A Place to Call Home: The Acceptance and Denial of Burmese Refugees
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Abstract
For more than 25 years Burma has been experiencing a refugee crisis due to the military government's excessive human rights violations. The argument for not accepting refugees often prioritizes the economic troubles that a country can face when taking care of refugees. Meanwhile, those who prioritize human rights often appeal to human morals and argue that refugees should be accepted wherever they need to in order to be safe. This project ultimately focuses on whether Burmese refugees should be accepted into the surrounding countries or if countries should be able to deny refugees within their borders.

History
Although Burma's government currently uses the name Myanmar, the name change is not recognized by the United Nations because the name was changed in 1989 by the military government (“U.S. Relations with Burma” par. 8). The military government took power in 1962 and relinquished it in 2011 (Lawi Weng par. 1). Even today, they continue to have power in the country.

Seeking refuge from persecution is an act that has existed for as long as civilization itself (“Refugees” par. 1). Refugees were first defined by the United Nations in 1951 as someone who has a "fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country” (“Refugees” par. 3). Over two million ethnic peoples have migrated to Thailand after enduring violence from the Burmese military (Banki 50; Pratle 2). (For the Burmese there is a very thin line between being a migrant and being a refugee since the country has some of the worst human rights abuses in the world. Under the United Nations' definition nearly all of the migrants would be considered refugees) (Newall et al. 8).

The Case Against Accepting Burmese Refugees
A number of countries that are pressured to accept refugees are not economically able to. In the case of the Rohingya Muslim refugees, both Malaysia and Indonesia have said that they cannot accept the refugees for financial reasons (Tenery par. 12). A report from the Center for Immigration Studies found that United States taxpayers spend $64,370 per Syrian refugee permitted refuge in the country (Meyer par. 2). Setting refugees in the United States is far more expensive than setting refugees in the rest of the world (such as Europe). The cost is increased by an allowance of $1,000 per refugee (Phillips par. 2). It would cost approximately $5,364 to support a refugee in a country that neighbors where they are fleeing (Meyer par. 3). It is not possible for countries such as Thailand and Bangladesh, who do not have the same international power as the United States, to spend anywhere near this amount of money on refugees. Unfortunately most refugees are concentrated in the poorer countries of the world (“Social and Economic Impact” par. 7).

Refugees are concentrated in the poorer countries of the world. Under the United Nations’ definition nearly all of the migrants would be considered refugees. It is important for refuge to be accepted. Without proper acceptance and treatment of migrants and refugees within their new country and those who work in the media. There is also continued violence within the state even though the government has performed countless human rights violations over the past 50 years: “arbitrary arrest, unlawful killings, sexual violence, torture, enforced disappearances and destruction of livelihood” (Gill 11).

The Case For Accepting Burmese Refugees
It is important to accept refugees into countries where they are safe. Talking about refugee issues is important but it can run the risk of making economic relations and trade agreements with these refugees. Meanwhile, the unification of negative economic impacts should there be steps taken to find a safe place for refugees, it is against economic goals that need protection. Even so, it is not reasonable for a single country to support all of the refugees that are leaving a neighboring country. It is possible to ease the economic disparity through further funding from the UNHCR or the International Monetary Fund (IMF). Further funding would involve further assistance globally. In order to help the Burmese refugees Thailand needs to sign the United Nations' 1951 Refugee Convention. Doing so would provide stronger aid.