

You have been granted one hour to discuss one of the countries in which HART works with the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson. What would be the key human rights issue you would discuss?

Dear Mr Johnson,

I am fortunate enough to be writing this letter sat in a stable home, able to go to bed each night without worrying about finding a safe place to sleep. As British citizens we have the luxury of rarely being in life-threatening situations, or being segregated because of the faith we believe in.

But the Rohingya people in Myanmar lack these rights. They are separated and discriminated from the rest of Myanmar's population in a situation similar to the atrocities of South Africa's apartheid. This is unquestionably a crime against humanity and a complete violation of human rights. The 1.1 million Rohingya people living in Myanmar have been denied adequate healthcare and education as well as being prevented from practising their faith. The UN specifies these basic needs in their Bill of Human Rights stating that everyone should have "the right to a nationality; freedom of thought and religion; freedom of opinion and expression; to equal access to public service in one's country". As UN members we are duty bound to protect this; the Rohingya people in Myanmar are clearly being denied these freedoms. Furthermore, the child mortality rate of Rohingya people living in Myanmar (224 deaths per 1,000 live births) is four times higher than the rest of Myanmar (52 per 1,000 live births). As a father, I'm sure you can empathise with the concerns of Rohingya parents' suffering. These examples of the situation in Myanmar are unacceptable; there's such inequality which is affecting both their everyday lives and their futures. If the same thing happened in the UK, we'd call on you to act and expect a swift response and firm leadership. In a globalised world, a modern Britain has duties to help other nations too.

The UN estimated that by the end of 2021 over three million Rohingya people will require humanitarian assistance. We desperately need to start sending humanitarian aid to go towards providing food and protection for the Rohingya. If the UK steps forward we can act as a role model to the rest of the world, showcasing our relevance and soft power in the 21st century and drawing attention to Myanmar's acts against humanity. By doing this we could initiate other allies to help. The UK's firm stance on the Ukraine crisis has shown the significance of the UK being seen to do things when it matters on foreign soils; if we want the UK to be taken seriously on international platforms, we must be involved in helping those in need. We must be seen to be doing the right thing.

As the Myanmar army actively promotes the segregation of the Rohingya people. I think the UK should support the excellent work of the NGO's on the ground. This is where we can help amazing organisations like the Humanitarian Aid Relief Trust (HART). By supporting HART with financial assistance we can ensure a direct and immediate use of UK tax payers money. An example of how the UK's aid can be used is through HART's partnership with Loi Tai Leng, a life-changing school located in a displacement camp in Myanmar. The school and its inspirational staff provide a safe home for many of the children who have been displaced because of the Myanmar army's 'ethnic-cleansing' campaign. Education is crucial to children's lives and that's why we must act now and help the Rohingya youth. Countries have already pledged a total of over \$100 million to go towards intervening in the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. Now it is our turn. Bold decisions need bold leadership and you have the opportunity to show the UK has not lost its moral compass, as it forges a new path in the aftermath of Brexit and the COVID-19 pandemic. As Myanmar used to be a British colony we are duty bound to the people who have been an important part of the Commonwealth. Additionally, with the rise of new global superpowers, like China, and the threat of old foes, like Russia, diplomacy with allies is more important than ever.

As the UN states in their Bill of Human Rights; "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights". In 2022, no one should ever suffer in a situation like this. Rohingya people are being denied their basic human rights and it is our job to make sure that we put an end to this situation of apartheid as soon as possible. We have the means to help. We have a moral obligation to help. I implore you to ensure justice is served swiftly and the UK is returned to a position of global authority and respect. Those responsible for these horrific crimes against humanity must be held to account.

With all regards,

Joely Harrison