

## Refugee Crisis in Bangladesh; Problems and Solution: Case Study - Rohingya Issue

Roni Basak\*

**[Abstract:** This article examines the problems and the solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis and its impact on Bangladesh. The key concern, which is at the heart of this study is to explore the causes of the crisis, and then understand the economic, political, social, environmental, cultural impacts of the crisis all of which are adversely affecting our country. In the context of Bangladesh's national security, the crisis will become a potential threat to Bangladesh, its neighbors and the region. So it is necessary for Bangladesh to solve the issue for its own national security and consecutive development. This article attempts to investigate the possible solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis. By providing an analysis of the problems and the solutions, this article attempts to point out the way of Rohingya repatriation and the sustainable peace to the region.]

### Introduction

According to the 1951 Geneva Convention, a refugee is someone with a well-founded fear of being persecuted in his country of origin for some reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group and political opinion. In today's independent world, more people are migrating for a wide variety of reasons. Some people leave home either legally or illegally, primary for economic reasons, some seek to join family members living abroad and growing number of people move principally to escape the violence associated with political instability, the absence of human rights and lack of government protection in their countries. Because of the close relationship between political conflict and economic and social problems, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish between refugees and migrant. Technically refugees flee to save their lives and migrants to improve their economic prospects; but distinguishing between them becomes extremely difficult when people flee from countries where poverty and violence are direct consequences of the political system.<sup>i</sup>

---

\* **Roni Basak:** Assistant Professor, Department of International Relations, Jahangirnagar University, Bangladesh.

The Burmese government would like the world to believe that the Rohingya Muslims only came to Burma in the last 50 to 70 years. This claim is to further strengthen their case to the world that the Rohingya Muslims have no place in Burma and are migrants from Bangladesh. Islam came to the region around the 8<sup>th</sup> century under the Abbasid Khilafah of Harun al-Rashid. We know from that period that Muslims were arriving and spreading into the region with the message of Islam. At that time individual merchants and traders were also arriving via the sea to these new territories; over time Muslims settled in these areas, in places like the Arakan state. Muslim history in the region can be seen from many monuments. The Budder Mukam Mosque was built in the 7<sup>th</sup> century but was taken by the military in 1978 and is used as a naval base camp.<sup>ii</sup> The Sandhi Khan Mosque was built in 1433 by Muslim Army General Sandhi Khan, but was demolished by the military in 1996. Other Mosques that were built still stand today and many streets and villages have Muslim linked names in the Arakan state; from 1430 to 1784 the Muslims ruled in the Arakan state with the help of the Sultan of Bengal.

This paper is attempted to achieve the following objectives:

- To understand the geneses and historical backgrounds of the Rohingya refugees.
- To determine the present Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh due to mass influx from Rakhine state.
- To know about the support structures being provided by government, donor agencies and diplomats in resolving the crisis.
- To learn about the economic, social, and environmental impacts of the Rohingya crisis.

#### **Methodology:**

There are innumerable number of data and information regarding Rohingya refugee crisis. The data may be found in common documents including official records, newspaper accounts, historical accounts etc. constitute the main research materials of the author. This paper used all forms of data available mostly in written form. After collecting the data this paper tries to give a broad understanding of the Rohingya crisis and its impacts on Bangladesh.

#### **Origin of Rohingyas:**

Arakan – currently a western province of Myanmar – had been an associate freelance country until 1784 C.E. Like alternative countries, the Geographic's of Arakan has had important influences on the course of its history. That Arakan managed to take care of itself as associate freelance kingdom until almost the end of the eighteenth century was mainly due to its geographical position.<sup>iii</sup>

The present day Arakan state is set between North latitude 17°-15' and 21°-17' and line of longitude 92°-11' and 94°-55'. The whole space of Arakan throughout British amount was concerning 20,000 sq. miles that has been reduced to 14,000 sq miles in 1974. It is situated between Burma proper on the east and south (to the east Magwe Division and Pegu Division; to the south Irrawadi Division); and Bay of Bengal and People's Republic of Bangladesh on the west; and on the north Bangladesh and Chin State. The Arakan Hill-tracts district (5235 sq. miles) bordering India and southernmost part of Arakan from Kyauk Chaung river to cape Negaris have been partitioned from Arakan mainland without the native people's consent. It is a narrow mountainous coastal strip of land with 443 miles coastal belt from the Naf River to Cape Negaris. It is wider in the Muslim north, which is about 100 miles in breadth and tapers down gradually to the south where it is at least 25 miles wide.<sup>iv</sup>

The Western mountain belt of Arakan, conjointly referred to as Arakan Yoma Mountains, could be a series of ridges that originate within the Northern mountains square measure and extend southward to the South-Western corner. The Arakan coastal strip is a narrow, predominantly alluvial belt lying between the Arakan Yoma Mountains and the Bay of Bengal. In some places the strip disappears as the mountain spurs reach the sea. To the south of Akyab district are the Barongas, three detached ranges of low hills running southwest into the sea.<sup>v</sup>

