WHO ARE THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE IN MYANMAR?

The Rohingya people are an ethnic minority group (the vast majority of whom are Muslim) in the country of Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country. The Rohingya numbered about one million people at the beginning of 2017 and represent the largest percentage of Muslim people in Myanmar; the majority live in the Rakhine state. Since August 2017, about 655,000 Rohingya people have fled into neighboring Bangladesh to escape violent and deadly persecution in Myanmar. This includes discriminatory policies and recent violent attacks by the Myanmar military—reported rape, murder and arson. Some of the Rohingya people have also traveled by land and sea to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. The United Nations' top human rights official called what is happening to the Rohingya a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” However, Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar’s de facto leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has denied that ethnic cleansing is taking place and dismissed international criticism of her handling of the crisis. Although this crisis has intensified recently, the targeted and sometimes violent discrimination against the Rohingya has a long history.

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to learn about and develop empathy for the plight of the Rohingya people and to explore what can be done about the current situation.

See these additional ADL resources: Lesson Plans “We Were Strangers Too: Learning about Refugees through Art,” “Refugee Crisis in Europe: How Should the World Respond?” and “Who Are the Children at our Border?, Myths and Facts about Muslim People and Islam and Refugees, Reactions and World Response

Grade Level: grades 10–12

Time: 60 minutes

Common Core Anchor Standards: Reading, Speaking and Listening, Language

Learning Objectives:

- Students will learn about the Rohingya people of Myanmar, the recent violent persecution lodged against them, and the history of discrimination leading up the recent violence.
- Students will develop empathy for the plight of the Rohingya people.
- Students will explore what the world is doing about the crisis and consider ideas of their own.

Material:

- KWL ("Know, Want to Know, Learned") Chart (one copy for each student)
• The “ethnic cleansing” of Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslims, explained video (2017, 5 mins., Vox, www.youtube.com/watch?v=04axDDRVy_o)

• The Rohingya Crisis backgrounder (Council on Foreign Relations, February 9, 2018, www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis, one copy for each student)

• Photos from The Rohingya Crisis: Expulsion and Exodus slideshow (Council on Foreign Relations, www.cfr.org/media/29819/modal?anchor=slideshow-29819#, print out photos, including their caption) and post around room or prepare them to be projected on the board/smart board

**Compelling Question:** What should be done about the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar?

**Vocabulary:**
Review the following vocabulary words and make sure students know their meanings. (See ADL’s “Glossary of Education Terms.”)

- advocacy
- atrocities
- census
- citizenship
- de facto
- discrimination
- disenfranchisement
- ethnic cleansing
- etymological
- exclusionary
- exodus
- exploitation
- infrastructure
- junta
- optimism
- pervasive
- primary source
- refugees
- resettlement
- restrictions
- sanctions
- sectarian
- stateless
- refugees
- vulnerable
- citizenship
- exploitation
- protest

**WHO ARE THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE?**

1. Distribute a KWL Chart to each student and ask: *Have you heard anything about the Rohingya people in Myanmar? What have you heard?*

   Ask students to share what they know and record their thoughts on the board/smart board. For each piece of information shared, elicit more from them by asking: *How do you know that? Where did you learn that?* Have students choose some of what is shared to record on their KWL Chart under the first column: “Know.” Explain that as they learn more about the Rohingya people throughout the course of the lesson, they will complete the KWL (“Know, Want to Know, Learned”) chart which will help them organize what they already know, what they want to know and what they learn throughout the lesson.

2. Depending on how much they share about what they already know, briefly explain the following:

   *The Rohingya people are an ethnic minority group (the vast majority of whom are Muslim) in the country of Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist country. The Rohingya numbered about one million people at the beginning of 2017 and represent the largest percentage of Muslim people in Myanmar; the majority live in the Rakhine state. Since August 2017, about 655,000 Rohingya people have fled into neighboring Bangladesh to escape violent and deadly persecution in Myanmar. This includes discriminatory policies and recent violent attacks by the Myanmar military—reported rape, murder and arson. Some of the Rohingya people have also traveled by land and sea to Indonesia, Malaysia and Thailand. The United Nations' top human rights official called what is happening to the Rohingya a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing.” However, Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar’s de facto leader and Nobel Peace Prize laureate, has denied that ethnic cleansing is taking place and dismissed international criticism.*
of her handling of the crisis. Although this crisis has intensified recently, the targeted and sometimes violent discrimination against the Rohingya has a long history.

3. Explain to students that they will learn more about this crisis throughout the lesson. After determining what students already know and sharing the above summary, ask: What more do you want to know? What questions do you have? Have students turn and talk with a person sitting near them to share additional questions they have. After sharing with their partner, have students record their questions under the second column of their KWL Chart: "Want to Know." Explain that in the middle and end of the lesson, they will fill in the third column with what they learned.

INFORMATION SHARING

1. Show the 5-minute video, The "ethnic cleansing" of Myanmar’s Rohingya Muslims, explained.

2. After watching the video, engage students in a discussion by asking the following questions:
   - What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
   - What surprises you about what you learned about the Rohingya people and the situation they are in?
   - How do you feel about what you learned from the video?
   - What other questions do you have?

3. Have students spend a few minutes recording what other questions they have (under W: “Want to Know”) and what they learned (under L: “Learned”).

