



*The School for Ethics and Global Leadership*

## **The Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar**

The School for Ethics and Global Leadership, Spring 2018  
April 25, 2018

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## **Special Thanks**

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Aaron Milner and Erol K. Yayboke at the Center for Strategic and International Studies

## **Introduction**

This policy document was written by 24 high school juniors at the School for Ethics and Global Leadership in Washington, D.C. The school is a semester-long program that aims to provide intellectually motivated high school juniors from across the country with the best possible opportunity to shape themselves into ethical thinkers and global leaders. Each class chooses a current international challenge and constructs a policy document that provides reasonable and effective solutions to the problem. This document is a purely student-run effort and does not reflect the positions of the School for Ethics and Global Leadership or its faculty. It is our wish that this document provides comprehensive and plausible recommendations to address the current issues facing the Rohingya people and other groups affected by this crisis.

## Executive Summary

In 2011, Myanmar began a shift towards democracy that has garnered an enormous amount of international support. Up until last year, it was considered a success story: an isolated military junta that had transformed into a modern, free republic on the international stage. Since August of 2017, this illusion has been shattered by a campaign of ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar military against the Rohingya Muslim minority. Entire villages have been burned down, tens of thousands of people have been killed, and 688,000 Rohingya have been driven from their homes.

The current crisis springs from a nationalist hatred of the Rohingya people within Myanmar that dates back to the colonial period. The Rohingya are descended from Muslim inhabitants of Myanmar's western Rakhine state and Indian Muslims who immigrated during the British occupation. Myanmar's national identity formed in opposition to British rule and anything associated with it, including the Rohingya, who are considered illegal immigrants. The Rohingya have faced intense persecution by the government, leading to multiple refugee crises over the past century. After the expansion of free speech in 2011, repressed anti-Muslim sentiment came out into the open. This led to an outburst of communal violence against the Rohingya in 2012. Consequently, a group of Rohingya in Saudi Arabia formed a militant organization, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), which launched attacks on Myanmar border police in 2016. An indiscriminate retaliation by the military against the Rohingya has driven the majority into neighboring Bangladesh. Apart from scattered incidents, Myanmar's military and government deny any such systematic campaign of violence. The government has avoided political consequences due to popular hatred of the Rohingya; thus, the task of supporting the Rohingya and holding Myanmar accountable falls to the international community.

The United States does not have enough evidence to call this crisis a genocide, so it uses the term ethnic cleansing; however, more evidence is vital to definitively identify the intention of Myanmar: the expulsion or extermination of the Rohingya. Genocide Watch defines ten stages of genocide, and the Myanmar government and military have committed acts that fall within each of these stages. Additionally, the United States needs to exercise great caution when considering repatriation, and it is in the United States' national security interest to protect the Rohingya and prevent any possible radicalization of the vulnerable group. Finally, the United States must take a strong stance against these crimes and institute a travel ban on Aung San Suu Kyi to demonstrate its absolute intolerance of the crimes the Myanmar government and military are committing against the Rohingya.

The Myanmar government recognizes that its economy, which sustains its military, relies on foreign capital and technology to develop. Myanmar has developed its economy significantly through trade with India and China since joining the World Trade Organization in 1995. Because Myanmar's membership contributes significantly to its economic stability and therefore its ability to carry out

ethnic cleansing, the WTO must revoke Myanmar's membership from their trade corporations to temporarily apply political and economic pressure until the violence against the Rohingya permanently stops. Myanmar's relationship with China goes beyond benefiting their respective economies; the two countries agreed upon allowing a Chinese pipeline to run through Myanmar's Rakhine state in return for China's tacit support of the military's ethnic cleansing. With their significant leverage over Myanmar's economy, China has the power to elicit a military ceasefire in Myanmar and ensure citizenship for the Rohingya. India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, publicly supports Aung San Suu Kyi, and has not intervened in the crisis despite his alleged concern over the violence against the Rohingya in the Rakhine. India has historically fostered close military ties with Myanmar, and must now cut training programs for the Myanmar military within its own borders, as well as cease the sale of arms to Myanmar.

The Rohingya refugees started to flee to the country of Bangladesh after the Myanmar military began an anti-Rohingya campaign in 1978. Bangladesh took in the refugees temporarily. Refugees reside in two Bangladeshi camps, Kutupalong and Nayapara. But due to the overwhelming quantity of refugees, almost 95% of Rohingya refugees live outside the two official camps, blocking their access to basic necessities. Given that Bangladesh does not want the Rohingya to stay indefinitely, it needs help in order to provide for the Rohingya and incentive to keep the refugees in Bangladesh for an extended period of time. Turning the refugees' makeshift settlements into official refugee camps, granting them more money and foreign aid, and making a model compact that will deal with the conditions of the refugees as well as the socio-economic status of Bangladesh seems to be the actions to take.

Many non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are involved in providing emergency relief support to the Rohingya refugees in the Kutupalong camp, ranging from International groups such as Doctors Without Borders and World Food Program, and more local groups like Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee. In addition to continuing to supply the essentials for the refugees in Kutupalong, NGOs must work with the Bangladesh government to have the Rohingya in Bangladesh attain work permits. The lack of permits inhibits their livelihood, denying them the ability to work and interact with the surrounding community. This forces them to rely on illegal work. NGOs have attempted to combat these complicated issues but a lack of funding prohibits many from implementing long running programs in Kutupalong. NGOs must try to partner with larger corporations and use social media for campaigning to raise a sufficient amount of funds for any projects to be successful.

The Rohingya, throughout this ethnic cleansing, have had no channel for self-advocacy. Therefore, it is imperative that they establish a formal leadership body, composed of traditional religious community leaders, youth advocates, and expatriate representatives to make their voices not only heard but also acknowledged throughout the policymaking process. Once the Rohingya have taken

this step, they must move towards short-term and long-term progress. In the short term, this necessitates calling upon the international community to end the bloodshed in Myanmar's Rohingya villages, improve conditions in refugee camps, and stop forced repatriation from Bangladesh. In the long term, the Rohingya must advocate for policies within Myanmar that will address the underlying contributors to poverty and unrest in Rakhine State, thereby ensuring a lasting and peaceful coexistence between the Rohingya minority and the Myanmar majority.

Global relations with Myanmar are far from straightforward. The world has yet to intervene in the Rakhine to address the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya. A multitude of factors make foreign intervention difficult and at times impossible, but Myanmar's stakeholders must act to prevent further acts of terror and ethnic cleansing to be carried out against the Rohingya. The global community must work with or without the Myanmar government to ensure the interests of the Rohingya for safety, stability, and citizenship for the estranged Rohingya people.

## Background

The military of Myanmar is carrying out a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya Muslim minority in the western Rakhine state, and have forced the majority of Rohingya into Bangladesh. This persecution is driven by a recent wave of extreme anti-Muslim sentiment among the Buddhist majority. This hatred is unlikely to subside anytime soon, since it has been part of the national identity of Myanmar since the colonial period. Any immediate attempts at repatriation are thus highly unsafe. The Rohingya people desperately need shelter, food, and a higher standard of living.