Arakan is endowed geographical diversities. The rivers of Arakan usually be due North to South being separated from one another by abrupt high watershed. There are a number of rivers and streams (chaungs) that flow in the Arakan into the Bay of Bengal. In all, there are seven rivers in Arakan. They are the Naf, the Mayu, the Kaladan, the Lemro, the Ann, the Taungup and the Sandoway. The four major navigable rivers are the Naf, Mayu, Kaladan and Lemro and all they are situated in the northern Arakan. All these four rivers are tidal and easily navigable all the year round. There are hundreds off-shore islands in Arakan of which Rambree and Cheduba are the largest. Rambree Island is the biggest of the offshore Island in Arakan comprising an area of 2,310 square miles being east to west 22 miles and north to south 105 miles. It lies between 18°-55' and 19°-32' North Latitude and between 93°-30' and 93°-58' East Longitude. Along the western coast line of the Island rises a range of low hills but the coast to the east and south is low-lying tract, ringed by mangrove jungle. The second biggest is Cheduba Island situated off the coast between 18°- 45' and 18° - 50' North Latitude and between 93°-30' and 93°-45'. It has an area of about 200 square miles, being east to west 20 miles and north to south 10 miles. In this island there is a Red Mountain and in its western parts there grow a kind of sweet smell grass. Other note-able islands are Boronga Islands, Savage Island, Kyun

Thaya, Sagu Kyun, Ganga Kyun, Ye Kyun and Kyun Zin and many of, which are cultivated.<sup>vi</sup>

### **History of Islam in Arakan:**

There are two major school of thought on the origins of Rohingyas in Myanmar.<sup>vii</sup> One school suggests that the Rohingyas are descendants of Moorish, Arab, and Persian traders including Mughal, Afghan, Pathan and Bengali soldiers cum migrants, who arrived between the ninth and fifteenth centuries, married local women and settled in the region. It may be mentioned that there had been regular arrival of Muslims from Afghanistan, Persia and Turkey, as well as from North India and the Arabian Peninsula. They amalgamated with Muslim society and become the Rohingyas. As a result, a distinct dialect was formed by the mixture of Persian, Urdu, poshtu, Arakanese and Bengali. To this school, Rohingyas are a mixed group of people with many ethnic and racial relations. Thus a Muslim presence already existed in Northern Arakan even before Islam reached Bengal in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>viii</sup>

Another school argues that ethnically, culturally and linguistically the Rohingyas are closely related to the Bengalis, and particularly the people of Chittagong area of Bangladesh. The Muslim population of the Rakhine state is the descendants of Bengali migrants from Bengal with some Indians coming during the British period. It is also emphasized that most of them speak Bengali with a strong 'Chittagongonian dialect', so they are regarded as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The government of Myanmar including the majority Burman-Buddhist population of the country, subscribes to this position. The Military regime in Myanmar prohibits the use of the term 'Rohingya', arguing that it is the creation of Bengali insurgents, and refers to them instead as 'Bengali intruders'. The pro-regime scholars argue that the cause of the Rohingya finds little support outside their own community, and their claims of an earlier historical tie to Burma are insupportable.<sup>ix</sup>

Islam had come to these regions without any political support whatsoever and remained rooted to the soil for centuries. Mr. R.B. Smart, author of *Burma Gazetteer*, stated: "About 788 A.D. Mahataing Sandya ascended the throne, founded a new city (Vesali) on the site of old Ramawadi and died after a reign of twenty two years. In his reign, several ships were wrecked on Ramree Island and the crews, said to have been Mohamedans, were sent to Arakan proper and settled in villages." During the same period, stated Arakanese chronicles that Muslim fakirs and dervishes (saints) used to visit Arakan coast. One of the widely known fact is the existence of Muslim shrines called Badr Moqam are essentially the commemorative shrines originally erected by the followers of devotees of Pir Badrudin Badri-i-Alam, popularly known as Pir Badr scattered along the coastline of Arakan.<sup>x</sup>

Arakan once a sovereign and independent State, is now one of the states of the Union of Burma. Under different periods of history Arakan had been an independent sovereign monarchy ruled by Hindus, Buddhists and Muslims. After Bengal became Muslim in 1203 AD, Islamic influence grew in Arakan to the extent of establishing Muslim vassal state beginning in 1430 AD. Muslim's rule and influence in Arakan lasted for more than 350 years until it was invaded and occupied by Burman king Boddaw Paya on 28 December (Saturday) 1784 AD.<sup>4</sup> The First Anglo-Burmese War (1824-26) was ended on 24 February 1826 when Burmese ratified the Treaty of Yandabo and Burmese ceded Arakan and Tenasserim to British India. Then under the Government of India Act of 1935, Burma was separated from British India on 1 April 1937. Arakan was made a part of British Burma against the wishes of its people and thus finally Arakan became a province of independent Burma in 1948.<sup>xi</sup>

