

Rohingya Refugees 'Disappear' From Aceh Detention Centres, Smuggled Into Malaysia Bernama

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By Mohd Haikal Isa

ALOR SETAR, Nov 6 (Bernama) -- Over the past several months, hundreds of Rohingya refugees held in detention centres in Aceh, Indonesia, have 'disappeared' after being smuggled out by human trafficking syndicates, to be brought into Malaysia.

This was disclosed by Yusof Ali, the deputy chairman of the Kedah chapter of Rohingya Society Malaysia (RSM) Kedah, to Bernama, and he claimed that the agents were brave enough to operate from within the detention centres themselves.

"The syndicate's agents consisting of Rohingya people themselves would pay a sum of money to certain individuals among the detention centre's guards, to obtain 'permission' to sneak out the inmates,"

"They would then be taken in chartered cars booked by the agents to the city of Medan before being taken to a specific location to catch a boat across the Straits of Melaka to Malaysia," he said.

According to Yusuf, he was told by inmates of the detention centres in Aceh, that anyone who wanted to get out of such centres would have to pay up to 8 million Indonesian Rupiah (RM2,542) to certain individuals among the group of guards.

He said that he knew the identities of the individuals, but was reluctant to reveal them, as he was worried about the safety of his two nephews who were still at one of the detention centres.

"Both my nephews are still teenagers," he said, adding, he had advised them not to be taken in by the agents' inducement, and continue to stay at the detention centre.

Yusof urged the inmates at the detention centres not to be influenced by "games" played by the agents of the syndicate, in addition to warning them of the possibility of being held by Malaysian authorities in the event they tried to enter the country using illegal means.

He said that once the inmates were successfully smuggled out of the detention centres, each person would have to pay another RM3,000 to the syndicate's agents if they wished to be taken by boat to Malaysia.

Yusof said he was told that recently, the number of Rohingyas and Bangladeshi nationals who were detained in three detention centres in Aceh have drastically reduced, compared to when they first arrived in northern Sumatra several months ago.

He gave as an example the detention centre in Kuala Langsa, Aceh, where initially there were more than 400 Rohingyas placed there a few months back, but the number had reduced to only 120 at present.

He said the number of inmates in the North Aceh detention centre had also reduced from 600 to about 150, while the one in Aceh 1, or East Aceh, went down from 400, to about a 100 currently.

"I believe all of them were brought to Malaysia by the human trafficking syndicate's agents," he said, adding that the matter was by related by inmates who were still at the detention centres.

The disclosure by Yusof is consistent with the statement released by North Aceh Regency government spokesman Amir Hamzah to the international media recently, who said that the number of Rohingya refugees in Kampung Blang Adoe, was dwindling.

He said an inspection by agencies of the United Nations (UN) found that the number had reduced from 322 to 140 people, believed be due to human trafficking.

Yusof said more than 1,000 Rohingyas and Bangladeshis were placed in the detention centres in Aceh, after their ships were stranded in the Straits of Melaka several months ago.

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