Myanmar has historically been characterized by its symbiotic relationship between the dominant Theravada Buddhist religion and the state. This Buddhist sect unified the people into a nation, and in turn the government sponsored their religious institutions. The British colonization in 1886 completely upended this system. The monasteries lost state support and fell into poverty, and there was a large influx of immigrants from India, especially Muslims. This created the impression that Buddhism was declining and being replaced by Islam, which sparked intense resentment. This was most pronounced in the Rakhine, where the existing Muslim community mingled with an especially large wave of immigrants to create the modern Rohingya people. The consequence of this mixing the extreme discrimination they have faced for almost a hundred years.<sup>1</sup>

In 1942, the Japanese invaded Myanmar and forced out the British. Burmese nationalists took the opportunity to attack the Rohingya, as well as other groups affiliated with Great Britain. This resulted in 22,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bengal.<sup>2</sup> Later, in the 1970s, the newly socialist Burmese government carried out Operation Dragon King, a program intended to eliminate foreigners before a national census. Over 250,000 Rohingya people fled to Bangladesh by 1978, and the Burmese government claimed this demonstrated that the Rohingya were not true citizens of the country. They were soon repatriated by the Bangladeshi government with the support of the United Nations.<sup>3</sup> The Myanmar government responded with the 1982 Citizenship Law, which made the exclusion of the Rohingya people part of Burmese law.<sup>4</sup> This law classifies Rohingya as “resident foreigners,” despite many being able to trace their ancestry to centuries before, and categorically denies them citizenship. They are not recognized as an official population in Myanmar, cannot vote, are restricted from

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<sup>1</sup> “Buddhism and State Power in Myanmar,” International Crisis Group, *International Crisis Group*, (September 5 2017), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/290-buddhism-and-state-power-myanmar>.

<sup>2</sup> *Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution: Historical Background*, Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 12, no. 3, (May 2000) <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm>.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Brad K. Blitz, *Refugees in Burma, Malaysia and Thailand*, *The World Today*, NPR, Vol. 66 no.5, (2010), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41962527>;

Olivia Enos, *Crafting a Successful U.S. Strategy toward Burma: Beyond the Rohingya Crisis*, The Heritage Foundation, (March 8, 2018),

<https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/crafting-successful-us-strategy-toward-burma-beyond-the-rohingya-crisis>.

traveling within the country and internationally, are forbidden from receiving a secondary education, are subject to random seizures of property, and are required to perform forced labor.<sup>5</sup> Furthermore, in the 1990s, more than 250,000 Rohingya people fled from forced labor, rape, and religious discrimination into Bangladesh, where they were sheltered in 19 refugee camps. The Bangladeshi government wanted to send the refugees back to Myanmar as soon as possible and were eager to begin a repatriation campaign. Despite a lack of cooperation from the Myanmar government, approximately 23,000 Rohingya returned to Myanmar between 1994 and 1997.<sup>6</sup> This resettlement, however, did not stop the continued persecution of the Rohingya.

In 2011, after the government was democratized and freedoms of speech expanded, nationalist anti-Muslim rhetoric and violence spiked. This process began with the “969” movement of monks calling for boycotts of Muslim businesses and anti-intermarriage laws. 969 was outlawed by the Sangha Council, the central authority of Buddhist monasteries in Myanmar, but was replaced by the more formally structured Association for the Protection of Race and Religion, usually abbreviated to MaBa’Tha. MaBa’Tha advocates for the same goals as 969 and has become especially popular through its outreach and service work.<sup>7</sup> The propaganda spread by these groups ignited a string of communal attacks on Rohingya in 2012. In response, the militant group ARSA was formed, led by a group of Rohingya stationed in Saudi Arabia.<sup>8</sup> They launched their first significant attacks in 2016 on Border Guard Police buildings. They were met with a disproportionate military response consisting of brutal “clearing operations” officially intended to recapture ARSA’s stolen ammunition. After a senior officer was killed by ARSA supporters, counterinsurgency efforts by the military increased, prompting the deployment of helicopter gunships in civilian areas.<sup>9</sup>

Other counterinsurgency efforts by the military have included the burning down of Rohingya villages. According to data from Human Rights Watch, from the end of August 2017, until December of that same year, more than 350 villages were partially or completely destroyed by the Burmese military.<sup>10</sup> These attacks prompted the first mass Rohingya exodus in the past decade, and

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<sup>5</sup> *Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution: Discrimination in Arkan*, Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch*, Vol. 12, no. 3, (May 2000), <https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm>.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Matthew J. Walton, Melyn McKay, and Daw Khin Mar Mar Kyi, *Women and Myanmar’s “Religious Protection Laws,”* Institute for Global Engagement, (2015), Vol. 13, No. 4, 36, <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/15570274.2015.1104975?journalCode=rfia20>.

<sup>8</sup> *Myanmar’s Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase*, International Crisis Group, (December 7, 2017), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/292-myanmars-rohingya-crisis-enters-dangerous-new-phase>.

<sup>9</sup> *Myanmar: Crimes against humanity terrorize and drive Rohingya out*, Amnesty International, (October 18, 2017), <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/10/myanmar-new-evidence-of-systematic-campaign-to-terrorize-and-drive-rohingya-out/>.

<sup>10</sup> *Burma: 40 Rohingya Villages Burned Since October*, Human Rights Watch, *Human Rights Watch*, (December 17, 2017), <https://www.hrw.org/news/2017/12/17/burma-40-rohingya-villages-burned-october>.

have resulted in over 688,000 refugees fleeing to Bangladesh, out of the almost 1 million total Rohingya in Myanmar.<sup>11</sup>

The military has officially denied the vast majority of reports of ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine state, claiming that they are only responding to terrorism by ARSA. They have, however, acknowledged the killing of ten Rohingya men in the village of Inn Din by seven soldiers, who have been sentenced to ten years of hard labor. This decision came after a report published by Reuters which was the first source to include testimony by soldiers themselves, breaking the apparent united front that the military presented in denying the violence. Two of the journalists involved in that report have been arrested and are being prosecuted.<sup>12</sup>

Currently, there are minimal signs of ARSA activity, suggesting that they have been shocked by the extremity of the response to their actions. Al-Qaeda has been threatening to retaliate against Myanmar, and the oppressed Rohingya are a prime target for jihadist conversion.<sup>13</sup> It is imperative for the international community to step in and provide shelter and care for the Rohingya people in Bangladesh, as well as assistance to Rohingya still in the Rakhine to stop radicalization. It will be impossible to return them safely to their homeland, however, until a countermovement springs from within the Buddhist community itself and the moral imperative to stop the discrimination is recognized by the people of Myanmar themselves.

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<sup>11</sup> *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, Inter Sector Coordination Group, (January 27, 2018), [https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/180127\\_weekly\\_iscg\\_sitrep\\_final.pdf](https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/180127_weekly_iscg_sitrep_final.pdf);  
The Central Intelligence Agency, *East and Southeast Asia: Burma*,  
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/bm.html>.

<sup>12</sup> Katie Hunt and Sandi Sidhu, *Seven Myanmar Soldiers Jailed for Rohingya Killings Uncovered by Reporters*, CNN, (April 11, 2018), <https://www.cnn.com/2018/04/10/asia/rohingya-myanmar-soldiers-jailed-intl/index.html>.

<sup>13</sup> *Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase*, International Crisis Group.

# Recommendations to the United States

## Overview

Myanmar's government refuses to acknowledge the Rohingya peoples' citizenship and instead calls them "Bengalis," implying they are foreigners.<sup>14</sup> 288 villages have been burned by military forces and thousands of Rohingya have been killed. More than 688,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh and now live in unsanitary, disease-ridden, and over-populated refugee camps.<sup>15</sup> Roughly 200,000 refugees live in areas that could potentially flood or collapse during the rainy season.<sup>16</sup> The UNHCR reports grave food shortages, severe malnutrition of children, outbreaks of infections such as diphtheria, insufficient healthcare services, and a lack of psychological care for victims of sexual violence.<sup>17</sup> Former Secretary of State Rex Tillerson and the United States ambassador to the UN Nikki Haley have referred to the crisis as "ethnic cleansing" and top UN official Yanghee Lee said it represents "the hallmarks of genocide."<sup>18</sup> During the 1948 Genocide Convention, Raphael Lemkin, established and defined the word genocide as, "A coordinated plan of different actions aiming at the destruction of essential foundations of the life of national groups, with the aim of annihilating the groups themselves." In accordance with United States' and United Nations' policies on genocide, the United States has an obligation to intervene in this situation.

