

Resolution Condemning Genocide of the Rohingya People of Burma and Urging Action

Reconstructing Judaism
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1 Background Information

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3 Since August 2017, the Burmese military has engaged in a brutal
4 genocide against the Rohingya people of Burma (Myanmar).
5 Soldiers have razed entire Rohingya villages; indiscriminately
6 massacred thousands of Rohingya men, women, and children; and
7 forced over 700,000 others to flee their homes and make the
8 perilous journey to Bangladesh’s refugee camps. Burmese
9 government officials have shielded military officials from
10 accountability by denying or downplaying these atrocities, and by
11 accusing the Rohingya of burning their own homes. The United
12 Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights has called the
13 attacks “a textbook case of ethnic cleansing.”

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15 In 2017, a coalition of Jewish organizations came together
16 to create the Jewish Rohingya Justice Network, a consortium of
17 Jewish nonprofits advocating for the rights of the Rohingya
18 people.¹ Despite calls for a swift response, the United States and
19 the international community have done tragically little to bring an
20 end to these atrocities. For the Jewish community, “never again” is
21 not a slogan, but a firm, moral commitment not to remain inactive
22 in the face of unspeakable atrocities. The Jewish community is a
23 strong ally of the Rohingya people and must speak up in the face
24 of these atrocities.

¹ Members include American Jewish World Service, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, American Jewish Committee, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, Union for Reform Judaism, HIAS, Anti-Defamation League, Jewish World Watch, JACOB, T’ruah, Reconstructing Judaism, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, Rabbinical Assembly. Allies: Hebrew College, The New York Board of Rabbis, Uri L’Tzedek, Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, The Shalom Center

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26 The Rohingya people, an ethnic minority group from the
27 Rakhine State of Burma, have a unique language and culture, and
28 while they live in a predominantly Buddhist country, the majority
29 of Rohingya people are Muslim. Despite living in Burma for
30 centuries, they are often reviled as outsiders, accused of being
31 illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. In 1982, the Burmese
32 government stripped Rohingya residents of their citizenship, and
33 through subsequent waves of violence destroyed their communities
34 and severely restricted their rights, including the right to work,
35 travel, marry, and access health services.

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37 Those fortunate enough to escape to Bangladesh lack food,
38 proper shelter, and medical care in the camps, and children are
39 prohibited from attending school. According to UNICEF, the
40 refugee settlements of Kutapalong and Balukhal in Bangladesh,
41 which now comprise the largest refugee camp in the world, are
42 home to nearly 600,000 people alone. Many refugees are
43 malnourished and in need of psychosocial support for their trauma,
44 including the sixty percent of the refugee population who are
45 women and girls and are particularly vulnerable to sexual violence.
46 The camps currently offer only one hospital facility per 130,000
47 people.

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49 As Jews living with the legacy of the Holocaust, we know
50 all too well the peril and horror of global indifference, when people
51 turn their backs on those persecuted for their race, religion,
52 ethnicity, or other distinction that degrades the value of human life.

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54 Resolution

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56 Whereas, we believe there is compelling evidence that the
57 Burmese military committed genocide against Rohingya people—
58 the deliberate and intentional destruction of their community based
59 on their ethnicity and religion.²

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61 Whereas, it is incumbent upon the Jewish community to raise
62 awareness about and advocate against the slaughter, persecution,
63 and displacement of the Rohingya people at the hands of the
64 Burmese military.

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66 Whereas, the Jewish community, for whom the words “Never
67 Again” is a rallying cry against genocide and other atrocities,
68 cannot remain silent.

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70 Therefore, Reconstructing Judaism calls
71 upon the US Congress and the Administration to condemn the
72 genocide and mandate strong economic sanctions and
73 humanitarian assistance, as crucial steps in stopping the violence.

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75 And urges the United States government and the international
76 community to immediately:

- 77 o Impose targeted sanctions on Burmese military
- 78 o officials and others involved in the ongoing
- 79 o atrocities;
- 80 o Provide humanitarian aid to Rohingya refugees;
- 81 o Explore international justice mechanisms, such as
- 82 o the International Criminal Court, to adjudicate the

²The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has concluded that there is compelling evidence based on its own on-the-ground research, which resulted in a joint 2017 report with Fortify Rights, as well as recent State Department and United Nations reports. American Jewish World Service also believes that the atrocities constitute genocide.

83 crimes committed by the Burmese military against
84 civilians, including the Rohingya people; and
85 o Urge all nations to cease arms sales to the Burmese
86 military.

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88 We also resolve to educate the community and raise awareness
89 about the genocide of the Rohingya people;

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91 Call on international bodies to ensure that any repatriation
92 planning process include Rohingya decision-makers, and restore
93 full citizenship to the Rohingya people with human rights and
94 safety guarantees;

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96 And work within local communities to build interfaith,
97 intercommunity coalitions to advocate for the rights of the
98 Rohingya people.