#### **Influx of Magadah Buddhists into Arakan**

Arrival of Buddhism into Arakan began around a century before the Christian era. In 8th century, under the Hindu revivalist leader, Sankarachariya, Buddhists in India were persecuted in large-scale. In Magadha, old Bihar of India, Buddhists were so ruthlessly oppressed by chauvinist Hindus and rival Mahayana sect of Buddhists that large numbers of Hinayana Buddhists had been compelled to flee eastward who ultimately found shelter in Arakan under the Chandra kings.<sup>xii</sup> Also, Buddhist refugees from Bengal, during the Tibetan conquest in the eighth and ninth centuries, crossed over to the nearest place viz. Arakan where they could preserve their religion. It is to be noticed that Magadha in its pristine days included Bengal. These Buddhist immigrants assumed the name Magh as they have migrated from Magadah. By this time, in Arakan, all the three religions Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam were present side by side, but there had been large-scale conversion to Islam. The Mongolian Invasion swept over Arakan which ended the Chandra dynasty in 957 C.E. Hinduism in the easterly Hindu State of Vesali thus vanished forever. This invasion not only closed the epoch of the Chandras but also carried away the Pala kings of Bengal at the same time. Vesali could never reemerge but in Bengal the Hindus regained their supremacy in a few years by pushing back the Mongolians into deeper mountainous areas. But the invaders became educated in the mixed culture of the country they have conquered and were ultimately assimilated with its inhabitants during those long five centuries. After the disappearance of Hinduism and the assimilation of Mongolians and Tibeto-Burman there remained only two distinctive races — the Rohingyas and the Maghs Buddhists who lived together in Arakan centuries after centuries. As a result of internal feuds and Palace intrigues, The Muslims rule in Arakan weakened in the eighteenth century and fell to neighboring Burman Buddhists in early nineteenth century.<sup>xiii</sup>

**British rule over Arakan (1825-1947)**

In 1826, when Britain assumed the task of ruling Arakan, the conditions were unsettled and remained so for some years. At first, the two provinces of Arakan and Tannasserim were separately administered under the direct supervision of the Governor-General of India, but Arakan was soon transferred to the Government of Bengal and its Superintendent subordinated to the Commissioner of Chittagong. The Indian system of administration was introduced there with almost exclusively Indian experience.<sup>xiv</sup>

Before long, however, Arakan had its own Commissioner and was placed under at his disposal. The administration was reorganized. Under the Commissioner, the district officer styled senior assistant to the Commissioner of Arakan, and now called Deputy Commissioner, performed the duties of a district Magistrate, Judge and Collector; Junior Assistant Commissioner was under him, who exercises similar powers except those of hearing appeals.<sup>xv</sup>

It is totally misleading and ill-motivated to allege that the bulk of the Muslims entered Arakan during the British era. The fact is that many Muslim families, who had earlier been driven out by the Burman's, have returned to their homes in Arakan when peace prevailed there as explained by Phayre. But, since 1942 and till today, anti-Muslim riot took place as a result of continuous ethnic cleansing operations in which as many as a million Rohingyas have been forced to leave Arakan. The Britain completed annexation of whole Burma in 1885. An organization, named Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) led by students of Rangoon College, was established in 1906 originally intended to promote Buddhism and education and to render social service. The YMBA started taking political resolutions as early as 1917. The YMBA converted itself into the General Council of Burmese Association (GCBA) which was more broad-based and a symbol of Burmese nationalism. The GCBA fought with the British government for the rights of the Burmese.<sup>xvi</sup>

Meanwhile, anti-foreigners hatred had been fanned by GCBA and other quarters, particularly Buddhist monks. Fiery speeches were delivered to drive out the Indians and loot their properties. Anti-Indian riots broke out in 1930 in Rangoon. Around 1930, a new organization, Do Ba Ma Asia one (Our Burman Association), was founded by young university students calling themselves Thakins (masters) who sent a wave of anti-Indian thrill throughout the country. Burmese Buddhist masses are unable to distinguish native Muslims like Rohingyas of Arakan, Zerbades of central Burma, Panthays of eastern Burma and Bashus of southern Burma from general Indians who entered during the colonial era and attacked them indiscriminately. Meantime, Burman religious and political leaders came to Arakan to organize the Arakanese Maghs into Thakin Party. The objective of Thakin Party is to free

