

“A protest called by the Refugee Action Collective this Friday May 22, 5.30pm Bourke St Mall will demand that the Australian government help to rescue up to 8000 Rohingya asylum seekers stranded in the Malacca Straits - where the Australian Navy patrols close by.” said Chris Breen for the Refugee Action Collective.

The rally will call on the Abbott government to

- Help Rescue the Rohingya
- End Boat Turn Backs
- Offer Australian resettlement to Rohingya refugees
- End the ban on accepting UNHCR refugees from Indonesia
- Provide humanitarian assistance, not foreign aid cuts

Speakers include:

- Habib Habiburahman - Australian Burmese Rohingya Organisation (ABRO) (Melbourne Branch)
- Pamela Curr – Asylum Seeker Resource Centre
- Mohammed Baqiri – Afghan refugee who came to Australia on boat that sank
- Senator Janet Rice – Greens

“Despite reports of 200 deaths already and many more imminent from dehydration, Tony Abbott continues to defend Australian turn backs of asylum boats. His encouragement to regional governments to do the same, has led to a deadly game of ping pong with asylum seekers pushed from country to country. It has become blatantly obvious that turn backs don’t save lives – they cause deaths.”

Breen continued “Around 1300 Rohingya asylum seekers have made it to land in Aceh, Indonesia many rescued by local fisherpeople. Local communities in Indonesia have organised donations of food, and water, but instead of offering help with humanitarian assistance Australia is cutting foreign aid to Indonesia by 40%. Australia must help provide aid, immediately lift its ban on accepting UNHCR refugees from Indonesia and offer Rohingya refugees safe passage to Australia.”

Habib Habiburahman for the Australian Burmese Rohingya Organisation (ABRO) says “Ethnic cleansing pogroms with genocidal actions, repression and forceful eviction operations against Rohingya minority have been ongoing since 1942. Minorities continue to face vigilante attacks, extrajudicial killings, sexual abuse, arbitrary arrests and detention, inhumane torture, use of landmines, the recruitment of child soldiers, forced labour, stripping off of citizenship and not allowing to recourse under new citizenship act”

Breen continued “Rather than call for an end to ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, Coalition Senator George Brandis last year welcomed Australia’s ‘growing defence engagement’ with the Myanmar regime.”

“If this was a natural disaster Australia would offer assistance. Australia spent up to \$80 million searching for missing Malaysian plane MH370, unlike the plane we know where the boats are and that people are still alive. A fraction of that \$80 million could save thousands of lives, but instead Abbott is wasting \$400million on the Coalition new monstrous Border Force ministry. Abbott’s ‘stop the boats’ slogan is an expensive lie that costs lives. The lives of up to 8000 Rohingya asylum seekers rest in the hands of regional governments of

Australia, Thailand, Malaysia and Indonesia. The Refugee Action Collective demands immediate action to save lives” concluded Breen.

For further comment call Chris Breen 0403 013 183 for the Refugee Action Collective or Habib Habiburahman 0469 773 077 - Australian Burmese Rohingya Organisation (ABRO) (Melbourne Branch)