## Signs of Genocide

The government of Myanmar has enacted steps in accordance with the ten stages of genocide as defined by Genocide Watch.<sup>19</sup> Myanmar has identified the Rohingya Muslims as a lesser group and classifies them as "Bengalis."<sup>20</sup> In doing so, the government rejects any citizenship claims of the Rohingya people. The government discriminates against the Rohingya by subjecting them to dehumanizing conditions.<sup>21</sup> Additionally, the government spreads propaganda about the Rohingya,

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<sup>14</sup> Katherine Southwick, *Preventing Mass Atrocities Against the Stateless Rohingya in Myanmar: A Call For Solutions*, *Journal of International Affairs*, (May 5, 2015),

<https://www.questia.com/library/journal/1G1-413170066/preventing-mass-atrocities-against-the-stateless-rohingya>.

<sup>15</sup> *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, Inter Sector Coordination Group.

<sup>16</sup> *JRP for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis*, International Organization of Migration, (March 2018),

<https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/JRP%20for%20Rohingya%20Humanitarian%20Crisis%202018.PDF>.

<sup>17</sup> *Burma: Ethnic Cleansing, Repression, Denials*, Human Rights Watch, (January 18, 2018),

<https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/01/18/burma-ethnic-cleansing-repression-denials>.

<sup>18</sup> Jonah Blank and Shelly Culbertson, *How the US Can Help Resolve the Rohingya Crisis*, *Foreign Affairs*, (January 4, 2018),

<https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/burma-myanmar/2018-01-04/how-us-can-help-resolve-rohingya-crisis>;

*President Trump Must Prioritize Rohingya Crisis in Southeast Asia Visit*, *Refugees International*, (November 8, 2017),

<https://www.refugeesinternational.org/advocacy-letters-1/2017/11/asia>.

<sup>19</sup> Gregory Stanton, *The Ten Stages of Genocide*, Genocide Watch,

<http://www.genocidewatch.org/genocide/tenstagesofgenocide.html>.

<sup>20</sup> Katherine Southwick, *Preventing Mass Atrocities Against the Stateless Rohingya in Myanmar: A Call For Solutions*, *Journal of International Affairs*, (May 5, 2015),

<https://jia.sipa.columbia.edu/preventing-mass-atrocities-against-the-stateless-rohingya-in-myanmar-a-call-for-solutions>.

<sup>21</sup> *The Everyday Way Rohingya Are Dehumanized In Burma*, *Burma Task Force*, (2015),

<https://www.burmataskforce.org/content/everyday-way-rohingya-are-dehumanized-burma-2>.

uses the military to organize killings, and forces them into confined areas.<sup>22</sup> Some government officials support this discrimination as a tactic for gaining more votes among the majority Buddhist population.<sup>23</sup> While the international community is unclear on some facts, it has been confirmed that Myanmar's government has increased "clearance operations", where the military commits acts of mass violence against the Rohingya people.<sup>24</sup> However, Myanmar's government maintains that no human rights violations or acts of ethnic cleansing have occurred. Myanmar's State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has failed to do anything to combat this crisis. The United States needs to gather more evidence and proof to definitively label this situation. Olivia Enos has recommended that the UNHCR create a Commission of Inquiry. This would allow the UN Commission to do in-depth interviews with refugees and others in order to find out what crimes the Myanmar government and military are committing without needing geographic access to the region. This would also allow them to further investigate the intent of the Myanmar government to either classify these crimes as genocide, or confirm that this is indeed an ethnic cleansing.<sup>25</sup>

## Repatriation

Bangladesh is planning to return the Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar.<sup>26</sup> However, the UNHCR warns against sending the Rohingya back to Myanmar without protective measures in place, and refugees in camps in Bangladesh assert that they will not return unless they have guaranteed citizenship, secured rights, and restitution. The UNHCR has also made it clear that the Rohingya are not to return unless it is an entirely voluntary decision.<sup>27</sup> The Myanmar authorities are responsible for upholding these conditions with the help of the United Nations and the member states.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Faine Greenwood, *The 8 Stages of Genocide Against Burma's Rohingya*, Un Dispatch, *United Nations*, (May 27, 2013) <https://www.undispatch.com/the-8-stages-of-genocide-against-burmas-rohingya/>.

<sup>23</sup> Linda Crossman, "Evidence of Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide Against the Rohingya," *Myanmar's Rohingya Refugees: The Search for Human Security*, 33 (2014), <http://hdl.handle.net/10822/712446>.

<sup>24</sup> *Burma: Ethnic Cleansing, Repression, Denials*, Human Rights Watch.

<sup>25</sup> Olivia Enos, *Crafting a Successful US Strategy toward Burma: Beyond the Rohingya Crisis*, The Heritage Foundation, (March 8, 2018), <https://www.heritage.org/global-politics/report/crafting-successful-us-strategy-toward-burma-beyond-the-rohingya-crisis>.

<sup>26</sup> *Steps Up Call for Unhindered Access in Myanmar's Northern Rakhine State*, UNHCR, *United Nations*, (January 23, 2018), <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/briefing/2018/1/5a6700a84/unhcr-steps-call-unhindered-access-myanmars-northern-rakhine-state.html>.

<sup>27</sup> Caroline Gluck, *Rohingya Say Rights Guarantees Key to Myanmar Return*, UNHCR, *United Nations*, (January 26 2018) <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/latest/2018/1/5a6a00b29/rohingya-say-rights-guarantees-key-myanmar-return.html>.

<sup>28</sup> *Bangladesh and UNHCR Agree on Voluntary Returns Framework for When Refugees Decide Conditions are Right*, UNHCR, *United Nations*, (April 13, 2018), <http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/news/press/2018/4/5ad061d54/bangladesh-unhcr-agree-voluntary-returns-framework-refugees-decide-conditions.html>.

## Security Interests and NGOs

As an international superpower and a leader on the world stage, the United States has an obligation to protect the Rohingya in Myanmar. It is in the United States' national security interest to intervene to prevent the radicalization of those in this marginalized and vulnerable group. Some Rohingya militant groups are susceptible to radicalization by Islamic extremists like Al Qaeda.<sup>29</sup>

Counterterrorism experts say that the Islamic State of Iraq and Syria (ISIS), along with radical Islamic terrorists in Malaysia and Indonesia, are interested in the conflict. ISIS, which has lost much of its territory in the Middle East, has been focusing on radicalization in South and Southeast Asia. Their online publication has threatened to build a base in Bangladesh and plan revenge attacks on Myanmar's government. In Indonesia, the Islamic Defenders Front (IDF), has called upon "jihadists" to fight in the Rakhine state against government forces, and their spokesperson, Salamet Maaref, said that the IDF is prepared to wage "jihad" on Myanmar if necessary. Additionally, intelligence from Kuala Lumpur warns that a group of Malaysian extremists has travelled to Myanmar and that Malaysia's proximity to the Rakhine State will likely allow ISIS to intervene in the conflict.<sup>30</sup> The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is being blamed by the Myanmar government for violence in the Rakhine State. The UN Special Advisor on the Prevention of Genocide states that something must be done to help the Rohingya and not allow further progress of what they refer to as a genocide.<sup>31</sup>

Currently, the government of Myanmar is preventing NGOs from entering the country. If NGOs such as Médecins Sans Frontières can access the Rakhine state, they will be able to assist children and young adults in the area. Limited opportunities for young Rohingya makes them highly vulnerable to radicalization. Deploying UN Peacekeepers to the area will allow NGOs to operate safely within the Rakhine state and protect remaining Rohingya in the area. Additionally, should Bangladesh force repatriation of Rohingya refugees, Peacekeepers will be able to provide safe return to Myanmar from Bangladesh.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>29</sup> Myanmar: *Who are the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army*, BBC, (September 6, 2017), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41160679>.