Burma from the British occupation. When the question of 'separation' arose, the British government invited 24 delegates representing various communities of Burma to a 'Burma Round Table Conference' held in London from November 27, 1931 to January 12, 1932. No representatives of the Rohingyas were invited as the Britain counted them within the Indian community. Mr. Tun Aung Gyaw, a Magh Buddhist Thakin, led the Arakanese delegation. With the separation of Burma from British India, and granting of 'Home Rule' (internal self-government) in 1937, the Thakins got full control of the administration. Just one year after the separation in 1938, anti-Muslim riot broke out again in Rangoon. Aung San, leader of Thakin Party, paid a secret visit to Arakan around the same time where he attended a conference held at Myebon Township. He discussed with Arakanese Buddhist leaders regarding his strategy of gaining independence of Burma including his policy towards the Rohingyas of Arakan. When the Second World War started in Europe, Burma was declared by its Governor to be automatically at war with the Axis powers.<sup>xvii</sup>

Aung San and his thirty comrades secretly went to Japan where they formed Burma Independence Army (BIA) under the patronization of Japanese. The Japanese bombed Rangoon on December 23, 1941. The first group of BIA men, led by Ne Win (Ex-Gen. Ne Win), reached Rangoon in early months of 1942 via Moulmein. This caused great consternation in the minds of Indians in proper Burma and Rohingyas in Arakan. The Indians had already started to flee Burma through all available routes.

### **Current Dispute between Buddhists and Muslims:**

Myanmar is composed of 135 officially recognized ethnicities in country's eight different regions with Bamar being the largest and politically dominant among them belonging from country's heartland. Rohingya Muslims from Rakhine state, with estimated population of around 1.1 million, are not officially recognized by Myanmar since the controversial 1982 citizenship law.<sup>xviii</sup>

According to this citizenship law, most Rohingya Muslims are considered by the Burmese authorities to be "resident foreigners" not citizens. This lack of full citizenship rights means that the Rohingya are subject to other abuses, including restrictions on their freedom of movement, discriminatory limitations on access to education, and arbitrary confiscation of property. Furthermore, the verification scheme under this law mandates to give proof of citizenship before 1823 for all ethnicities except Muslims as they are not recognized as a race in the country despite having Rohingya history since 15th century. UN has described Rohingya Muslims are "the most friendless people in the world".<sup>xix</sup> It is worth noting that Muslims in Myanmar were recognized as citizens till 1958.

Despite having a rich Muslim history of presence, trading and ruling of the Rakhine region (also called Arakan kingdom) since 1430, the local narrative in Myanmar is outright hostile claiming that Muslim population is in fact “Bengalis” imported during the British colonial rule for their local projects. The Kingdom of Muslim Arakan was economically and politically closely linked to Sultanate of Bengal but relatively independent bordering Buddhist dynasty in upper Burma.<sup>xx</sup>

There are two major ethnic communities in Arakan. The Rohingyas who from the majority population of Arakan, as a whole, are the believers in the religion of Islam and the Maghs (Rakhaine) who are the minority that professes Buddhism. During 1942, anti-Muslim rioting the Muslims of southern Arakan had been pushed to the north whereas the Buddhist Maghs took over the southern half of the country where they now form majority. There are a few tribes dwelling in Arakan hills who are mostly animists. Their number is still insignificant.<sup>xxi</sup>

Extreme communal violence against Rohingya Muslims is a permanent feature of Myanmar’s polity even before independence of 1948. Historical fear and hatred within Buddhist community against Muslims are widespread as per the finding of the Kofi Anan Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. The military junta drafted citizenship law in 1982 which stripped Rohingya Muslims of their citizenship; thus, increasing their resentment, hardships and political exclusion.

Sources of communal anger against Rohingya are both historical and ideological. Historically, the Mughal military campaign, under Aurangzeb of the mid-17th century to liberate Dhaka, Chittagong and Arakan territories from Buddhist occupation, has left a deep imprint on the psyche of followers of Theravāda branch of Buddhism which is dominant in Myanmar.<sup>xxii</sup>

During the WWII, Britain recruited Rohingya and Bengali Muslims to repel the Japanese invasion. A significant faction of pro-independence movement against the British had close ties with Japan. This anger has been reflected by Army Commander Sr. Gen. Min Aung Hlaing’s recently when he was quoted by media on September 2, 2017 saying:

“It (army) won’t ease off its campaign, describing it as “unfinished business” dating back to World War II. Army was pursuing its patriotic duty to preserve Myanmar’s borders and prevent Rohingya insurgents carving out their own territory in northern Rakhine State. “We will never let such a terrible occurrence happen again”.<sup>xxiii</sup>

Ideologically, the Buddhist movement is gaining ground within Myanmar and especially in Rakhine and is led by a monk named Wirathu. Wirathu urges Buddhists to boycott Muslim shops and shun interfaith marriages. He calls mosques “enemy bases.” He is also quoted as saying: “You can be full of



kindness and love, but you cannot sleep next to a mad dog,” referring to Muslims.<sup>xxiv</sup>

