

**Act on Rohingya issue, else Malaysia no better than Myanmar, says
BN lawmaker**
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By Anisah Shukry

Malaysia will be no better than Myanmar if no action is taken against its fellow Asean member over its treatment of the Rohingyas, a Barisan Nasional (BN) lawmaker said today, following reports that over a thousand starving migrants remained stranded at sea.

Padang Besar MP Datuk Zahidi Zainul Abidin told the Dewan Rakyat today that Asean could not allow Myanmar to continue persecuting the Rohingya, and that Malaysia, as the chair of Asean, must give up its policy of non-interference.

"If Myanmar doesn't want to resolve this issue, we have to expel Myanmar from Asean. Human lives are more important than Asean's economy. Otherwise, it is shameful," said the Umno MP.

"I think our Prime Minister Datuk Seri Najib Razak is respected in Asean. So make a stand. Otherwise it is shameful that Thailand has offered help, the Philippines has offered help, but we have done nothing.

"We should be leading Asean, and most unfortunately, we are the chair of the Asean human rights, yet we aren't doing anything. If Asean does not do anything about this Rohingya issue, Malaysia is just the same as Myanmar."

He said this while debating the Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Anti-Smuggling of Migrants (Amendment) Bill 2015.

On Sunday, Deputy Prime Minister Tan Sri Muhyiddin Yassin said the Myanmar government should take responsibility to solve the Rohingya ethnic issue internally.

He said the Cabinet had decided that Foreign Minister Datuk Seri Anifah Aman hold discussions with the countries involved, including Myanmar, Indonesia and Thailand to find a solution.

But Zahidi pushed for more action, and urged Putrajaya to appeal for funds from the Organisation of Islamic Countries (OIC) to help the refugees.

Meanwhile, BN's Bagan Serai MP Dr Noor Azmi Ghazali told the Dewan Rakyat that the refugees stranded at sea was an emergency humanitarian crisis, and should be treated as such.

"This should be treated with utmost emergency. The world is watching us. I am sure that with the prime minister's wisdom, he will make the best decision for our country," said the Umno MP when debating the bill.

More than 1.3 million Rohingya – viewed by the United Nations as one of the world's most persecuted minorities – live in Myanmar's western Rakhine state.

AFP reported last week that Malaysia had turned away two boats carrying hundreds of migrants after supplying them with fuel and provisions.

Last week, about another 1,000 Rohingya and Bangladesh nationals were abandoned by people smugglers and swam to shore on Langkawi, a resort island in the north of Malaysia's peninsula. They are now under the custody of the immigration authorities.
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