<sup>30</sup> Francis Chan, ISIS, Al Qaeda Drawn to Crisis in Rakhine State, *Straits Times*, (September 20, 2017), <http://www.straitstimes.com/asia/se-asia/isis-al-qaeda-drawn-to-crisis-in-rakhine-state>.

<sup>31</sup> Adama Dieng, *Note to Correspondents: Statement by Adama Dieng, United Nations Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide, on his visit to Bangladesh to assess the situation of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar*, UN Secretary General, *United Nations* (March 12, 2018), <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/note-correspondents/2018-03-12/note-correspondents-statement-adama-dieng-united-nations>.

<sup>32</sup> Medicines Sans Frontières, *MSF Activity Report: Myanmar*, Medicines Sans Frontières (2016), <http://activityreport2016.msf.org/country/myanmar/>.

## **Recommendations**

- Encourage the UNHCR to create a Commission of Inquiry.
- Propose the UN Security Council deploy UN peacekeepers, in a joint operation with US military personnel to the Rakhine State. The objectives of this operation will be to protect Rohingya villages, allow for safe repatriation, and allow NGOs to operate safely within Myanmar.
- Following the placement of peacekeepers in Myanmar, encourage NGOs to better implement education and other opportunities to young Rohingya.
- Work with nations of the European Union, NATO, and others to institute a collective travel ban on Aung San Suu Kyi in response to her insufficient response and encourage her to take action.

# Recommendations to Myanmar and its Partners

## Overview

Myanmar's most important trading partners are China and India, and its membership in the WTO is also a huge influence on Myanmar's economic decision making. These partners have the ability to influence the conflict in ways that could benefit both Myanmar and the Rohingya.

## Myanmar

Myanmar joined the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 and has since developed trade relationships with India and China.<sup>33</sup> Myanmar's economic relationship with China indirectly supports its political regime. Previously, economic sanctions have been an incredibly powerful tool in ending oppressive, racially discriminatory regimes. In 1986, South Africa was incentivized to end its Apartheid regime when the USA, European Commission, and Japan imposed economic sanctions.

On November 23, 2017, the Burmese government and Bangladesh signed an agreement for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees. This plan outlines a multi-phased voluntary process that allows the refugees to return home upon completion of the proper forms and proving former residency in the country.<sup>34</sup> Bangladesh has identified 8,032 refugees for repatriation. According to Myanmar, the process has been delayed due to the refugees' inability to properly complete the forms.<sup>35</sup> Having a neutral force to facilitate communication with the Bangladeshi government and other external partners will help facilitate these deals more transparently.

After Myanmar's democratization and the end of its isolation, the country has developed strong international trade relations. Most of the resulting economic growth has been concentrated in urban areas, and as a result unemployment rates are near 37%, and 26% of the country lives in poverty.<sup>36</sup> In the Northern Rakhine State, there is economic stagnancy and extreme poverty stemming from a lack of infrastructure in the region and their status as non-citizens. Recently, Bangladesh has urged Myanmar to begin the implementation of safe zones in the Rakhine State. Myanmar has begun to

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<sup>33</sup> *Myanmar and the WTO*, World Trade Organization, (2018), [https://www.wto.org/english/thewto\\_e/countries\\_e/myanmar\\_e.htm](https://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/countries_e/myanmar_e.htm).

<sup>34</sup> *Myanmar can draw on UN expertise in tackling Rohingya returns*, Security Council Told, United Nations, (December 12, 2017), <https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/ar/node/100045805>.

<sup>35</sup> *Myanmar and Bangladesh ink deal to repatriate Rohingya Muslim refugees amid concerns over army's role*, Firstpost, (2017) <https://www.firstpost.com/world/myanmar-and-bangladesh-ink-deal-to-repatriate-rohingya-muslim-refugees-amid-concerns-over-armys-role-4224607.html>, 8 Apr. 2018.

<sup>36</sup> *Myanmar: Economy*, Asian Development Bank, (March 19, 2018), <https://www.adb.org/countries/myanmar/economy#tabs-0-0>.

build these zones, but with little oversight and funding, they fall short of their goal to provide livable space for repatriation.<sup>37</sup>

## **The World Trade Organization and Association of Southeast Asian Nations**

India and China have long been Myanmar's largest weapons suppliers.<sup>38</sup> Myanmar's democratization in 2011 lifted trade sanctions from WTO affiliates worldwide on arms and other products. One result of this has been the ability of Myanmar's army to grow considerably in size and strength. As a result of the increased trade, Myanmar has begun a series of macroeconomic reforms, allowing its per capita GDP to grow significantly.<sup>39</sup>

The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and its free-trade agreements with developing countries strongly influence Myanmar's trade policy. The Burmese government recognizes that its economy "needs foreign capital and technology for continuous and sustainable development,"<sup>40</sup> not only with ASEAN but with other foreign nations in the Middle East and Europe. Consequently, the Burmese government initiated the Foreign Investment Law in 2012, which allows foreign direct investment and incentivizes citizens to export goods.<sup>41</sup>

In 2015, Myanmar's top five non-agricultural bilateral imports came from India, China, Thailand, the European Union (EU), and the United Arab Emirates.<sup>42</sup> Its main export destinations in 2011 and 2012 were Thailand, China, and India. In 2000, the International Labor Organization (ILO) Convention called for a series of stepped-up political measures against Myanmar for their continued failure to follow the ILO Forced Labor Convention.<sup>43</sup>

## **China**

China is using the Rohingya crisis to its advantage to increase their economic influence in the region. In April 2017, China and Myanmar began a pipeline starting in Kyaukphyu, a coastal city in the Rakhine State, to China. The Chinese use the Kyaukphyu port in Rakhine State to avoid the controversial South China Sea. Additionally, this pipeline helps China fulfill its goal of increasing their access to Myanmar's developing infrastructure and economy. When the conflict in the Rakhine

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<sup>37</sup> *Addressing Rohingya Crisis, Bangladesh Proposes UN-monitored 'safe zones' in Myanmar*, UN News, *United Nations*, <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/566322-addressing-rohingya-crisis-bangladesh-proposes-un-monitored-safe-zones-myanmar>.

<sup>38</sup> Asrar, Shakeeb, *Who is selling weapons to Myanmar?*, *Al Jazeera*, (2017), <https://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/09/selling-myanmar-military-weapons-170914151902162.html>.

<sup>39</sup> *Myanmar Executive Summary*, World Trade Organization, (2018), [https://www.wto.org/english/tratop\\_e/tpr\\_e/s293\\_sum\\_e.pdf](https://www.wto.org/english/tratop_e/tpr_e/s293_sum_e.pdf).

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> *Myanmar Tariff Profile*, World Trade Organization, (2015), [http://stat.wto.org/TariffProfiles/MM\\_e.htm](http://stat.wto.org/TariffProfiles/MM_e.htm).

<sup>43</sup> Charnovitz, Steve, *Rethinking WTO Trade Sanctions*, *The American Journal of International Law* Vol. 95, No. 4 792-832, (2001), [https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract\\_id=256952](https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/papers.cfm?abstract_id=256952).

