

LIGHT ONE CANDLE FOR THE ROHINGYA PEOPLE

A reading for candle lighting on Chanukah

We invite you to dedicate one night of Chanukah to the Rohingya people of Burma. Please join with **American Jewish World Service (AJWS)**, the **Jewish Rohingya Justice Network** and concerned Jews across the U.S. to stand up against the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya people of Burma.

It's now been more than two years since the Burmese military launched its campaign of ethnic cleansing against this long-persecuted community, forcing more than 700,000 Rohingya women, men and children to abandon their homes and flee to refugee camps across the border in Bangladesh. Our shared history of persecution calls upon us to tell their stories and work towards a just resolution to this conflict.

Please incorporate the following reading into your candle lighting in their honor, and in recognition of all who flee from religious or ethnic persecution around the world today. Together we will shine a light for the Rohingya people.

Read aloud:

Our tradition recounts that when the ancient Greek army invaded Judea and defiled the Temple Mount, the Jews ran for their lives, retreating into caves to practice their religion in peace.

Tragically, this pattern has repeated itself throughout the ages—both for Jews and for other persecuted minorities like the Rohingya community of Burma. Just two years ago, the Rohingya people fled genocide and now live in exile, hoping for a safe return to their land.

Tonight, as we light our candles in the relative safety and warmth of our homes, we bear witness to all those who yearn for safety and comfort. We know that all should have the right to live free from persecution and fear. No one should be forced to flee because of who they are or what they believe.

We dedicate this candle to the Rohingya people, and to all who seek shelter from persecution today.

To the refugees living a daily struggle for food, water, shelter and survival.

To the brave activists who are fighting for equality, dignity and peace.

To the children hoping for a life without fear.

May the light that we kindle tonight shine bright, illuminating our pursuit of justice. May it remind us that each of us has the capacity to dispel darkness and bring light and hope.

Proceed with your candle lighting blessings.

Note: Candle lighting is often inter-generational, and so we welcome you to decide what is appropriate to teach your family or community. This reading may be too heavy for some young children; and older participants may want more information about the plight of the Rohingya people, which you will find on the following page.

Background on the Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya people of Burma (Myanmar) have faced decades of abuse and violence at the hands of their own country's military. This persecuted ethnic minority has been stripped of their citizenship, driven from their land and interned in camps.

In August 2017, the discrimination and violence escalated to a genocide, when the military began a vicious campaign of burning villages and brutally murdering people. In the aftermath, more than 700,000 Rohingya people fled to Bangladesh—many on a weeks-long journey—carrying nothing but their children and a few belongings.

The plight of the Rohingya people echoes the persecution and violence suffered by Jews throughout history, and the members of the Jewish Rohingya Justice Network are acting powerfully on our promise of “never again.”

American Jewish World Service, for example, funds social change organizations in Burma that are working around the clock to help refugees in camps in Bangladesh meet basic needs for food, shelter and water; recover from their profound traumas; and weather the devastation wrought by the monsoon rains. AJWS also supports Rohingya and other human rights activists in Burma and around the world who are fighting to end the persecution and achieve justice. AJWS has issued a rallying cry for the Rohingya people—pushing the U.S. government to take action and orchestrating a unified Jewish response.

The Jewish Rohingya Justice Network is petitioning Congress to pass legislation calling for immediate U.S. government intervention.

After witnessing the first iteration of this bill stall in the Senate in 2018, we now demand that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee advance the Burma Human Rights and Freedom Act of 2019. The House passed H.R. 3190, a similar piece of legislation, in September of 2019 by an overwhelming majority, and now we must demand that the Senate take action, too.

Sign our petition to join us in advancing a just end to the Rohingya crisis.

Please visit ajws.org/lightforrohingya

THE JEWISH ROHINGYA JUSTICE NETWORK is the powerful consortium of Jewish NGOs advocating for the rights of the persecuted Rohingya people of Burma. JRJN's membership includes 26 organizations and all four major branches of American Judaism—all standing together against genocide.

Jewish Rohingya Justice Network members include: *American Jewish Committee, American Jewish World Service, The Association of Rabbis and Cantors, Anti-Defamation League, Cantors Assembly, HIAS, Indianapolis Jewish Community Relations Council, JACOB, Jewish Community Relations Council of New York, Jewish Council for Public Affairs, Jewish Labor Committee, Jewish World Watch, The Orthodox Union, Rabbinical Assembly, Reconstructing Judaism, Reconstructionist Rabbinical Association, Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism, T'ruah and The Union for Reform Judaism. Allies: Foundation for Ethnic Understanding, Hebrew College, The Muslim-Jewish Solidarity Committee, Never Again Coalition, The New York Board of Rabbis, The Shalom Center and Uri L'Tzedek.*