

28 JAN 2002

UNHCR-Complaint

UNHCR CRITICISED FOR HANDING ROHINGYA REFUGEES OVER TO MALAYSIAN POLICE

KUALA LUMPUR, Jan 28 (Bernama) -- The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) was today criticised for handing over 28 Rohingya Muslim asylum seekers to the Malaysian authorities last Friday.

Secretary-general of the Rohingya Information Centre Syedul Amin Syed Ahmad said today that instead of providing shelter or protection for the asylum seekers, the UNHCR had called the Malaysian authorities and handed them over to the police.

"The UNHCR is under a duty to help oppressed communities like the Rohingyas. Even they are recognised as refugees under the UNHCR mandate because they have been vested with the humanitarian mandate by the UN and Refugee Conventions," he said in a statement, here.

He urged the UNHCR to treat Rohingya Muslims on par with other asylum seekers and to stop inhuman treatment of Rohingya asylum seekers and refugees in Malaysia.

Twenty-eight Rohingya Muslim refugees, including women and children, from the Arakan province of Myanmar broke into the UNHCR compound here to seek asylum last Friday and were handed over to the police the following day.

"We beg the government of Malaysia, particularly the Prime Minister, Datuk Seri Dr Mahathir Mohamad, for sympathy so as to give temporary shelter until the Rohingya people can return to their homeland in Arakan," he said.

He said that if the Rohingyas here in Malaysia returned now under the present regime, they would be subjected to massive human rights violations.

These Rohingyas are part of about 7,000 Rohingya refugees stranded in Malaysia since 1988.

-- BERNAMA

SLR AHH JK