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Myanmar's navy arrests over 200 Rohingya fleeing Rakhine

Junta navy officials have arrested 226 Rohingya fleeing Myanmar by boat since Oct. 27, communities in western Myanmar told Radio Free Asia. They were attempting to escape to Malaysia and Thailand.

On Thursday, the navy apprehended two boats carrying 167 Rohingya off the coast of Ayeyarwady region, a source close to the region's police force said Friday.

"They were caught when they left to go to Thailand. They were caught at sea," he told RFA, asking to remain anonymous for fear of reprisals. "There were 80 men and 87 women on the boat."

Ten Myanmar crew members are also being prosecuted, he added.

The group of 167 Rohingya originated from Rakhine state. They traveled in boats called Thuta Kyaw and Zeya Aung and were sailing northwest from Hainggyikyun in Ayeyarwady region, some pro-army channels on the messaging app Telegram reported. Junta navy warship 553 caught the boats while patrolling the area.

ecoi.net description:

Since 27 October 2023, the Junta navy arrested 226 ethnic Rohingya attempting to flee Myanmar by boat

Country:

Myanmar

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Navy officials took the arrested Rohingya to an unknown location from Hainggyikyun police station, said a local close to the junta council administration. Their whereabouts is still unknown.

Similarly, officials arrested nine men and 12 women on Monday after the group entered Rakhine state from Bangladesh's refugee camps. They intended to go to Malaysia, but were arrested in the sea near Rathedaung township's Done Paik village.

On Oct. 27, junta officials arrested 38 Rohingya enroute to Malaysia. The boat was caught near Ah Ngu Maw village in Rakhine's Rathedaung township. The following day, the group was taken to Sittwe police station to be prosecuted, according to a press release from the junta-controlled Rakhine Daily Telegram page.

In relation to the three cases, police arrested six more people, including boat owners, crew members and a broker.

Rohingya regularly leave by boat for neighboring countries because it is more difficult for them to survive in Rakhine state, one Rohingya refugee from Sittwe told RFA.

"This leaving is normal and there is no way to stop it. People are going in droves, although they know the way is deadly," he said, asking to remain anonymous. "About half of those who left have arrived. But there is absolutely no way to stop it. Because it's difficult to live here – job scarcity and unemployment, no freedom. And people are leaving because the resentment is growing day by day."

They are trying to leave by paying brokers up to 10 million kyats (US\$4,762) per person, he added. Rohingya are often arrested by the Myanmar navy while leaving on boats.

RFA contacted Ayeyarwady region's junta council spokesman, Maung Maung Than for comment on the arrested Rohingya, but did not receive a reply by the time of publication.

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