

Thailand casts adrift Burmese refugees

Wednesday 11 February 2009, by [PETERSON Chris](#) (Date first published: 6 February 2009).

A boat of Burmese refugees found off Indonesia claimed on February 3 that they had been towed out to sea and set adrift by Thai authorities.

According to the February 4 Melbourne Age "About 200 men from Burma's minority Muslim Rohingya community were found huddled in a boat marooned off the northern tip of Indonesia's Sumatra island on Monday".

They said they had spent three weeks adrift after Thai authorities beat them and dumped them in as many as 10 wooden boats far out to sea with no motors and hardly any provisions after they had sought refuge in Thailand.

Human rights groups have said nearly 1000 Rohingya landed in Thailand last year, before being towed out to sea with few supplies.

Migrants found off Sumatra on January 7 also bore scars that they said had been inflicted with wooden sticks and rifle butts.

Burma's military rulers deny basic citizenship rights to the Rohingya, leading to discrimination and abuse and contributing to a regional humanitarian crisis as hundreds try to flee the country by boat every year.

About 650 Rohingya migrants were found drifting in Indonesian and Indian waters in January.

Indonesia has said the migrants will likely be repatriated to Burma despite their fears of persecution. Indonesia has denied the UN refugee agency access to those who arrived on January 7 and has tried to prevent journalists from interviewing them.

It has also refused to comment on their claims of abuse by Thai security forces.

According to Refugees International, "Burma is experiencing one of the most neglected humanitarian and human rights crises in the world. No less than half a million people are internally displaced in the eastern part of the country and at least one million more have fled to neighbouring nations."

P.S.

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