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# Promoting refugee protection in Southeast Asia through the Responsibility to Protect (R2P)

Ju-li Teo



UNIVERSITI  
KEBANGSAAN  
MALAYSIA

*The National University  
of Malaysia*



**KITA**  
INSTITUT KAJIAN ETNIK  
INSTITUTE OF ETHNIC STUDIES

## **Abstract**

Despite the large number of refugees living in Southeast Asia, ASEAN states continue to remain adverse towards international refugee law. The orthodoxy of ASEAN's non-interference policy, coupled with the region's distorted view of the concept of 'burden-sharing' and lack of political will and commitment towards providing refugee assistance, amongst others, has led to a severe political impasse in terms of managing forced migration. Failure to adequately respond, even in instances involving genuine victims fleeing atrocity crimes and violations of human rights (e.g. during the 2015 ASEAN Rohingya refugee crisis), is reflective of the region's critical normative-legal gap in its current protection approaches towards refugees.

This paper explores the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) concept as a means of invoking international law, namely to compel idle ASEAN states to respond to refugee crises. It further examines R2P's capability as a legal, political and moral tool in bridging the gap, the nexus between R2P, asylum and refugee protection, and how R2P can effectively promote regional cooperation and refugee protection in Southeast Asia.