



AS IT IS

Indonesia Permits Boat Carrying Rohingya Refugees to Land

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Indonesia has permitted a boat carrying Rohingya refugees to land off the country's northernmost **province** of Aceh.

The wooden boat carrying about 120 passengers became **stranded** after experiencing engine problems. Fishermen first saw the boat Sunday about 96 kilometers off the town of Bireuen, said Badruddin Yunus. He leads the local, tribal fishing community and spoke to The Associated Press.

"Their condition looks weak, but fine," Yunus added. He said the refugees wanted to go to Malaysia and had been at sea for 28 days before their boat's engine broke down.

An official at Indonesia's chief security ministry, Armed Wijaya, said in a statement the government's decision was made "in the name of humanity." He added that the passengers – mostly women and children – were experiencing severe conditions.

"The decision was made after considering the emergency conditions the refugees are experiencing onboard the boat," the statement said.

Officials said they would give the refugees food, medicine and water. Local officials supported by police and the navy worked to repair the boat.

But the government does not plan to permit the Rohingya Muslim refugees to seek refuge in Indonesia. Local officials said the plan was to push the boat back to international waters once it is fixed.

That plan drew criticism from human rights groups.

“The Rohingya ethnic group is a **vulnerable**, stateless group of people that should be given protection,” the Civil Society Coalition said in a statement. The coalition is a group of nine Indonesian rights groups. “As a country that upholds human rights and is a member of the U.N. Human Rights Council, Indonesia should set an example for other countries,” the statement said.

Members of the Rohingya ethnic group were forced to flee violence and **persecution** in Myanmar starting in 2017. They began leaving Rakhine state after Rohingya militants launched attacks against security forces. The attacks led to government military action against suspected militants and their supporters.

Muslim-dominated Malaysia has been a common goal for the boats, with traffickers promising the refugees a better life there. But many Rohingya who land in Malaysia face detention.

I’m Bryan Lynn.

The Associated Press and Reuters reported this story. Bryan Lynn adapted the reports for VOA Learning English. Susan Shand was the editor.

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Words in This Story

province – *n.* large areas that some countries are divided into

stranded – *adj.* unable to leave a place

vulnerable – *adj.* easily hurt or harmed physically, mentally, or emotionally

persecution – *n.* the treatment of someone unfairly or cruelly because of their race, religion, or beliefs

