

Rohingya refugees from Burma held on Nauru

Wednesday 30 May 2007, by [McILROY Jim](#) (Date first published: 26 May 2007).

A group of Rohingya people, a Muslim ethnic minority from western Burma's Arakan state, is being held indefinitely at the Australian government detention centre on Nauru.

Brisbane,

The asylum seekers, who are being refused processing under the Migration Act, have been imprisoned since September 2006 and have very limited access to legal advice and communication with the outside world.

The Rohingya have been described as one of the world's most persecuted people. Despite a population of approximately 3.5 million, they are also one of the most forgotten.

The Rohingyas are victimised by Burma's military regime because of their religion and ethnicity. They face widespread discrimination and are denied Burmese citizenship despite having lived in Burma for hundreds of years.

The plight of the Rohingya asylum seekers on Nauru was discussed at a May 24 forum organised by the Refugee Action Collective (RAC). Human rights lawyer Andrew Boe, who was born in Burma, told the audience that Burma has the worst population displacement problem in Asia, with an estimated half-a-million people forced to leave their homes.

He described the "overwhelming sense of fear" that affects all the people of Burma under the current police-state conditions, adding that the Australian government must recognise the genuine refugee status of the Rohingya at Nauru and their right to settle in Australia.

An Afghan refugee on a temporary protection visa who spent three years on Nauru spoke about problems faced by asylum seekers there. The isolation and lack of certainty experienced by people held in Australia's detention centres has serious effects on their physical and mental health, he said.

Ian Rintoul from RAC condemned the Australian government's refugee policies, arguing that the refugee-rights movement has considerable "unfinished business" whichever party wins government later this year.

For more information, visit <http://www.rac-qld.org>

P.S.

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