

**Rohingya not allowed to work in Malaysia, says Home Minister**  
**The Malaysian Insider**  
**June 4, 2015**  
**By Muzliza Mustafa**

The Rohingya Muslims in Malaysia are not allowed to work in the country as it is against the law, Home Minister Datuk Seri Ahmad Zahid Hamidi said today.

He said Putrajaya has no plans to issue working permits to the refugees.

"The Rohingya have no right to work. Even if they have UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) cards they are not allowed to work here. Not by law," said Zahid this morning.

Malaysia, on humanitarian grounds, recently allowed more than 1,000 boat people comprising Rohingya Muslims and Bangladeshi migrants to come ashore after their boats were abandoned by people smugglers in the open sea.

They were placed in a temporary shelter in Kedah.

In a joint statement after the ministerial meeting on irregular movement of people in Southeast Asia in Kuala Lumpur on May 20, Malaysia and Indonesia agreed to continue to provide humanitarian assistance to 7,000 migrants still at sea.

They also agreed to offer them temporary shelter provided that the resettlement and repatriation process will be done in one year by the international community.

Despite allowing the Rohingya to stay here, Malaysia is not a signatory to the 1951 UN Refugees Convention. As such, there is no legal mechanism in place to give the refugees any form of status.

Because of this, most of them had to work illegally to feed their families.

The Rohingya were also used as cheap labour and vulnerable to ill-treatment from their "employers". They were faced with constant harassment and detention.

The Rohingya have been seeking refuge in the country since the 80s, with the UNHCR stating that there are 36,290 of them here (as of April 2014). There are perhaps a few thousand more unaccounted for.

While UNHCR provides documentation, and support for the most vulnerable among them, a lot of support comes from the community itself. – June 4, 2015.

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