



# Persatuan Pengguna Pulau Pinang Consumers Association of Penang

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Press Statement/Letter to the Editor

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## The government needs to recognise refugee rights

The Consumers' Association of Penang (CAP) is appalled by the inhumane suggestion by some parties that Malaysia should bar as well as evict Rohingya refugees in our country. These people have escaped their country because they fear for their lives and if we turn them away it is as good as condemning them to death.

There are citizens, certain NGOs and even politicians who are against the Rohingya being in Malaysia. The excuse given for their prejudice is that the Rohingya refugees are dirty, rude, do not respect our culture and are demanding Malaysian citizenship.

However, it is not fair to judge a whole group of people based on the bad behaviour of a few; there will always be good and bad in any group of people.

Many Rohingya refugees in Malaysia have made it clear that they appreciate that they have been allowed to make Malaysia their temporary home and that they want nothing more than to return to Myanmar or to settle in a third country. They not only have to deal with the bigotry of certain groups in our country but also the mental and emotional stress of being stateless and surviving off people's goodwill.

The fact that Malaysia does not recognise Rohingya refugees as refugees, but illegal immigrants or stateless people makes surviving very difficult for them. They cannot legally work in our country and they have no access to healthcare or education. All this gives them a bad image and their presence here has a negative connotation.

If the government would recognise their refugee status, it would not only benefit Rohingyas but also our country. The Rohingya refugees would be functioning members of our society; they could legally work and pay taxes. Their children could go to school to get an education and learn to socialise. Also, we would not have to worry about dangerous diseases, such as Covid-19, circulating in areas with high Rohingya refugee settlers and them passing it on to the rest of society. They would not be afraid to seek medical attention when they feel sick and could be properly treated before an epidemic occurs.

We ask that the government acknowledge the status of Rohingya refugees, and refugees of other nations, that are residing in Malaysia. The government must recognise their rights to work, education and healthcare as embodied in international treaties such as the 1951 Refugee Convention, also known as the Geneva Convention. It is high time we stop demonising this group of people who have been unfairly persecuted by their own countrymen and government.

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President

Consumers Association of Penang