State is resolved, China wants to use its economic power in the region to bolster both countries' economies.<sup>44</sup> On November 20th, 2017, China attended the 13th Asia Europe Foreign Minister Meeting and decided on a three step plan to solve the crisis. The three steps include calling for a ceasefire between Burmese military and Rohingya, facilitating negotiations between Bangladesh and Myanmar on returning the refugees and where they will live if their homes were destroyed, and finally overseeing the repatriation process by granting them legal citizenship.<sup>45</sup>

## India

On September 6, 2017, India's prime minister, Narendra Modi, announced his support for Myanmar's de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and his shared concern about rising Rohingya extremism in Rakhine State.<sup>46</sup> As part of India's "Act East Policy," which aims to foster ties with its Southeast Asian neighbors and puts emphasis on ASEAN cooperation, India has adopted a "do nothing approach" in crafting its position on the Rohingya issue.<sup>47</sup> India has fostered close military ties with Myanmar, selling arms and instructing their military in Indian training camps.<sup>48</sup> Furthermore, the countries jointly patrol the India-Myanmar border and India has been a crucial proponent in Myanmar's drug trafficking prevention efforts.<sup>49</sup>

## Recommendations to Myanmar

- Permit the entrance of a neutral force to oversee Burmese military activity in the Rakhine State.
- Replace the citizenship law with one that does not discriminate based on ethnicity or religion.
- Continue, with the oversight of neutral arbitrators, the implementation of safe zones in preparation for the return of Rohingya refugees, including rebuilding the infrastructure of the Northern Rakhine State to allow a safe and economically feasible opportunity of return.

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<sup>44</sup> Lucy Hornby, "China and Myanmar Open Long-delayed Oil Pipeline," Financial Times, (April 11, 2017), <https://www.ft.com/content/21d5f650-1e6a-11e7-a454-ab04428977f9>.

<sup>45</sup> Lee Yimou, "China draws three-stage path for Myanmar, Bangladesh to resolve Rohingya crisis," Reuters, (November 19, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/china-draws-three-stage-path-for-myanmar-bangladesh-to-resolve-rohingya-crisis-idUSKBN1DK0AL>.

<sup>46</sup> "Modi says India shares Myanmar's concern about 'extremist violence,'" Reuters, (September 6, 2017), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-india/modi-says-india-shares-myanmars-concern-about-extremist-violence-idUSKCN1BH0LL>.

<sup>47</sup> *Act East Policy*, Press Information Bureau Government of India Ministry of External Affairs, (December 23, 2015), <http://pib.nic.in/newsite/PrintRelease.aspx?relid=133837>.

<sup>48</sup> *Myanmar's Approach to India*, The Diplomat, (March 29, 2018), <https://thediplomat.com/2018/03/myanmars-approach-to-india/>.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

- Expedite the optional repatriation process by allowing Bangladesh to verify the return forms and approve return.

### **Recommendations to WTO and ASEAN**

- Revoke Myanmar's membership from the WTO and ASEAN temporarily to isolate it politically and economically, until the violence against the Rohingya stops.
- Implement embargoes and sanctions on Myanmar to persuade them, through economic and political measures, to stop the ethnic cleansing of the Rohingya.

### **Recommendations to China**

- Continue to oversee and implement the three step plan discussed at the 13th Asia Europe Foreign Ministers Meeting on November 20, 2017, including:
  - Calling for ceasefire between Burmese military and Rohingya,
  - Facilitating negotiations between Bangladesh and Myanmar on returning the refugees
  - Implementing the repatriation process by granting them legal citizenship.

### **Recommendations to India**

- Supervise and enforce the cease fire.
- Provide military support in the Rakhine State and on the Bangladesh-Myanmar border to ensure the safety of the Rohingya and prevent further destruction of villages and homes, as well as to eventually ensure safe repatriation to Myanmar.
- Cease support of Myanmar's military by halting the sale of arms to Myanmar and training of Burmese soldiers in Indian training camps.

# Recommendations to Bangladesh

## Overview

Bangladesh is an extremely densely populated country—it holds about 163 million people within an area smaller than the state of Illinois. According to the Asian Development Bank, in 2010, 31.5% of the population lived below the national poverty line.<sup>50</sup> This percentage of the population lives off of less than \$2 United States Dollars (USD) a day, while the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is \$1,358.8 USD per capita.<sup>51</sup> They have taken in 688,000 additional Rohingya refugees since August 25, 2017.<sup>52</sup> The government of Bangladesh has set aside 2,000 acres of forest land in Cox’s Bazar for the two official refugee camps for Rohingya Muslim refugees, Nayapara and Kutupalong.<sup>53</sup> Refugees are not allowed to leave the camps in search of employment, and are forbidden from leaving the camps into surrounding Bangladesh.<sup>54</sup> Currently, Bangladesh does not have enough money to accommodate all of their refugees. The International Organization for Migration (IOM) recommends that 182.1 million USD is necessary to provide for 900,000 refugees at this time.<sup>55</sup>

## Historical Repatriation

During Myanmar’s Operation Dragon King in 1978, when Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh refused to be repatriated, Bangladesh cut off food supplies to the refugee camps in an attempt to force them to leave, killing 10,000 Rohingya.<sup>56</sup> The last refugees were repatriated in 1979. During another refugee influx in 1992, Bangladesh created a memorandum of understanding with Myanmar about the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, but Myanmar would not allow the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees (UNHCR) to assist. This forced repatriation caused several riots in the camps, with refugees protesting those efforts. Later, when Myanmar allowed UNHCR access, 230,000 of the 250,000 refugees were repatriated back to Myanmar.<sup>57</sup> In 1997, forced repatriation efforts caused the remaining refugees to organize hunger strikes. After several violent confrontations between refugees and Bangladeshi police, the repatriation process stalled. In light of this history, the

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<sup>50</sup> *Poverty in Bangladesh*, Asian Development Bank, <https://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/poverty>.

<sup>51</sup> *GDP per capita (current USD)*, The World Bank Group, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.PCAP.CD>.

<sup>52</sup> *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, Inter Sector Coordination Group.

<sup>53</sup> Navine Murshid, Bangladesh Copes With the Rohingya Crisis By Itself, *Current History* Vol. 117, Issue. 798, 129-132, (April 2018)

<sup>54</sup> Dr. Syed Mahmood, “The Rohingya people of Myanmar: health, human rights, and identity,” *The Lancet*, Vol. 389 No. 10081,1845-1850, (May 6, 2017), [http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736\(16\)00646-2/fulltext](http://www.thelancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736(16)00646-2/fulltext).

<sup>55</sup> “Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis: IOM Appeal”, International Organization for Migration, *United Nations*, (March-December 2018), [https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation\\_reports/file/IOM-Appeal-Rohingya-Humanitarian-Crisis-Response.pdf](https://www.iom.int/sites/default/files/situation_reports/file/IOM-Appeal-Rohingya-Humanitarian-Crisis-Response.pdf).

<sup>56</sup> Pia Oberoi, Rohingya Muslim Refugees in Bangladesh, *Exile and Belonging: Refugees and State Policy in South Asia*, (New Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 2018), 175-199.

<sup>57</sup> “Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution,” Human Rights Watch, Vol. 12, No. 3 (2000), [https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm#P112\\_25491](https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm#P112_25491).

Rohingya will likely not accept repatriation unless it is voluntary and/or supervised by the UNHCR. However, voluntary repatriation is unlikely to happen since the Rohingya have no incentive to return to Myanmar.