### **Challenges for Bangladesh:**

#### **Humanitarian Support for the Rohingyas:**

In recent times, Bangladesh faced two major exoduses of the Rohingyas from Myanmar, one in 1978 a total of 1, 67,000 Rohingya refugees entered Bangladesh and later save 10,000 ‘residual refugees’ all were repatriated to the Myanmar with the support of the international community, including Saudi Arabia and the UNHCR. But even after their repatriation the Rohingyas remain stateless; that is, the Myanmar government did not grant them citizenship nor were they recognized as one of the ethnic communities of Myanmar.<sup>xxv</sup> . Again in 1992, the Rohingyas, and this time a total of 250,877 were forcefully driven out of the Arakan region with no option but to flee to Bangladesh. And again and this time with the exception of 27,150<sup>xxvi</sup> ‘officially documented’ refugees, the bulk of them were repatriated to Myanmar under the supervision of UNHCR. The officially documented Rohingya refugees currently reside in two camps – Kutupalong and Nayapara in the Southern Cox’s Bazar district. The local people, however, claim that almost all of them who were earlier repatriated to Myanmar returned to Bangladesh and started living in and around the Cox’s Bazar area. Some estimates suggests that there are about 300,000 undocumented refugees from Myanmar who are illegally staying outside the official camps mostly in areas of Cox’s Bazar, Bandarban, Chittagong and Dhaka. The government of Bangladesh is yet to announce the accurate figure of undocumented refugees living in Bangladesh.<sup>xxvii</sup>

At the peak of the crisis, a large number of Rohingyas were crossing into Bangladesh daily. Most walked for days through jungles and mountains or broke dangerous sea voyages across the Bay of Bengal. They arrived exhausted, hungry and sick – in need of international protection and humanitarian assistance. The ministry of Disaster Management and Relief, Bangladesh is providing humanitarian support to the Rohingyas staying in Ukhiya and Teknaf upazilla of Cox’s Bazar. Different national and international organizations have also extended their helping hands. A total number of US\$434 million was sought as humanitarian assistance to the Rohingya Refugees at a conference in Geneva organized by the UN, IOM, UNHCR, OCHA and co-hosted by Kuwait and the European Union.<sup>xxviii</sup>

#### **Legal status of Rohingyas in Bangladesh:**

In fact, a critical outcome of protracted statelessness cum refugeehood was the dispersion of the Rohingyas to different countries of the world. According to the demographic diffusion, the Rohingyas have often been dubbed as Asia’s ‘new Palestinian’s’<sup>xxix</sup> imbued with what could be referred to as glocalized (local-global)

identity., albeit without a secured home to return to. And this has created different sets of problems. This puts them into a dire situation. Indeed not having legal documents of nationality, the Rohingyas not only face discrimination but also are exposed to various forms of exploitation at the hands of the locals.<sup>xxx</sup>

The Rohingya are an ethno-linguistic-religious minority group inhabiting in the northern Rakhine state of Myanmar. Under the international legal framework, Rohingya in Bangladesh are both refugees and stateless.<sup>xxxi</sup> Bangladesh has not ratified the 1951 refugee convention <sup>xxxii</sup> nor either of the two statelessness conventions <sup>xxxiii</sup> nor does it have any local law governing refugee status or the grant of asylum.

### **Diplomatic Initiative:**

Bangladesh is continuing its strong bilateral and multilateral diplomacy to have a peaceful and permanent solution to the Rohingya crisis. The issue was discussed in the UN Security Council several times following continued diplomatic efforts to the government. The atrocities against the Rohingyas in Myanmar have been defined as “ethnic cleansing” by the UNHCR. The Myanmar government has also been requested to resolve the Rohingya crisis in Rakhine by the Kofi Annan commission (International advisory commission headed by the former UN secretary General Kofi Annan). The US has proclaimed withdrawal of military assistance. Bangladesh government stepped up contacts with UN Security Council members including Russia, China, and major organizations like the European Union, OIC, ASEAN, neighboring India and important countries like Germany to mount pressure on Myanmar to end the persecution of the Rohingyas. Bangladesh circulated briefing notes, documents, and evidence of atrocities in Myanmar among the UN nations, UN Secretary General, UN Human Rights Commission and other regional and international bodies. Bangladesh with support from Saudi Arabia has taken another initiative to take a resolution on the Rohingya issue to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Committee (Human Rights Affair) in the General Assembly.<sup>xxxiv</sup>

### **Impacts of the Rohingya crisis on Bangladesh:**

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in association with Policy Research Institute (PRI) and the local administration of Cox’s Bazar unveiled the findings of a joint impact assessment study. The immediate effect of Bangladesh hosting about a million people on its soil is that, the price of daily necessities have risen by about 50 percent, wages of daily labor decreased, about 5,500 acres of reserve forest have been decimated and 1,500 hectares of wild life habitat destroyed.<sup>xxxv</sup> Bangladesh is facing different types of challenges like economic, social and environmental due to the Rohingya crisis. The impacts are:

