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“World in Crisis”



**Resolving the refugee placement
issue in Myanmar and the
surrounding region**

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Introduction

The humanitarian crisis caused by the communal violence and abuse by the security forces towards Rohingya Muslims residing in Myanmar's Rakhine State has led 727,000 of Rohingya people to flee to Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh.

The United Nations (UN) says that the Rohingya refugee crisis is the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world and the concentration of refugees in Cox's Bazar is amongst the densest. For security and other reasons, Bangladesh does not want the Rohingya refugees there permanently. But, returning to Myanmar will threaten their freedom and put their life in danger. Recently, Bangladesh and Myanmar have agreed to complete the return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims within two years. Bangladesh will set up five transit camps on its side of the border. Those camps will send Rohingyas to two reception centers in Myanmar.

Key Vocabulary

Rakhine State: Rakhine State is a mountainous province in the west of Myanmar. It is bordered by Bangladesh.

ARSA: The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army is an insurgent group. The group is also referred as Harakah al-Yaqin (Faith Movement).

Resettlement: Resettlement is the transfer of refugees from an asylum country to another State that has agreed to admit them and ultimately grant them permanent settlement.

RSO (Rohingya Solidarity Organization): Rohingya Solidarity Organization is an Islamist insurgent group.

Tatmadaw: The Tatmadaw is the official name of the armed forces of Myanmar.

Ethnic cleansing: Ethnic cleansing is the mass expulsion or killing of members of one ethnic or religious group in an area by those of another.

Focused Overview

1) The Rohingya People

The Rohingya people are an ethnic minority that live mainly in the northern region of Rakhine State, Myanmar, and have been described as one of the world's most persecuted minorities. The Rohingya are not recognized as one of the 135 ethnic groups in Myanmar and have been rendered stateless. Being unable to prove their citizenship, they have been subject to restriction of movement and have been denied of higher education and positions in the public sector of Myanmar.

2) The Beginning of the Violence in Myanmar

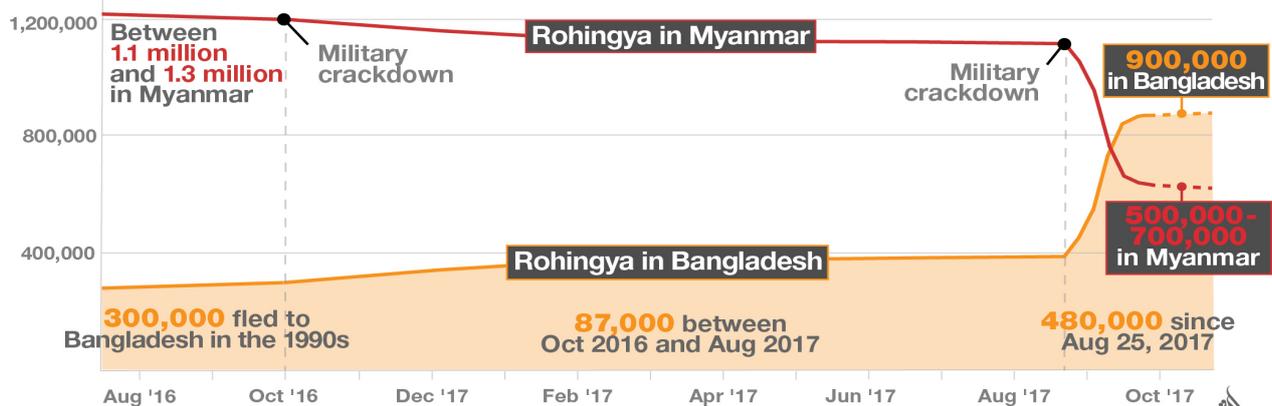
On October 9th 2016, a Muslim insurgency group carried out several simultaneous attacks on police outposts along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The attacks left 9 police officers and 4 soldiers dead, and weapons and ammunition were stolen from the outpost. Government officials in Rakhine State initially blamed the RSO for the attacks, later a group calling itself Harakah al-Yaqin claimed responsibility of the attacks. Tatmadaw responded by operations that involved arbitrary killings, systematic rapes, the burning of houses, and forced expulsions of locals.

3) 2017 Rohingya Ethnic Cleansing

In 2017, Buddhist extremists started attacking the Rohingya people and committed atrocities against them in the Rakhine State. At least 10,000 Rohingya people were killed, 392 Rohingya villages in Rakhine State were reported as burned down, and widespread gang rapes and other forms of sexual violence against the Rohingya Muslim women and girls were committed. Myanmar has denied committing atrocities against the Rohingya, saying its military carried out justifiable military action against rebels who had attacked security posts in the region. According to the United Nations reports, as of September 2018, over 700,000 Rohingya people had fled from Rakhine State or had been driven out of Rakhine State and had taken in the neighboring Bangladesh as refugees.

How Myanmar expelled the majority of its Rohingya to Bangladesh

After the recent influx of a half-million Rohingya into Bangladesh, the country now hosts more Rohingya than Myanmar.



Source: IOM, Al Jazeera, agencies
Photo: Showkat Shafi/Al Jazeera
Last updated: Sept 28, 2017

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Picture 1: Migration of Rohingya

4) Current Situation

Genocide continues to take place against the Rohingya in Myanmar. Myanmar's government has rejected the 440-page UN report on the crackdown, which concluded top military leaders should be prosecuted for war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide for their role in the crackdown. Aung San Suu Kyi says the conditions are not right for any Rohingya to return to Myanmar. "The camps, the shelters, the model villages that are being built, it's more of a cementing of total segregation or separation from the Rakhine ethnic community."

