

Protesters: Boat people not Myanmar's fault
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About 300 people protested in Yangon Wednesday against international pressure on Myanmar over the Asean refugee crisis.

This comes as Malaysia and Thailand uncover hundreds of mass graves believed of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar.

Malaysia and Indonesia have also agreed to offer temporary shelter thousands others drifting in the Andaman Sea after people smugglers abandoned their human cargo amid a crackdown.

Rally-goers, including Buddhist monks, said the Rohingya are not from Myanmar, local news portal The Irrawaddy reported.

This despite the United Nation's (UN) refugee agency UNHCR saying that the Rohingya are fleeing in thousands from anti-Muslim violence in the Myanmar Rakhine state.

"Boat people are from Bangladesh, stop making (up the) story of Rohingya, stop lying for Rohingya, (there are) no Rohingya in Myanmar," the demonstrators reportedly shouted in Burmese and English.

The protest was held ahead of a 17-country meeting on the crisis in Bangkok tomorrow.

One senior monk at the rally, U Thuta Nanda, told the portal he joined out of concern that the rise of the Muslim population in majority Buddhist Myanmar would steer the country towards a Muslim doctrine.

'They'll destroy our pagodas'

He fears the country's Muslims, which he said are migrants from neighbouring Bangladesh, are trying to join the country's political parties for this purpose.

"We found that they have 25 percent of the power in both political parties already," the monk said.

"They are active in our country now. They will destroy our pagodas and our Buddhist religion."

However, the portal reported that there are no Muslim lawmakers in Myanmar. The community makes up 3.8 percent of the total population and is expected to remain at that rate for 15 years.

Yesterday, UN human rights experts condemned a proposed population control law in

Myanmar which allowed the state to enforce birth spacing.

The Bill will allow township groups to organise couples to practice 36-month birth spacing between pregnancies, and has been reportedly endorsed by the country's president.

It is proposed in a set of other bills, which also include a bill to outlaw adultery.

"These bills particularly discriminate against ethnic and religious minorities and have the potential to fuel existing tensions in the country," UN Special Rapporteur on minority issues, Rita Izsák said in a statement.

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