

Mass Graves Discovered in Malaysia



Kuala Lumpur, May 25 (RHC)-- Thirty mass graves believed to contain the remains of Rohingya migrants have been discovered in Malaysia, according to senior officials. Police discovered the graves in two locations in the northern state of Perlis, which borders Thailand, local media reported on Sunday.

Home Minister Ahmad Zahid Hamidi confirmed the unearthing of a mass grave near 17 human trafficking detention camps in Padang Besar. "But we don't know how many there are. We are probably going to find more bodies," media outlets quoted the minister as saying. However, the Star Malaysia daily reported that the graves were "believed to contain nearly 100 Rohingya migrants."

The dead are believed to be Rohingya Muslim refugees from Myanmar and Bangladesh, who either died of disease or starved to death. Smugglers abandoned the sick refugees when they moved Rohingya migrants across the border into Malaysia.

This comes after Thai police in early May found secret human-trafficking jungle camps on their side of the border and dozens of shallow graves. The graves were discovered at a remote camp in the mountains of southern Songkla province, which borders Malaysia. Thai officials had described the site as a virtual "prison camp," where migrants from Myanmar and Bangladesh were held in makeshift bamboo cells.

The Thai government has been criticized for pushing boatloads of Rohingya Muslims entering Thai waters back out to sea, and for holding migrants in overcrowded facilities.

In recent weeks, thousands of migrants, including Rohingyas and Bangladeshis, have fled their countries on boat and have arrived in neighboring Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. Many are in serious need of food and water.

On May 22nd, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) said at least 3,000 members of the Rohingya Muslim minority are still likely to be stranded in the Andaman Sea. The UNHCR also called on neighboring governments to take action and address the crisis.

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