**Economic:**

The adverse effect of hosting so many people in the areas has had damaging effect in the local economy. Its employment structures can easily be changed because of Rohingya crisis. Local Bangladeshi people and the Rohingyas both are used to speak same language. So, they can easily mix with the local people and can decrease the job opportunity for the local people. As jobs are available in different camps, the laborer are also switching to work in the camps with the aid agencies. The opportunity has created a shortage of labor in the local market. The presence of Rohingya is impacting dramatically on the local economy of the area. As aid money and international humanitarian personnel have poured into the area, the price of essential goods in the local market has increased. At the same time local wages decreased with Rohingya willing to work for less of the local daily unskilled wage rate. There are also fears that the tourist industry of Bangladesh could easily become vulnerable if the local area becomes unstable.

**Environment:**

The environment is perhaps the worst casualty. Six thousand acres of government land that were forest and hilly areas were initially used to house Rohingya population. According to the forest department data (Cox's Bazar) that the refugee influx has destroyed approximately 4,818 acres of forest reserve worth about US\$ 555 million. Every day, nearly three quarters of a million kg of timber, vegetation and roots are collected from the reserve forest to be used as cooking fuel (equivalent to the surface area of four football fields.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Bangladesh is highly susceptible to climate change. For years the country has been grappling with soil erosion, rising sea levels and frequent natural disaster such as cyclones and floods. Air pollution in Teknaf and Ukhia has increased because of smoke from firewood burnt by the refugees and exhaust from thousands trucks, cars, jeeps bringing people and goods into the camps.<sup>xxxvii</sup>

**Social:**

The refugees have modified the demographics of Bangladesh's Ukhia and Teknaf areas, where Rohingya now outnumber. Locals 2 to 1 out of the approximately 9,00,000 Rohingya, 73 percent are living in new spontaneous settlements, 13 percent in makeshift settlements, 9 percent among host communities and 5 percent in formal refugee camps. Kutupalong camp is the largest and most densely inhabited refugee settlement in the world. The birthrate among the Rohingyas is also much higher than that of Bangladeshis; in 2018 alone, experts expect refugees to give birth 48,000 babies who will face severe risks of malnutrition, disease and death. Refugees are also at risk for trafficking sex, drugs and labor. The organized crime networks are eager to exploit those displaced by the crisis.<sup>xxxviii</sup>

### Recommendations:

A proposal by Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the United Nations for resolving the Rohingya refugee crisis has been hailed by the Muslim community. In Bangladesh's annual address to the UN General Assembly, Prime Minister urged the international community to "understand the untenability of the situation" surrounding the Rohingya refugees from Myanmar, who are fleeing persecution by the military there. At the General Assembly, Hasina presented a four point plan to end the crisis, of which her country borne the main burden despite not causing it. Her proposal includes the following points:

1. Myanmar must manifest clear political will supported by concrete actions for the sustainable return and reintegration of the Rohingya to Myanmar.
2. Myanmar must build trust among the Rohingya by discarding discriminatory laws and practices and allowing "go and see" visits to northern Rakhine by Rohingya representatives.
3. Myanmar must guarantee the security and safety of the Rohingya by deploying civilian monitors from the international community in Myanmar's Rakhine state.
4. The international community must ensure that the root causes of the Rohingya problems are addressed and the violation of human rights and atrocities committed against the Rohingya are accounted for.<sup>xxxix</sup>

Different international agencies are creating pressure on the Bangladesh government to formulate a more practical approach to deal with the Rohingya refugee crisis. To mutually address the issue, the Myanmar and Bangladesh government must discuss the matter with patience focusing on the humanitarian aspect. The Annan Commission Report is suggestive commission regarding Rakhine province war formed by former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan. The 63-page report's name is *"Towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine."*

The report explained overall situation of Rakhine population, historical background, their 450 years long history, their pathetic lives depiction. 88 recommendations under 17 main categories in the 63 page report recommended for the development of Rakhine. They are as follows:

1. **The economic and social development:** Many recommendations were made in the report for economic and social development. Of them, all communities involvement in using properties, land compensation, labor market assessments, placing special economic zone, is ensuring small and family business. Elsewhere, infrastructural development such as- ensuring roads, waterways, jetties, electricity, drinking water, internet facilities and the planned airport in Mrauk U is constructed.