4. Explain that the term “ethnic cleansing” is used in the video. Ask students if they know what that means. Explain that a United Nations’ top human rights official called the crisis in Myanmar a “textbook example of ethnic cleansing” which is defined as rendering an area ethnically homogeneous by using force or intimidation to remove from a given area persons of another ethnic or religious group.

   Ask students: Can you think of other cases of “ethnic cleansing” in recent history? How do they compare to what you know about this current crisis? How do you think “ethnic cleansing” differs from other forms of conflict?

READING ACTIVITY

1. Distribute a copy of The Rohingya Crisis to each student, giving them 15–20 minutes to read the article silently. As an alternative, provide the article to students the day before to read that evening for homework.

2. After students have read the article, engage them in discussion by asking the following questions:
   - What are your thoughts and feelings after reading the article?
   - What stood out for you in reading the article and why?
   - What is happening in Myanmar?
   - What are some examples of violence and discrimination directed at the Rohingya people?
   - What is the Myanmar government doing about the crisis? What are your thoughts about their official position and what they are doing?
• How has the world responded to the crisis? How has the United States responded to the crisis? In your opinion, is it enough?
• What more, if anything, do you think should be done by the United States and other countries?
• What did you learn that you didn’t know before?
• What additional questions do you have?

3. After discussing the article, have students add to their KWL Chart, specifically adding information under the “L” column (what they learned) and the “W” column (what more they still want to learn).

PHOTO GALLERY

1. Place around the room the images from The Rohingya Crisis: Expulsion and Exodus slideshow, using all 13 photos (or a smaller amount). Have students take a “photo gallery walk” around the room (with paper and pen) by moving around the room, looking at each photo, reading the caption and silently writing down their reflections. Give students 10 minutes and instruct them to respond to the following questions with words, phrases or full sentences that convey their responses to the questions:
   • What’s going on in this photo?
   • What do you think the people are thinking or feeling?
   • If you could ask the people in the photo a question, what would you ask?

Alternative: Project each photo on the board/smart board and have students jot down their reflections on their own sheets of paper as you look at each photo together as a group.

2. After students have done their “photo gallery walk,” engage them in a discussion by asking the following questions:
   • Would anyone like to share any of their thoughts or feelings about the photos?
   • What stories do the photos tell that perhaps words do not capture?
   • What is the benefit of looking at photos of the Rohingya crisis?

WHAT CAN BE DONE?

1. Explain to students that we are going to discuss what can be done about the Rohingya crisis. First ask: What are some examples of what other countries are doing about this crisis? Examples could include: taking refugees in, providing humanitarian and financial assistance, publicly condemning the persecution, imposing sanctions and applying pressure on the Myanmar military and government.

2. Then ask students: What can we—as individuals, a class, school or community—do about the situation? You may want to use 10 Ways Youth Can Engage in Activism as an additional resource to generate ideas. Brainstorm a list of ideas, which may include some of the following:
   • Donate money to an established group providing support.
   • Organize a fundraiser and donate to an organization that is providing support.
   • Write letters to the U.S. President and/or your U.S. Congressional representative to encourage them to increase aid, apply sanctions, etc.
   • Hold an information session at school to teach other students and school staff about the situation.
• Volunteer with an organization that is assisting refugees or advocating on their behalf (i.e., International Rescue Committee).
• Conduct a public awareness campaign about the issue using social media and other channels.

3. If time permits, identify one of the projects to work on as a class and spend several weeks or more developing the idea and bringing it to fruition.

CLOSING

Have students complete their KWL Charts, adding to the section “What I Learned.” Do a go-round where each student shares the most important thing they learned.

ADDITIONAL READING

• 100 days of horror and hope: A timeline of the Rohingya crisis video (UNHCR, December 4, 2017)
• Inside a Rohingya Refugee Camp video (The New York Times)
• “Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis” (BBC, January 16, 2018)
• “Myanmar’s Rohingya Are in Crisis—What You Need to Know” (National Geographic, September 29, 2017)
• Rohingya emergency (United Nations High Commission for Refugees)
• Rohingya Rights Now (American Jewish World Service)
• “The Misunderstood Roots of Burma’s Rohingya Crisis” (The Atlantic, September 25, 2017)
# COMMON CORE ANCHOR STANDARDS

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Content Area/Standard</th>
<th>Reading</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Standard 1: Read closely to determine what the text says explicitly and to make logical inferences from it; cite specific textual evidence when writing or speaking to support conclusions drawn from the text.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 4: Interpret words and phrases as they are used in a text, including determining technical, connotative, and figurative meanings, and analyze how specific word choices shape meaning or tone.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 7: Integrate and evaluate content presented in diverse media and formats, including visually and quantitatively, as well as in words.</td>
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<th>Speaking and Listening</th>
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<td>Standard 1: Prepare for and participate effectively in a range of conversations and collaborations with diverse partners, building on others’ ideas and expressing their own clearly and persuasively.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 5: Integrate and evaluate information presented in diverse media and formats, including visually, quantitatively and orally.</td>
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<td>Standard 1: Apply knowledge of language to understand how language functions in different contexts, to make effective choices for meaning or style and to comprehend more fully when reading or listening.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases by using context clues, analyzing meaningful word parts and consulting general and specialized reference materials as appropriate.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Standard 6: Acquire and use accurately a range of general academic and domain-specific words and phrases sufficient for reading, writing, speaking and listening at the college and career readiness level; demonstrate independence in gathering vocabulary knowledge when encountering an unknown term important to comprehension or expression.</td>
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### KWL (KNOW, WANT TO KNOW, LEARNED) CHART

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