



[Human Rights Watch Releases a New Report Outlining the Perils of Rohingya Refugees on the Remote Island of Bhasan Char](#)

Human Rights Watch (HRW) released a report this week detailing Bangladesh's plan to move nearly 100,000 Rohingya refugees to a remote island in the Bay of Bengal. The island in question, Bhasan Char, has a heightened risk of monsoons, cyclones, and other weather-related disasters, as well as having insufficient health care and infrastructure to support such a population. The refugees will be moved from Cox's Bazaar, where nearly 850,000 people live in overcrowded and squalid conditions. Human Rights Watch called for an independent assessment of Bhasan Char's habitability by the United Nations, and warned that many of the refugees moved to the island were forced to do so without giving their consent. Currently, just over 18,000 refugees have been moved to Bhasan Char, and Bangladesh's government has announced plans to transport nearly 80,000 more Rohingya to the island.

Humanitarian experts have expressed concern with Bangladesh's plan to relocate nearly 100,000 refugees, and warned that Bhasan Char simply does not have the facilities to sustain such a population. However, Cox's Bazaar, which is the world's largest refugee settlement, has become overcrowded in recent years, as tens of thousands of Rohingya have fled state-sponsored violence in Myanmar. The government of Bangladesh has claimed that the facilities on Bhasan Char are equivalent to those in Cox's Bazaar, and that there is more space on the remote island. It has also said that the relocations are completely voluntary, and the refugees on the island are not at any additional risk from weather-related disasters.

In their report, Human Rights Watch was careful to credit Bangladesh for accepting scores of Rohingya refugees, noting that other countries in the region had closed their borders to this vulnerable population. However, in interviews with refugees on the ground in Bhasan Char, Human Rights Watch learned that many of them had been moved without their full and informed consent. Additionally, they had been prevented from returning to the mainland, and the healthcare facilities were severely lacking. HRW suggested that the international community collaboratively raise money to provide to Bangladesh to assist in the resettlement of Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh is constricted by their economic uncertainty, which Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen highlighted in saying "I am sorry we cannot have better facilities because we are not a rich country. We cannot afford to provide more things."

In recent years, Bangladesh has stepped up to provide temporary respite for Rohingya refugees fleeing ethnic violence in Myanmar, even as other countries in the region refused. Over one million Rohingya were forced to flee Myanmar as the security forces there conducted a campaign of ethnic cleansing. Bangladesh has rightfully been praised for providing refuge to the Rohingya, although it could use additional support from the international community. Economic realities in Bangladesh, one of the poorest countries in the world, have meant that refugees are often deprived of basic necessities, such as healthcare and formal education for children.