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Associate of South East Asian Nations (AESAN)

There is a non-intervention policy within the member states as the crisis surrounds inhabitants from Myanmar. The Associate of Southeast Asian Nations - Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam - main plan of action

surrounds intensifying immediate search and rescue operations to ensure the wellbeing and safe return of the migrants lost at sea. Furthermore, these member states have agreed to provide temporary shelter to the refugees but are calling on the international community to provide financial assistance.

Myanmar

The government of Myanmar has been regarding the Rohingya people as ‘stateless entities’ since the implementation of a population law in 1982. Myanmar’s inhabitants are predominantly Buddhists and have formed a hostile point of view towards the Muslim Rohingya. Myanmar is a member of the ASEAN and has not signed nor ratified the 1951 Refugee Convention.

The root cause of the whole refugee crisis is the fact that Myanmar keeps on denying the Rohingya with their basic right of citizenship, even after several serious remarks by the UN and other parties. The United Nations (UN) nor any other country can change the population law; Myanmar is the only one who can change its own laws and when it is looked at the past, it does not seem like Myanmar will change its ideas about the Rohingya in the near future.

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is not against the reintegration of the Rohingyas back into their country, yet, it is a country that strongly urges a reconsideration of this intended plan of action due to the lack of financial stability and infrastructure to support a large and increasingly growing influx of Rohingya refugees.

Thailand and Malaysia

Both Malaysia and Thailand have pledged to assist resettlement programs of refugees into their respective countries. Financial assistance would be beneficial for impacting greater change.

United States of America

The United States of America serves as a moral superpower in the actions taken towards solving this crisis. Largely due to its distance, it is unable to provide direct relief for refugees fleeing from persecution in Myanmar however it agrees to resettlement plans and is willing to provide financial assistance for regions in need.

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (UNHCHR)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights has been instrumental in providing information for the international community on the situation of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar and Bangladesh. In advising the UN it has suggested approaches to solve the issue, which should be kept in mind when drafting solutions.

Timeline of Events

Date of Event	Description of Event
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1, May 2015	Rohingya mass grave found on the border of Thailand-Malaysia. Many Rohingya died of starvation and dehydration.
9, October 2016	Rohingya men attack border posts in Rakhine State, killing nine police officers, according to state media. The attacks spark an intense crackdown by the Myanmar military and trigger an exodus of 87,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh. Rohingya insurgent group, ARSA, claims responsibility for the border post attack.
24, March 2017	The United Nations Human Rights Council decides to set up an investigation into alleged human rights abuses by the army against the Rohingya Muslim minority.
25, August 2017	Myanmar's state media reports 12 security officers were killed by ARSA insurgents during attacks. Military responds with what they describe as "clearance operations," burning down villages and triggering a mass exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh.
19, September 2017	Aung San Suu Kyi condemned human rights violations but was widely criticized for failing to acknowledge the alleged atrocities by the military. Myanmar's military has repeatedly denied conducting atrocities, saying it is targeting terrorists.
23, October 2017	More than 600,000 Rohingya refugees arrive to Bangladesh after fleeing violence in Myanmar since August 25, 2017.
27, August 2018	A United Nations report accuses Myanmar military leaders of carrying out genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity against Rohingya Muslims, calling for six generals to face trial at the International Criminal Court (ICC). It also accuses Aung San Suu Kyi of failing to prevent the violence. Myanmar rejects the findings.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

- [A/HRC/29/L.30 \(2015\)](#)
The UNHRC issued a resolution titled "Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar" in response to the 2015 refugee crisis, calling for a review of the inability of certain minorities in Myanmar to gain Myanmar citizenship, condemning violence against Rohingya Muslims.
- [S/2017/1099 \(2017\)](#)
Secretary-General's report on Children and Armed Conflict in Myanmar.
- [A/C.3/72/L.48 \(2017\)](#)
Resolution on the situation of human rights in Myanmar adopted by the General Assembly Third Committee (SOCHUM).

Possible Solutions

The basic framework meant to help countries protect Human Rights is set out in the Paris Principles, which also set out guidelines for countries to help the United Nations monitor the Human Rights situations in said countries. Encouraging the Myanmar government to recognize and work by the Paris Principles could provide a very good foundation to improve the position of the Rohingya

people. Myanmar's Race and Religion Protection laws and the 1982 Citizenship law are also not in line with international standards and need amendments to create equality before the law for minorities like the Rohingya Muslims.

Bangladesh banning certain NGOs from providing aid to the Rohingya refugees is not beneficial to the situation of these refugees, which can use all the help they can get. Convincing Bangladesh to allow these NGOs to operate in refugee camps would mean an improvement in the conditions of the Rohingya refugees. Therefore, setting up talks between the Bangladesh Government and NGOs or incitement of conversation could be a solution to move towards resolving the situation.

Further Reading

- <https://nhri.ohchr.org/EN/AboutUs/Pages/ParisPrinciples.aspx>
- <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/02/03/asia/rohingya-united-nations-report/index.html>
- https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=04axDDRVy_o
- <https://www.securitycouncilreport.org/un-documents/myanmar/>
- <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32740637>

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