

## MENELUSURI JEJAK PENGUNGSI VIETNAM DI PULAU GALANG TENTANG SEJARAH, KONFLIK, DAN KENANGAN KELAM

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### ABSTRACT

*Galang Island, under the administration of Batam City, Riau Islands, plays an important role in humanitarian and geopolitical history as a Vietnamese refugee camp from 1979 to 1996. After the Vietnam War conflict ended in 1975, around 250,000 Vietnamese fled to Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. Galang Island was chosen as the location for a refugee camp managed by UNHCR and the Indonesian government, providing facilities such as hospitals, schools, and places of worship. Although safe from conflict, the refugees faced hardships, uncertainty, and psychological trauma. The island is now a historical monument, but there are still many dark stories that are spread and trigger confusion. This study traces the history and dark memories on Galang Island, as well as Indonesia's role in providing temporary protection for Vietnamese refugees as part of global humanitarian history. This research method uses qualitative with data collection techniques using observation, interviews with related people.*

**Keywords:** Culture Tourism, Galang Island, Vietnamese Refugee Camp, Historical Monument

### INTRODUCTION

Galang Island, located under the administration of Batam City, Riau Islands, has a rich history and an important role in humanitarian and geopolitical contexts. The island was originally known as part of an industrial area connected to Batam Island via a series of Bareleng bridges, but became better known for its role as a Vietnamese refugee camp in the late 20th century.

From 1979 to 1996, Galang Island became a shelter for thousands of Vietnamese refugees who fled the conflict in their country, especially after the Vietnam War ended in 1975. The refugees, often referred to as "boat people," fled to various Southeast Asian countries, including Indonesia. Galang Island

was then chosen by the UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) and the Indonesian government as the location of the refugee camp because of its strategic location, remoteness, and separation from local settlements.

During its operational period, Galang Island was equipped with various facilities such as hospitals, schools, places of worship, and skills training centers for refugees. The camp was designed to accommodate up to 250,000 refugees, and its management was carried out strictly by UNHCR in collaboration with the Indonesian government.



Picture 1. 1 *A Thousand Faces of Vietnamese Refugees*

Currently, although the refugee camp has been closed, Galang Island is one of the historical tourist destinations in Batam. The former camp is used as a memorial monument to the Vietnamese refugee crisis and is often visited by tourists, including those who want to learn more about the history of humanity in this region. As for Galang Island, we want to trace the traces of history, conflict, and dark memories on the island, where there are some histories that are spread that are not real or deviate from what actually happened there so that there is confusion in the community about the history of Galang Island.

By taking this title, we hope to be able to develop and provide important and interesting information from the history of the Vietnam Camp on Galang Island. By including the words "history" and "conflict," this title attracts the interest of readers who are interested in the dynamics of Southeast Asian history, especially those related to the Vietnam War, the genocide in Cambodia, and its impact on Indonesia.

Many refugees died at sea on their way to neighboring countries, including Indonesia. Stories of lack of food, water, and threats from pirates show the suffering they experienced during the refugee camp. Although safe from conflict, the refugee camp on Galang Island also has its own dark memories. Living conditions in the camp are not always adequate. Some refugees live in uncertainty for years, waiting for resettlement to a third country such as the United States, Canada, or Australia. Traumatic memories of what they experienced in their home country are exacerbated by the difficulties of living in exile.

Past experiences in conflict and life as a refugee often leave deep psychological wounds. It is possible that refugees suffer from PTSD (Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder) or other mental health problems. Tracing the footsteps of refugees on Galang

Island is also a way to understand how Indonesia, as a neighboring country, played an important role in providing temporary shelter for thousands of refugees. This is part of the history of Indonesia's involvement in global humanitarian issues.

## METHOD

Research conducted by the author at Camp Vietnam located on Jl. Trans Bareleng, Sijantung, Galang Island, Batam, Riau Islands, Indonesia. Here is the road map and the Camp Vietnam Museum on Galang Island.



Picture 1. 2 *Location map and museum of the Vietnamese camp on Galang Island*

This research was conducted using a qualitative method where the author collected data directly by observation, interviews with related parties. The latest visitor data in 2024 includes several countries, namely Singapore, North America, Canada, Malaysia, Vietnam, Kuala Lumpur, Germany, China, North Korea, South Korea, Paris, Japan, London, Myanmar, India, which of them are direct descendants of Vietnamese refugees and also native residents who have settled there.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the research conducted by the author can be information to the public and also to those who read this research. The author got information about Camp Vietnam from one of the officers who guarded the museum and knew the history that occurred with the name Mr. Andri. The author includes documentation with the officer.