2. **Citizenship:** The citizenship is the biggest impediment in the path of peaceful and glory in Rakhine, although the matter is disputed, it should not be avoided. If the matter is not resolved, humanitarian crisis and insecurity will be continued, socio-economic development in Rakhine state will halt. The processes of justifying citizenship according to citizen act of 1982 must gear up aiming to resolve the crisis in short term, but this is the right time to review the act.
3. **Freedom of Movement:** The report says regarding people's movement of Rakhine must ensure the facilities of movement free for the all kind of population not excluding someone on the basis of religion, cast or nationality.
4. **Internally Displaced Persons (IDPS):** The government should prepare a comprehensive strategy towards closing all IDP camps. The strategy should developed through a consultation process with affected communities and contain clear time lines. It should also contain plans for the provision of security and livelihood opportunities at the site of return/location.
5. **Humanitarian Access:** The government of Myanmar should ensure full and unimpeded humanitarian access for both national and international staff at all times and all communities in Rakhine state.
6. **Media Access:** The government of Myanmar should provide full and regular access for domestic and international media to all areas affected by recent violence as well as all other areas of the state. At the same time, the government should increase and improve its public communication related to development in Rakhine state.
7. **Education:** To ensure equal rights of education for all not excluding people based on ethnicity, religion, race and gender or citizenship status. The government should remove movement restriction that reduce access to education and reverse discriminatory practices that inhibit students without citizenship from higher education.
8. **Health:** To ensure all communities have equal access to health treatment irrespective of religion, ethnicity, race, gender, or citizenship status. The authorities should commence the removal of administrative obstacles that impede access to healthcare. Health facilities should be labelled as 'protected zones' providing a safe environment for those seeking cares.
9. **Drugs:** The government of Myanmar should adopt a holistic anti-drugs approach based on public health, community safety, human rights and development. The government should strengthen health and harm reduction services for drug users and ensure that the use of such service is voluntarily and intensify its effort to combat corruption within the security agencies operating along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

10. **Communal Participation and Representation:** To create faithful relation between government and people and to ensure participation of people including minority women, stateless people and displaced people.
11. **Inter-Communal Cohesion:** To ensure that inter-communal dialogue is held at all level of society – including township, state and union levels and conducted in a systematic manner with a clearly stated purpose. The dialogue should ensure grassroots participation and include women, youth, minorities and civil societies. Dialogue within communities should also be facilitated.
12. **The Security Sector:** To monitor the security division's activities properly and provide expected higher value security. To run language learning course for removing misunderstanding of Rakhine region.
13. **Access to Justice:** According to international standard of Rakhine's judiciary to bring law principle, accountability and equity.
14. **Cultural Development:** To keep continue Mrauk U declared by UNESCO as part of world heritage and to protect all religious and historical establishment.
15. **Border Issue and Bilateral Relationship with Bangladesh:** There is need of cooperation in security and border management. The government of Myanmar and Bangladesh should facilitate the voluntary return of refugees from Bangladesh to Myanmar through joint verification in accordance with international Standards and with assistance from international partners. The implementation of Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between Bangladesh and Myanmar will start as soon as possible.
16. **Regional Relation:** To uphold the situation of Rakhine state among neighboring countries to enter in Rakhine.
17. **Implementation of Commission's Recommendation:** A ministerial level appointment should be made with the sole function of coordinating policy on Rakhine state and ensuring the effective implementation of the Rakhine Advisory Commission's recommendations. This should be initially be a one year appointment and the appointee should deliver quarterly reports to the public.<sup>xi</sup>

### Conclusion:

Refugee crisis are not just the result of wars, internal political instability or economic discrimination. Refugee problems are often made to happen by the governments in order to eradicate selected social classes and ethnic groups within their borders. Similarly, Rohingyas are discriminated in their own country by their own government. As a host country it is impossible for Bangladesh to take all responsibilities of Rohingya community staying in Bangladesh. The

immediate and effective repatriation of Rohingya people to their own country is necessary for the security of Bangladesh as well as the whole South Asian region.