## Refugee Distribution

As of April 12, 2018, estimations place over 95% of Rohingya refugees living outside of the two officially recognized camps of Kutupalong and Nayapara. Currently, Bangladesh only allows UNHCR to collect data and provide aid to refugees living within those two camps. The largest percentage of residents of unofficial camps, roughly 81%, are living in the Kutupalong Expansion Site, an area surrounding Kutupalong's official boundaries.<sup>58</sup> Other settlements housing about 1.5% of unofficial refugees (roughly 12,000 people), or more include those in Unchiprang, Hakimpara (Camp 14), Jamtoli (Camp 15), Baghonna (Camp 16), and Chakmarkul (see Appendix A). Refugees living in the unofficial settlements are not guaranteed protection under the UNHCR mandate or food rations.<sup>59</sup> Local and international relief organizations have had limited access to the surrounding settlements, which has led to infrastructure and sanitation well below international standards. Several NGOs, such as Islamic Relief, have reported harassment by Bangladeshi officials when attempting to provide aid to these "unofficial" refugees, who Bangladesh view as migrants. Currently, NGOs providing aid to refugees outside of the official Kutupalong and Nayapara camps can be penalized and expelled by the Bangladeshi government and denied reentry.<sup>60</sup> This has prevented the vast majority of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh from receiving aid from NGOs and UNHCR.

## Jordanian Compact Model

In March 2011, Jordan's government faced a similar situation to that of Bangladesh. The Jordanian government had an influx of Syrian refugees from the Syrian Civil War. In order to solve this problem, they met with the European Union (EU) on July 2, 2016 to develop solutions to the growing economic and social issues stemming from the refugee crisis.<sup>61</sup> They created the Jordan Compact, which focuses on areas such as strengthening the relationship between Jordan and the EU from 2016 to 2018 by providing a trade off; the European Union allows textiles from Jordan into its market in exchange for Jordan allowing the refugees to work. This approach is giving Jordan the opportunity to better its economy while providing refugees with job related skills. The compact's

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<sup>58</sup> *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, Inter Sector Coordination Group.

<sup>59</sup> Justin Rowlett, "Rohingya Crisis: Why Aid is Slow to Reach Refugees", British Broadcasting Corporation, (September 14, 2017), <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41253683>; Richard Sollom and Parveen Parmar, "An Emergency Report from Physicians for Human Rights", ReliefWeb, (March 2010), [https://www.google.com/url?q=https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/5C48E7C7725E5409C12576E100475265-Full\\_Report.pdf&sa=D&ust=1523845274039000&usg=AFQjCNGb\\_A--U-OAKO5CnuCy34V5niqBuQ](https://www.google.com/url?q=https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/5C48E7C7725E5409C12576E100475265-Full_Report.pdf&sa=D&ust=1523845274039000&usg=AFQjCNGb_A--U-OAKO5CnuCy34V5niqBuQ).

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Government of Jordan, "The Jordan Compact: A New Holistic Approach between the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the International Community to deal with the Syrian Refugee Crisis," ReliefWeb, (February 8, 2016), <https://reliefweb.int/report/jordan/jordan-compact-new-holistic-approach-between-hashemite-kingdom-jordan-and>.

focus is on improving living conditions for both the 655,000 Syrian refugees in Jordan and for their vulnerable host communities, bettering the socio-economic status, security, stability and resilience of Jordan, as well as improving the temporary stay of Syrian refugees.<sup>62</sup> The Jordan Compact is turning a crisis into an opportunity for mutual benefit, modeling the ways in which a country can respond to a rapid influx of refugees.

## Recommendations

- Do not attempt to repatriate the Rohingya refugees unless the repatriation is voluntary and supervised by the UN--refugees should only be repatriated once the ethnic cleansing in Myanmar has stopped and the land is considered safe by the UNHCR for the Rohingya to return to the country.
- Request \$200 million USD in foreign aid from the United Nations and the World Bank in order to distribute properly to appropriate organizations, such as the International Organization for Migration (IOM), for the purpose of properly accommodating the increasing number of refugees.
- Grant the unofficial settlements and camps surrounding Kutupalong, Unchiprang, Leda, Hakimpara (Camp 14), Jamtoli (Camp 15), Baghonna (Camp 16) and Chakmarkul official status as refugee camps and register their residents as refugees with Bangladesh and UNHCR.
- Create a refugee compact based on the Jordanian model between Bangladesh and the international community that includes compromises to deal with the living conditions of the Rohingya, the employment of refugees, and the improvement of the socio-economic status of Bangladesh.

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<sup>62</sup> “EU-Jordan Partnership: The Compact”, European Commission, <https://ec.europa.eu/neighbourhood-enlargement/sites/near/files/jordan-compact.pdf>.

# Recommendations to NGOs

## Current NGO Work

From large international organizations such as United Nations International Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Doctors Without Borders (MSF), and the Red Cross to local organizations such as the Bangladesh Rural Advancement Committee (BRAC), NGOs and international agencies have been committed to providing humanitarian aid in Myanmar and Bangladesh. MSF has ten stations in Cox’s Bazar District, with one directly outside the Kutupalong refugee camp. They have been effective in addressing public health issues such as diarrheal diseases and sexual violence. In addition to emergency assistance, groups such as the World Food Programme have been addressing food scarcity with nutritional powder. NGOs also focus on other issues such as mental health, education, and protecting women and girls from sexual violence and trafficking.<sup>63</sup>

Since August 25, 2017, 688,000 Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh, totaling approximately one million Rohingya in the Cox’s Bazar district.<sup>64</sup> There are two official refugee camps in the region and many refugees settle in host communities; the Kutupalong camp and its surrounding expansion area holds upwards of 618,037 refugees.<sup>65</sup> This has become an area of concern to the aid community, as many in the camp now lack adequate resources to survive. Poor sanitation contaminates the water and poor roads make food inaccessible. Recently, an upward trend in acute watery diarrhea and E. coli-contaminated food and water has affected the camps.<sup>66</sup> UNICEF spokesperson Christophe Bouliercac attributed recent health issues to poor hygiene and water storing practices.<sup>67</sup> These health issues include illnesses such as malaria, since rainwater pools (a source of drinking water,) remain a breeding ground for mosquitoes who carry malaria.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, the dangerous roads within the camps force Rohingya to go without food and stay in their homes. Gilles Nouziès, Handicap International's head of programs in Asia, explains the unlivable situation: “Someone with reduced mobility can’t use the narrow, muddy and sometimes steep pathways... A woman alone with her children who doesn’t want to leave her children by themselves in a shelter, can’t benefit from food distributions.”<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Tiffany May, “Helping the Rohingya”, New York Times, (September 29, 2017), <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/29/world/asia/rohingya-aid-myanmar-bangladesh.html>.

<sup>64</sup> *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis*, Inter Sector Coordination Group.

<sup>65</sup> *JRP for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis*, International Organization of Migration.

<sup>66</sup> “UNICEF warns of contaminated drinking water in camps for Rohingya refugees,” UN News, *United Nations*, (November 21, 2017), <https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/11/636832-unicef-warns-contaminated-drinking-water-camps-rohingya-refugees>.

<sup>67</sup> Ibid.

<sup>68</sup> Brendan Brady, “Fears of humanitarian crisis in western Myanmar’s camps for internally displaced persons”, CMAJ, (July 9, 2013), <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3708010/>.

<sup>69</sup> “Rohingya refugees live in inhumane conditions”, ReliefWeb, (November 9, 2017), <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/rohingya-refugees-live-inhumane-conditions>.

Monsoon season is becoming an urgent concern within the camps. Many of the refugees live in flimsy tents and plastic makeshift houses, unprotected from the monsoons which threaten to destroy homes, cut off certain parts of the camps from receiving aid, and displace even more Rohingya.

