



Date : 1/16/2025

The Leader of Opposition  
Mr. Sajith Premadasa  
S.J.B.

**Nationalist Organizations objects the illegal boat arrivals known as Rohingyas to Sri Lanka & calls to investigate local agents involved in international human smuggling business**

1. We are addressing this letter to present our grave concern over the steady illegal maritime arrivals called Rohingyas from Myanmar. The latest arrival of 113 Rohingyas on 19 December 2024 and the announcement by the Minister of Public Security Mr. Ananda Wijayapala claiming a further 100,000 Rohingyas is reported to arrive & that they are paying to leave on boats to numerous foreign destinations has prompted us to present some facts for the Government to take serious note of as appropriate timely action not taken or delayed will complicate issues for Sri Lanka & the Government.

2. As per UN Refugee Council, there are 2.6m IDPs in Myanmar & 1.3m refugee/asylum seekers from Myanmar hosted in other countries. However, UN Member States are cutting humanitarian funding – from 70% in 2021, to 60% in 2022 & 30% in 2023. In 2023 WHO cut food rations from \$12 per person to \$8 per person.

3. Australia is also reducing aid to its NGOs supporting 390,000 Rohingyas (\$11.2m in 2020 to \$6.4m in 2023 which also covers NGO admin costs). Australia refuses to allow Rohingyas to resettle in Australia. Anyone sent to an offshore processing centres in Papua New Guinea & Pacific Island of Nauru, will never be resettled in Australia. All boat arrivals are sent to detention until deported or added to waiting lists for resettlement in another country. As a result, boats have stopped coming to Australia since 2014 as Australian Navy patrols its territory & sends back boats under its policy Operation Sovereign Borders.

4. There are 1.1m Rohingyas living in Bangladesh detention camps since 2017.

Rohingyas have been arriving in Bangladesh from Myanmar since 1970s with 30,000 new borns in the camps each year. The Bangladeshi govt has accused Rohingyas of numerous crimes & the 2012 Ramu violence, displacing the indigenous people of the Chittagong Hill Tracts & importing narcotic drugs. To address this, the Bangladesh Govt proposed to relocate Rohingyas to a remote island (Bhasan Char) but was prevented by UNHCR however with increase in influx, the Govt proceeded to build 100,000 homes & relocated 20,000 Rohingyas in the island in December 2020.

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5. The former Bangladeshi PM in 2022 asked the international community to help solve the Rohingya crisis Bangladesh was experiencing. The Bangladeshi government was spending \$350million from its own resources to temporarily relocate 100,000 Rohingyas while Bangladesh spends \$1.22billion every year for the Rohingyas alone. The former Bangladeshi PM said the refugees have caused loss of biodiversity, loss of forest area of around 6500 acres of land & "immeasurable adverse effects on the local population".

6. Sri Lanka is facing an economic crisis of its own & has no financial wherewithal to spend on illegal arrivals & the situation Bangladesh is facing should be clear lessons for Sri Lanka, of the problems that may arise.

7. Thus, keeping illegal boat arrivals in camps raises enormous problems & challenges – physical & mental health even surgeries, hygiene, sanitation & infectious diseases, food & water, drug addicts & trafficking, promoting, prostitution, births & deaths, vaccination requirements, marriage, child marriage & population increase, education & facilities, increasing demands by Rohingyas upon host countries all contributing to national security implications as a result of their prolonged stay.

8. These are the same likely issues Sri Lanka, though not a signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention will have to deal with by accepting illegal immigrants known as Rohingyas. Sri Lanka is a small island. Our total land area is only 62,710sq.km. In 2022 our population density was 332.76 persons per sq.km. This has risen to 370 per sq.km as of 2025.

9. Sri Lanka is only just coming out of an economic bankruptcy declared crisis. Cost of living is skyrocketing, inflation is at an all-time high, the inequality-gap is widening, the government has an arduous task of resolving the problems of its own citizens first. We have 121,000 Sri Lankans displaced since 2021 from natural disasters & another 11,000 Sri Lankan refugees from the 30-year armed conflict who are still living in refugee camps & not resettled. Sri Lanka's government must address these anomalies first.

10. Leaving aside the genuineness of asylum/refugee seekers, transporting people to another nation by boat for a payment is part of a global human smuggling/human trafficking/modern slavery that is a \$150billion annual profitable "business" (ILO 2014) involving 50million people which includes forced sexual exploitation, domestic work, forced labor in agriculture & other economic activities, prostitution (\$99b), pedophilia, child sex & marriage. As per ILO the business was generating \$44b annual profits in 2005.

11. Estimates by Hope for Justice claims that modern slavery & human trafficking is a \$245b annual business. This figure excludes forced marriage (estimated 22m people). The \$245b a year is equivalent to 0.26% of the world's GDP. \$245billion broken down covers \$169.9b from sexual exploitation & \$75.9b from forced labor. Thus, we see a massive increase in the exploitation of people.

12. India & Bangladesh Governments have also raised serious concern over Rohingya links to terror groups as well. This leads to the question of whether there is a link to local agents including politicians & NGOs who are part of the international human smuggling network who are promoting transportation of illegals by boats & pressurizing governments to accept them. This entails the GoSL to open an investigation into all persons in Sri Lanka taking an unusual interest in keeping illegal boat arrivals in Sri Lanka.

13. As per the statement issued by Public Security Minister Mr. Ananda Wijayapala, the present group of Rohingyas that arrived in December 2024 had paid to be taken by boat & the boat had been arrested after entering Sri Lanka's territorial waters & thereafter had claimed asylum/refugee status. If they had paid to be taken in boats to other countries, they cannot be categorized as refugees/asylum seekers. Sri Lanka cannot & should not become a hub for any form of human trafficking/modern slavery & its associated criminal activities.

14. Thus, the Government must request UNHCR to desist from encouraging refugees to arrive in nations that are not signatory to the 1951 Refugee Convention. Parking refugees for an unspecified period & thereafter looking for nations to accept them is not a solution & results in unnecessary problems for both refugee & temporary host nation.

15. We also observe there is a political element in the pressure being exerted on the government using the term "humanitarian" to accept an influx of Rohingyas. If the transportation of people by boat is part of the global human smuggling racket, the government should investigate if those promoting to accept these "refugees" be they politicians or NGOs picketing, to be on the human smuggling payroll. The sudden call to establish an immigration/emigration centre to issue visas in East Sri Lanka cannot be a coincidence & questions whether it will be used to provide visa for illegals arriving on boats. The involvement of Opposition political parties/MPs in this issue may well be to create a new problem to bring the government into disrepute & make it unpopular amongst the public. Therefore, the government must not embrace any new problems that it cannot handle.

16. The other issues that the Bangladeshi Government currently faces are relevant to Sri Lanka especially when Sri Lanka's debt repayment begins from 2027 and Sri Lankans will face tremendous financial challenges in cost of living.

17. Taking all these into consideration, Sri Lanka's Government & relevant line Minister must protect Sri Lanka's sovereignty & territory & Sri Lankans & place their well-being first and make immediate arrangements to transfer the present Rohingyas detained & prevent accepting any new arrivals while opening investigation into local links to international human trafficking business & its associated crimes.

18. It is the duty of the Nationalist organizations to support the Government when it needs to be supported & guide the government in taking decisions that are relevant to National interest & the National security of Sri Lanka.



The President of Swadeshika Movement,  
Priyadarshana Benthotarachchi.

CC: The President of Sri Lanka – H.E. Anura Kumara Dissanayake