to anyone's life. Anyone being worried about these Rohingya people being infected with COVID-19 and infecting others; their fear is understandable, but it can be easily solved through quarantine for a limited period of time - 14 days.

During this ongoing COVID-19 crisis, the world has shown remarkable solidarity, co-operation, understanding and have come together to fight as one unit rather than a divided force.

It is equally important to show more empathy and support to vulnerable communities and people in distress.

COVID-19 pandemic must not be used as an excuse to deny people in distress to basic rights and assistance to seek refuge in a foreign land or water under extreme emergencies.

For further information:

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