Gang rapes and systematic military rapes are both common occurrences in the Kutupalong refugee camp.<sup>70</sup> Humanitarian Aerlyn Pfeil has encountered sexual abuse survivors around the world, but even she was appalled by the conditions in Kutupalong, saying “I have never heard so many stories of so many women being publicly raped and then killed.”<sup>71</sup>

## Long-Term Issues

Beyond a lack of basic resources, Rohingya face legal hurdles that bar them from work, education, and social services in Bangladesh. The UNHCR registered refugees in Kutupalong to keep track of the supplies they need, but of the recent arrivals, only 35,000 have registered in Kutupalong and Nayapara camps.<sup>72</sup> Rather than being recognized as citizens, the Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh are referred to as “illegal immigrants” and are not provided with the same resources that others in these countries get. Bangladesh is trying to defer responsibility, through Bangladesh’s Foreigners Act and principles laid out in its constitution that reject citizenship. However, according to international agreements that Bangladesh has signed, Bangladesh is still responsible for ensuring refugees are protected and have the rights to work and receive education. In reality, refugees are restricted from moving freely, including working or going to school in host communities, and have very little autonomy in their daily lives.<sup>73</sup> Roughly 50% of Rohingya refugees are children, and the charity Children on the Edge estimates that 625,000 Rohingya children in Bangladesh lack access to educational opportunities.<sup>74</sup> Both Rohingya adults and children are reliant on aid or illegal work for their basic necessities of life.

Several miles from the resort town of Cox’s Bazar, local “host communities” are also struggling with poverty and lack of resources. According to the Center for Strategic and International Studies, the

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<sup>70</sup> Maggie Fox, “Violent rape just one of many disasters for Rohingya refugees,” NBC News, (December 17, 2017) <https://www.nbcnews.com/health/health-news/violent-rape-just-one-many-disasters-rohingya-refugees-n830351>.

<sup>71</sup> Ibid.

<sup>72</sup> “Bangladesh Operational Update,” UNHCR, *United Nations*, (October 6, 2017), <http://reporting.unhcr.org/sites/default/files/UNHCR%20Bangladesh%20-%20Operational%20Update%20-%206OCT17.pdf>.

<sup>73</sup> “Confined Spaces: Legal Protections for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Malaysia and Thailand,” Equal Rights Trust, (December 2016) <http://www.equalrightstrust.org/resources/confined-spaces-legal-protections-rohingya-bangladesh-malaysia-and-thailand-0>

<sup>74</sup> Children on the Edge, “Education for Rohingya Refugee Children,: Accessed April 6, 2018, <https://www.childrenontheedge.org/bangladesh-education-for-rohingya-refugee-children.html>.

relationship between the Rohingya and local Cox's Bazar residents could improve.<sup>75</sup> The refugees require additional firewood and resources, which accelerates the country's deforestation—Bangladesh now has only 10% of its original trees.<sup>76</sup> If the deforestation continues at the fast growing rate, neither Rohingya nor Bangladeshi people will be able to warm their houses and will be at higher risk of flooding from monsoon damage.<sup>77</sup> NGOs have the ability to teach and urge Rohingya and Bangladeshis to combat deforestation together, which will decrease animosity and improve living situations.

## Funding

A significant lack of funding is limiting the positive work NGOs can have on refugee camps. NGOs receive the vast majority of their funding from private donations. Occasionally, NGOs earn money from membership dues, sale of goods and services, private sector for-profit companies, philanthropic foundations, government grants, and private donations. As a result of the influx of technology usage in the last decade, social media is now a big component of raising money for NGOs around the world. They are increasingly raising money via mass media campaigns, advertising space on Google, and more money from the government.<sup>78</sup> In addition, many of the world's largest foundations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Gates Foundation, are not directing their funds to this crisis.<sup>79</sup>

## Recommendations

- Continue to support the provision of basic necessities, building of roads, investment in monsoon-safe living, and the support of sexual assault victims by organizations such as Doctors Without Borders, UNHCR, and IOM, with a focus on employing Rohingya.
- Create an initiative that uses temporary learning centers and locals to educate youth and teach refugees about purifying water, combating malaria and general hygiene.
- Support the UNHCR and Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission joint effort to register more refugees with the UNHCR, and work with the Bangladeshi government to

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<sup>75</sup> Erol Yayboke, "The Rohingya in Bangladesh: Playing Politics with a People in Crisis," Center for Strategic and International Studies, (January 29, 2018),

<https://www.csis.org/analysis/rohingya-bangladesh-playing-politics-people-crisis>.

<sup>76</sup> "Drivers of deforestation and forest degradation in Bangladesh: Final Report", UN-REDD PROGRAMME, *United Nations*

[https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohammad\\_Rahman171/publication/319653168\\_Drivers\\_of\\_deforestation\\_and\\_forest\\_degradation\\_in\\_Bangladesh\\_Final\\_Report/links/59b82e79a6fdcc68722c61b9/Drivers-of-deforestation-and-for-est-degradation-in-Bangladesh-Final-Report.pdf](https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Mohammad_Rahman171/publication/319653168_Drivers_of_deforestation_and_forest_degradation_in_Bangladesh_Final_Report/links/59b82e79a6fdcc68722c61b9/Drivers-of-deforestation-and-for-est-degradation-in-Bangladesh-Final-Report.pdf).

<sup>77</sup> "JRP for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis", International Organization of Migration, (March 2018),

<https://www.unocha.org/sites/unocha/files/JRP%20for%20Rohingya%20Humanitarian%20Crisis%202018.PDF>.

<sup>78</sup> Google Ad Grants, *Google*, (2018), [google.com/adgrants](https://www.google.com/adgrants/).

<sup>79</sup> Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, UNHCR, *United Nations*,

<http://www.unhcr.org/en-us/bill-and-melinda-gates-foundation.html>.

obtain and distribute work permits to Rohingya adults for industries such as small farming, fishing, and entrepreneurship.

- Bring the Rohingya and local Bangladeshi communities together to plant trees, uniting them around a common goal of combating deforestation.
- Start a mass media campaign to increase funding by applying for “Google for Nonprofits,” a grant that will give eligible NGOs free advertising on Google sites and by appealing to philanthropic foundations, such as the Rockefeller Foundation and the Gates Foundation, and government aid.

# Recommendations to the Rohingya

## Overview

Burmese police, military, and local militias have brutally attacked Rohingya villages; survivors, when interviewed, have shared reports of government soldiers stabbing babies, cutting off boys' heads, gang-raping girls and women, shooting grenades into houses, burning families to death, and rounding up unarmed male villagers for execution.<sup>80</sup> Doctors without Borders estimates that from August to September 2017, at least 6,700 Rohingya have died in Myanmar; this figure is likely an underestimation because it was based on surveys of refugees who reported only the destruction they witnessed first-hand.<sup>81</sup>

Rohingya in Myanmar have experienced violence and discrimination long before their persecution garnered international attention. In 2009, 43.5% of the nearly four million people in the Rakhine State lived in poverty, which raised tensions between the Buddhist majority and the Muslim minority.<sup>82</sup> Exacerbated by ethnic and religious tensions, Rohingya people are more likely to join a radical organization, especially if they feel they have run out of options via the economy or the government. For example, Ataullah abu Ammar Jununi founded the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, a violent fundamentalist militia, in 2012 for Rohingya to defend themselves.<sup>83</sup> Jununi views the group as the only option for the Rohingya, stating that ARSA is not a terrorist group, but rather "Rohingyas, standing up for our nation... for our rights."<sup>84</sup> Pakistan and Saudi Arabia have funded ARSA, Al-Qaeda has endorsed it, and the United Nations has condemned it.<sup>85</sup>

## Community Leaders

However, there are many Rohingya leaders other than ARSA, many of whom are expatriates living around the globe. There are Rohingya advocacy groups in Japan, Thailand, the United Kingdom,

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<sup>80</sup> "Rohingya Recount Atrocities: They Threw my Baby in the Fire", The New York Times, October 11 2017, <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/10/11/world/asia/rohingya-myanmar-atrocities.html>.

<sup>81</sup> "Myanmar/Bangladesh: MSF surveys estimate that at least 6,700 Rohingya were killed during the attacks in Myanmar", Medecins Sans Frontieres, <http://www.msf.org/en/article/myanmarbangladesh-msf-surveys-estimate-least-6700-rohingya-were-killed-during-attacks>.