### References:

- i. Gil Loescher, *Beyond Charity-International Cooperation and Global Refugee Crisis*, p.5
- ii. <https://thesail.wordpress.com/the-existence-of-the-arakan/>
- iii. Dr Mohammad Yunus. *A History of Arakan, Past and Present*. Chapter 01 <http://www.netipr.org/policy/downloads/19940101-Dr-Yunus-History-Of-Arakan.pdf>
- iv. R.B. Smart, *Burma Gazetteer: Akyab District, Vol.A*, Rangoon, 1957, P.157; San Tha Aung, *The Buddhist Art of Ancient Arakan*, Daw Saw Saw Sapay, Rangoon, 1979, P.2; Nurul Islam, *The Rohingya Problem*, Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO), Arakan (Burma), 1999, op. cit., P.2.
- v. George Thomas Kurian, *Encyclopedia of Third World (Revised Edition)*, op. cit., P. 249; Maung Kok San, *Rakhine Paynay Desandara Powtawwe Achinsuk (A General Geography of Arakan State)*, Sawkra Press, Rangoon, 1984, PP. 19-23.
- vi. <https://www.rohingya.org/the-rohang-arakan/>
- vii. Imtiaz Ahmed, "Globalization, low- Intensity Conflict & Protracted Statelessness/Refugeehood: The Plight of the Rohingyas," in John Tirman, ed., *The Maze of Fear: Security and Migration after 9/11*, (New York: New Press, 2004), p. 183-184
- viii. Imtiaz Ahmed, *Bangladesh-Myanmar relations from a post –realist perspective*, *Journal of International relations*, Vol. 6, No. 4, June 2013, p. 3
- ix. *Ibid*, p. 3-4.
- x. Dr Mohammad Yunus. *A History of ARAKAN, Past and Present*. Chapter 01 <http://www.netipr.org/policy/downloads/19940101-Dr-Yunus-History-Of-Arakan.pdf>
- xi. <https://www.rohingya.org/the-rohang-arakan/>
- xii. Maxime Boutry. *Buddhists and Muslims of Arakan, religious conflict or national identity crisis?* <http://www.gis-reseau-asie.org/monthly-articles/buddhists-muslims-arakan-myanmar-maxime-boutry>
- xiii. Dr Mohammad Yunus. *A History of Arakan, Past and Present*. Chapter 01 <http://www.netipr.org/policy/downloads/19940101-Dr-Yunus-History-Of-Arakan.pdf>
- xiv. Dr Mohammad Yunus. *A History of Arakan, Past and Present*. Chapter 01 <http://www.netipr.org/policy/downloads/19940101-Dr-Yunus-History-Of-Arakan.pdf>
- xv. *Ibid*
- xvi. <https://www.scribd.com/document/52597354/A-History-of-Arakan-Past-Present-by-Dr-Mohammed-Yunus>
- xvii. *Ibid*
- xviii. Human Rights Watch Report. *Discrimination in Arakan*. <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-02.htm>

- 
- xix. BBC Report "Who will help Myanmar's Rohingya"?  
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38168917>
  - xx. Kofi Annan Final Report of Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.  
[http://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport_Eng.pdf)
  - xxi. Dr Mohammad Yunus. A History of Arakan, Past and Present.  
<http://www.netipr.org/policy/downloads/19940101-Dr-Yunus-History-Of-Arakan.pdf>
  - xxii. Kofi Annan Final Report of Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.  
[http://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport\\_Eng.pdf](http://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport_Eng.pdf)
  - xxiii. CETUS News. Myanmar Says Clearing of Rohingya Is Unfinished Business From WWII. <http://www.cetusnews.com/news/Myanmar-Says-Clearing-of-Rohingya-Is-Unfinished-Business-From-WWII-.Bkg5ATeYYb.html>
  - xxiv. Thomas Fuller, NY Times. Extremism Rises among Myanmar Buddhists.  
<http://www.nytimes.com/2013/06/21/world/asia/extremism-rises-among-myanmar-buddhists-wary-of-muslim-minority.html?mcubz=3>
  - xxv. Imtiaz Ahmed, Bangladesh-Myanmar relations from a post –realist perspective, *Journal of International relations*, Vol. 6, No. 4, June 2013, p. 2
  - xxvi. UNHCR, UNHCR global Appeal 2008-2009, P. 229. See,  
<http://www.unhcr.org/home/PUBL/474ac8da11.pdf>
  - xxvii. Imtiaz Ahmed, Bangladesh-Myanmar relations from a post –realist perspective, *Journal of International relations*, Vol. 6 , No. 4, June 2013, p. 3
  - xxviii. Kudrat-E-Khuda (Babu), The Impacts and challenges to host country Bangladesh due to sheltering the Rohingya refugees,  
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/23311886.2020.1770943>
  - xxix. Martin Smith, *Burma: Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity* (London: Zed Books and Dhaka: University Press Limited, 1991), p. 241.
  - xxx. Imtiaz Ahmed, Bangladesh-Myanmar relations from a post –realist perspective, *Journal of International relations*, Vol. 6, No. 4, June 2013, p. 5
  - xxxi. Convention relating to the status of refugees, 189, U.N.T.S. 150, 1954, Article 1 (A) (2); Convention relating to the status of stateless persons, 360 UNTS 117, 1954, Article (1)
  - xxxii. Ibid, Conventions relating to the status of refugee.
  - xxxiii. Conventions relating to the status of stateless persons above, note 5, Convention on the Reduction of statelessness, 989, U.N.T.S 175, 1961.
  - xxxiv. Daily Star, September 13, 2017, accessed on July 26, 2020.
  - xxxv. Daily Star, August 06, 2019, accessed on July 26, 2020.
  - xxxvi. Ibid
  - xxxvii. Washington Post, February 12, 2018, accessed on July 28, 2020.
  - xxxviii. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2018/02/12/how-the-rohingya-crisis-is-affecting-bangladesh-and-why-it-matters/>
  - xxxix. <https://www.dw.com/en/rohingya-support-bangladeshi-leaders-proposal-to-end-crisis/a-50624711>
  - xl. Sirajul Islam, Rohingya – Beyond the Borders, p.113-116.