

EVALUATING CANADA'S RESPONSE TO THE ROHINGYA CRISIS & MYANMAR

Issue Statement

The 2018 report *Tell Them We're Human*, released by PM Trudeau's Special Envoy on the Rohingya Crisis, Bob Rae, has formed the framework for Canada's engagement in the Rohingya crisis and Myanmar Strategy. These are some of MyPACK's provisional findings from our review of the report's recommendations and Canada's Myanmar policy over the last six years.

Background

The report consisted of 17 specific recommendations divided into four parts:

- 1) Alleviating Humanitarian Crisis and Allocating Aid to Myanmar and Bangladesh (Recs. 1-7);
- 2) Engaging in the Political Situation of Myanmar and Bangladesh (Recs. 8-13);
- 3) Pushing for Accountability and Impunity (Recs. 14-15); and
- 4) Establishing Coordination and Cooperation across various actors (Recs. 16-17).

Evaluation

Canada was **successful** in fulfilling humanitarian aid and collaboration goals, pursuing economic sanctions, supporting the IIMM, and some engagements with international partners.

- **Humanitarian Aid (Rec. 2):** Canada's Rohingya/Myanmar strategy consisted of \$300 million dollars of funding from 2018-21 and \$288.3 million from 2021-24. However, no support has been committed in the recent budget.
- **Sanctions (Rec. 15):** Canada did enact sanctions, including arms embargoes, but with limited effect since Canada never provided arms to Myanmar.
- **IIMM (Rec. 2 & 14):** The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) was successfully established in September 2018 with Canadian leadership and funding.
- **Human Rights (Rec. 13):** Canada has issued statements and condemnations, and promoted activists, workshops, and civil society.
- **Engagement (Rec. 14 & 17):** Canada engages with ASEAN, and the UN, and launched the International Working Group (IWG).

Canada **failed** in incorporating Rohingya voices, pursuing land allocation in Bangladesh, accepting refugees, pursuing conflict mediation, and forming a Canada-Rohingya Working Group.

- **Listening to Rohingya Voices (Rec. 1):** Most support was given to large international agencies against the advice of diaspora leaders to work through local networks.
- **Land Allocation (Rec. 3):** Canada has not prioritized pushing Bangladesh to allocate more land for Rohingya refugees, which has worsened their conditions.

- **Refugees into Canada (Rec. 6):** Canada has only accepted approximately 1,000 Rohingya refugees since 2006, despite this being a critical component of the Rae Report.
- **Mediating Dialogue (Rec. 7):** Canada has not significantly supported mediation efforts between Myanmar and Bangladesh nor within Rakhine State.
- **Canada-Rohingya Working Group (Rec. 16):** No working group established.

Canada partially succeeded in establishing formal MoUs, limited support to women and girls, some support to peace operations, some promotion of human rights, and the establishment of the IWG.

- **State Relations (Rec. 5):** Some MoUs established between relevant actors, but with limited results. The Myanmar National Unity Government (NUG) is the only actor to commit to the return of the Rohingya.
- **Women and Girls (Rec. 2 & 11):** One project worth \$1 million was listed for women and girls but there are no results nor mention of attention for emergency responses.
- **Supporting Stakeholders (Rec. 7 & 12):** Canada has successfully funded NGO-led peace ops but lacks evidence of reconciliation or dialogue-based projects.
- **International Working Group (Rec 17):** The IWG was successfully established with 22 other states and Canada has raised Myanmar issues on the international stage.

Key Takeaways

1. **The situation in Myanmar is drastically different since the coup.** A new assessment is needed to guide policy; ideally, another Special Envoy should be appointed.
2. **Canada must continue its support for Myanmar and the Rohingya.** The situation in Myanmar and for the Rohingya has deteriorated significantly since 2018. Canada cannot abandon its commitments and should build on the initiatives it has successfully established.
3. **Humanitarian aid should continue, but more *political* support is needed.** At this crucial juncture, Rohingya must have a voice in Myanmar's future and democratic institutions need strengthening.
4. **Recommendations to engage the Myanmar Government and military are now *invalid*.** Their atrocities since the coup make engagement unacceptable.
5. **However, Canada needs guidance on engaging new democratic actors.** This includes the National Unity Government, Ethnic Revolutionary Organizations, Civil Disobedience Movements and CSOs.
6. **Support for the IIMM needs recalibrating.** In addition to institutional support, grassroots communities need material support to continue monitoring and reporting activities.
7. **Dedicated funding should be established** for Phase III, from 2024 onwards. This should prioritize working through local organizations and networks.

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