<sup>82</sup> "Towards a Peaceful, Fair, and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine.", Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, 2017, [rakhinecommission.org](http://rakhinecommission.org).

<sup>83</sup> "Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase," International Crisis Group, (December 7 2017), <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/292-myanmars-rohingya-crisis-enters-dangerous-new-phase>.

<sup>84</sup> "Inside the Rohingya Resistance: The Rebels who Provoked Myanmar's Crackdown", CNN, (February 3 2017), <https://www.cnn.com/2017/02/03/asia/myanmar-rohingya-resistance/index.html>.

<sup>85</sup> "Secretary-General's Remarks at Open Debate of the Security Council on Myanmar", United Nations, (September 28 2017), <https://www.un.org/sg/en/content/sg/statement/2017-09-28/secretary-generals-remarks-open-debate-security-council-myanmar>.

Australia, several US states, and an overarching North American Rohingya Association.<sup>86</sup> The leaders of these groups, specifically Zaw Min Htut in Japan and Tun Khin in the United Kingdom, advocate for Rohingya refugees by testifying in front of government bodies and penning articles in their defense.<sup>87</sup> There are also Rohingya community figureheads, such as Wai Wai Nu, a former political prisoner, co-founder of Justice for Women, and founder of the Women Peace Network-Arakan.<sup>88</sup> Furthermore, many Rohingya elders who are prominent members in the traditional Muslim community serve as leaders. This community network has recently issued a list of demands to be met by Myanmar and the international community before the Rohingya will voluntarily return to Bangladesh.<sup>89</sup>

## Refugee Camps

The difficulties faced by the Rohingya continue in refugee camps outside of Myanmar. One Rohingya refugee left Myanmar for camps Malaysia only to discover that life is just as bad in the refugee camps, if not worse.<sup>90</sup> Of the Rohingya living in refugee camps, 95% lack access to clean water, and 75% lack reliable access to food.<sup>91</sup> Forced repatriation, as is being practiced by Bangladesh, seriously endangers the Rohingya people.<sup>92</sup> Conditions in refugee camps are deplorable, and those in Myanmar are worse, leaving the Rohingya with no viable options.

## Recommendations

- Form a leadership body that includes traditional, young, and expatriate representatives in order to increase legitimacy in the community and to make the interests of the Rohingya known.
- Advocate for improved conditions in refugee camps. There is no easy solution to the conflict in Myanmar, and Rohingya refugee camps will likely be in use for years to come.

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<sup>86</sup> *Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan*, <http://brajtokyo.blogspot.co.uk/>; *Burmese Rohingya Association Thailand*, <http://rohingyathai.blogspot.com>; *Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK*; [http://brouk.org.uk/?page\\_id=29](http://brouk.org.uk/?page_id=29); *Australian Burmese Rohingya Organization*; <http://abro.org.au>; *The Burmese Rohingya Association of America*, <https://www.burmataskforce.org/content/organization-11>.

<sup>87</sup> *Zaw Min Htut Speaks on Rohingya Issue in Myanmar*, Foreign Correspondents Club of Japan Video Testimony, (October 23 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=38-a8yN5y7k>; *Tun Khin Al Jazeera Author's Profile*, Al Jazeera, (February 20 2018), <https://www.aljazeera.com/profile/tun-khin.html>.

<sup>88</sup> "Wai Wai Nu, Hillary Clinton Award Awardee", Georgetown Women, Peace, and Security, (February 5 2018), <https://giwps.georgetown.edu/awardee/wai-wai-nu/>.

<sup>89</sup> "Exclusive: Rohingya Refugee Leaders Draw Up Demands Ahead of Repatriation" Reuters, (January 9 2018), <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-petition-exclusive/exclusive-rohingya-refugee-leaders-draw-up-demands-ahead-of-repatriation-idUSKBN1F80SE>.

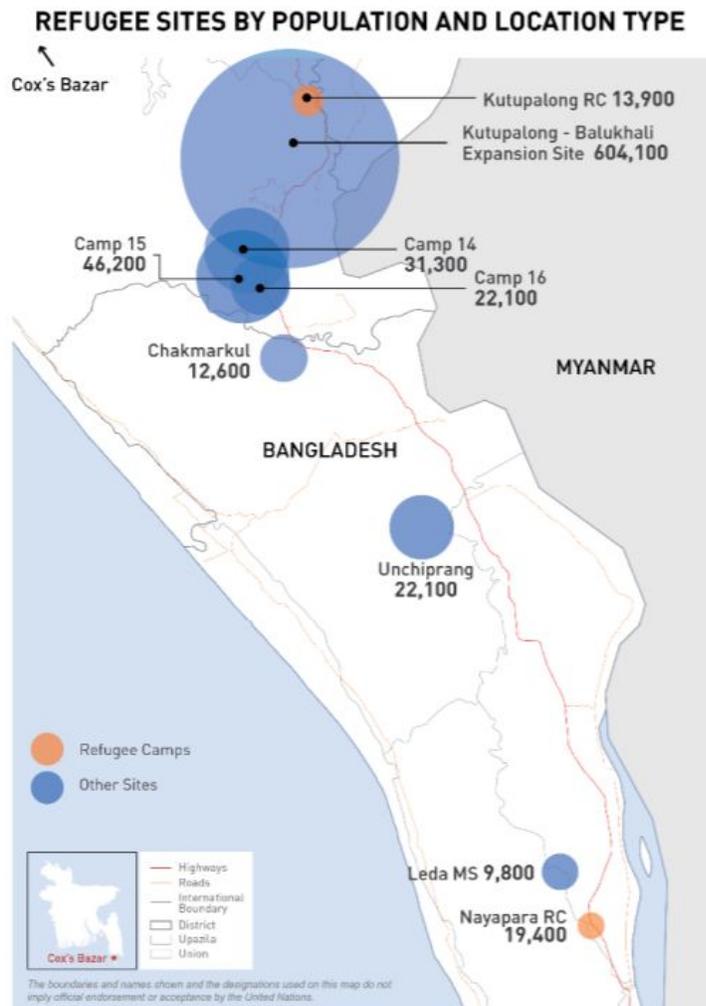
<sup>90</sup> *Rohingya Refugees Seek Shelter in Malaysia*, Al Jazeera English Video Interview, *Al Jazeera*, (April 6 2018), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=e0y48Bw7P3w>.

<sup>91</sup> "Rohingya Refugees: The World's Fastest-Growing Humanitarian Crisis by the Numbers", International Rescue Committee (IRC), International Rescue Committee, (October 23 2017), [www.rescue.org/article/rohingya-refugees-worlds-fastest-growing-humanitarian-crisis-numbers](http://www.rescue.org/article/rohingya-refugees-worlds-fastest-growing-humanitarian-crisis-numbers).

<sup>92</sup> "Burma/Bangladesh: Return Plan Endangers Refugees", Human Rights Watch, (January 23 2018),

- Call for the Bangladeshi government to cease forced repatriation until the Rohingya are voluntarily accompanied by a UN security force back to a safe Myanmar.
- Call on the government of Myanmar to develop infrastructure, exports, and the agricultural sector, along with increased trade connectivity between itself, Bangladesh, India, and other surrounding countries to address poverty in the long term in Rakhine State.
- Call for the international community to prioritize the end of the bloodshed and destruction of Rohingya villages. In the name of the most basic of human rights, the international community must intervene in this humanitarian crisis immediately to prevent any further human suffering.

## Appendix A



“Refugee Sites by Population and Location Type.” Inter Sector Coordination Group. *Situation Report: Rohingya Refugee Crisis*. 12 April 2018.

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