Picture 1. 3 Documentation at the Museum (FG Galih)

### *History of the Formation of the Vietnam Camp on Galang Island*

Initially in 1975 there was a civil war between North Vietnam pro and contra China while South Vietnam pro and contra America. This conflict caused many Vietnamese citizens to flee to various neighboring countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. At first the Vietnamese citizens fled to Malaysia but because their population in Malaysia was already dense, the Vietnamese citizens finally chose Natuna Island as their next refugee camp. In 1979 the Natuna residents filed a complaint to the Central Government because of the dense Vietnamese refugees in Natuna. The Central Government and UNHCR (UN) decided to establish a Vietnam Camp on Galang Island. And when the Vietnam Camp was established, the refugees gradually came to Galang Island until the refugees reached approximately 250,000 people. They came to Galang Island using hundreds of ships, each ship consisting of hundreds of people in it.



Picture 1. 4 Refugee ship transport process

### **The Role and Contribution of Foreign Volunteers in Helping Refugees on Galang Island, Riau Islands**

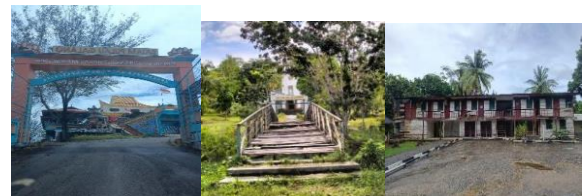
Foreign volunteers play a very important role in helping refugees on Galang Island. Foreign volunteers come from various countries such as North America, Australia, Canada, European countries, and also from international organizations with the aim of providing humanitarian support, and their contributions are very useful in various aspects of the lives of refugees. One of the main roles of volunteers is in the field of education. They provide and build schools for Vietnamese children and teenagers to be able to study, volunteers teach them many things such as teaching English to be able to communicate, and also sports education. And volunteers not only help the education of children but they also organize activities for all refugees.



Picture 1. 5 Sports education activities and several activities carried out by refugees

As the picture above informs that not only refugees from Vietnam but also refugees from Cambodia. Cambodian refugees are not as many as Vietnamese refugees but only hundreds and also they are not long on Galang Island only about 2 years.

The central government and UNHCR (UN) not only provide education, but they also provide other facilities such as hospitals, places of worship, building around 400-500 barracks, public cemeteries and other facilities.







Picture 1. 6 Some facilities provided by the central government and UNHCR (PBB)



Picture 1. 7 Vietnam Camp Map

There are many volunteers who become teachers and medical personnel for the refugees. They dedicate themselves for the sake of humanity without expecting anything in return. Overall, the role and contribution of foreign volunteers on Galang Island is a reflection of international solidarity in facing the humanitarian crisis, which provides hope and support for thousands of Vietnamese refugees.



Picture 1. 8 The teachers assigned by UNCHR (United Nations)

### Reasons Vietnamese People Are Reluctant to Return to Their Home Country

in 1996 the refugees were forcibly repatriated by the Indonesian government due to the monetary crisis in Indonesia and also at that time there was the construction of the Balerang bridge where the Indonesian government was afraid that the refugees on Galang Island would scatter to fill the Riau Islands. Initially the Vietnamese refugees refused to be

repatriated to their home country by destroying their boats so that they would not be repatriated to their home country and they also rebelled including burning themselves, hanging themselves, and others that threatened their own lives. because of the many refugees who rebelled, the government, especially the central government and UNHCR (UN) worked with third countries, where. these countries accepted Vietnamese refugees from Galang Island, some of the countries that cooperated were the United States, Canada, Australia, and several countries in Europe.



Picture 1. 9 Boat destruction



Picture 1. 10 The process of returning refugees to third countries

The refugees have dark memories of an incident experienced by a Vietnamese refugee woman who was raped by several men who were also Vietnamese refugees, which resulted in the woman becoming frustrated and deciding to. to end her life by hanging herself, from this incident a stone ornament of a woman carrying a baby was formed which is to commemorate this event..



Picture 1. 11 Statue of a woman holding a baby  
"Humanity Statue"



Picture 1. 12 Vietnamese Refugee Relics

## CONCLUSION

The conclusions that the author can list are as follows:

1. The history of the Vietnamese Refugee Camp on Galang Island reflects international efforts to provide protection for refugees and the challenges faced by refugees during their waiting and struggle for a safer future.
2. The history of the Vietnamese Camp on Galang Island also highlights international solidarity, as well as the important role of foreign volunteers involved in helping refugees. The closure of the camp in 1996 marked the end of an important chapter in the history of Southeast Asian migration, but its traces remain as a memorial site that preserves the memory of the suffering and struggle of refugees.
3. From the dark story that happened to Vietnamese refugees, we can learn lessons to prevent and ensure that such events do not happen again.

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