JUNE 2024

The Accountability, Politics, and Humanitarian Toll of the Rohingya Genocide

NEW LINES INSTITUTE
FOR STRATEGY AND POLICY

The Accountability, Politics, and Humanitarian Toll of the Rohingya Genocide

Table of Contents

(continued)

The views expressed in this report are those of the authors and not an official policy or position of the New Lines Institute.

COVER: Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar cross a rice field near Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, where more than 1 million of members of the persecuted ethnic group live in refugee camps. (Paula Bronstein/Getty Images)

Our mission is to provoke principled and transformative leadership based on peace and security, global communities, character, stewardship, and development.

Our purpose is to shape U.S. foreign policy based on a deep understanding of regional geopolitics and the value systems of those regions.

Introduction

The plight of the Rohingya people represents one of the most urgent humanitarian crises of our time. Decades of persecution and systematic discrimination have rendered them stateless and vulnerable, with successive governments in Myanmar perpetuating egregious human rights violations. In the wake of the 2021 coup, their suffering has only intensified, necessitating immediate and concerted international intervention.

Despite broad humanitarian assistance and widespread condemnation of the actions against them, the Rohingya continue to endure unimaginable hardships, exacerbated by regional neglect and a lack of organized representation on the global stage.

The Global Rohingya Initiative, spearheaded by the New Lines Institute, represents a landmark initiative designed to ensure the voices of the Rohingya community are heard in all discussions with international entities, are leading efforts to build enduring frameworks, and are at the center of any path forward. Our comprehensive approach encompasses a range of activities, from advocacy and capacity-building to policy development and international engagement, with a steadfast commitment to centering Rohingya perspectives and experiences with an aim to equip Rohingya leaders to develop a new global Rohingya representative body with offices in the U.S., Europe, the Middle East, and Asia.

The Global Rohingya Initiative stands as a beacon of hope and solidarity in the face of adversity. It is imperative that we heed the Rohingya call for justice and solidarity, recognizing the pressing need to empower them with a unified voice and agency in shaping their own future.

Sincerely,

Dr. Azeem Ibrahim OBE
Senior Director
The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy
Washington, D.C.

Cox's Bazar District and Refugee Camps

Abdulqawi Ahmed Yusuf, center, president of the International Court of Justice, delivers the court's ruling on Jan. 23, 2020, in a lawsuit filed by Gambia accusing Myanmar of genocide in its treatment of the Rohingya people. (Robin Van Lonkhuijsen/ANP/AFP via Getty Images)

Corporate Accountability and the Rohingya Genocide

N. Hasan and Regina M. Paulose

Introduction: The Landscape of Access to Justice

The Rohingya people have faced genocide and crimes against humanity for the past several decades, mainly perpetrated by the military junta in Myanmar (Burma). However, it was primarily due to the massive outbreak of violence against the Rohingya in August 2017 that a wave of legal cases was filed regarding these crimes. The actions taken to date include investigations and lawsuits that have been filed in national and international courts against the government of Myanmar and the leaders of the military junta. As of this publication, some legal matters have concluded, and some are still pending.

Two main investigations have taken place since August 2017. The first is the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. It concluded that the August 2017 events had genocidal intent and described in detail a litany of human rights violations perpetrated against the Rohingya and other minority groups including the Kachin. Another investigation, not

as often discussed, was the Rosenthal report, which examined some of the failures of the United Nations to appropriately respond to the Rohingya situation.[1]

Lawsuits have been the main tool used to examine the Rohingya situation. Quickly after the 2017 genocidal purge, a lawyer in Australia filed a prosecution against then-State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi, which was dismissed by the Australian attorney general. The International Criminal Court prosecutor opened a preliminary investigation into the 2017 exodus into Bangladesh. The International Criminal Court Office of the Prosecutor is continuing its investigation. Rohingya survivors have been participating in a universal jurisdiction case in Argentina. Prior to the 2021 coup in Myanmar, a Rohingya widow filed a case before the Myanmar Human Rights Commission, but no information has been reported since the filing. In 2023, another universal jurisdiction case was filed in Germany, which included Rohingya survivors.

One of the most well-known matters that has been brought forward is the legal proceedings at the International Court of Justice filed by the government of Gambia, a member of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation. In The Gambia v. Myanmar, Gambia has alleged that Myanmar breached its obligations under the U.N. Genocide Convention based on the events of August 2017. A key moment in the proceedings so far was Gambia's request for provisional measures, specifically requesting that all genocidal acts stop against the Rohingya and for the preservation of evidence related to the case. The International Court of Justice granted the provisional measures and requested that Myanmar report on its compliance with the order every six months. Objections filed by Myanmar were recently denied by the court, and the international community now waits for the next set of hearings.

Noticeably absent from these lawsuits are corporate actors. Generally, corporations are lesser-discussed actors in the field of international criminal law. Sometimes, routine business can cause a corporation to be viewed as complicit in or aiding and abetting a genocide, which in turn further exacerbates conditions for victims. This policy paper will focus on corporate involvement in Burma and examine four case studies where it could be argued that the industries involved participated in the Rohingya genocide. It will discuss the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and why the international community must pay greater attention to corporate dealings in the context of genocide. This paper will emphasize the importance of corporate social responsibility and accountability, particularly in light of the Rakhine recommendations.

Kofi Annan Commission – Rakhine Recommendations

In 2016, the Kofi Annan Foundation along with the Myanmar State Councillor's Office formed the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State (Advisory Commission). The mandate of the Advisory Commission focused on development, peace and reconciliation, security, and humanitarian issues in the Rakhine (Arakan).[2] The Advisory Commission traveled extensively throughout the Arakan and met with various leaders, government representatives, and international partners and experts. Prior to the issuance of its final report in 2017, people in the Arakan made several criticisms of the Advisory Commission, and some groups within the Arakan requested that it be canceled.[3]

In August 2017, the Advisory Commission produced its final report, "Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine," which detailed several recommendations. In the introduction, the Advisory Commission calls attention to the "development crisis" in the Arakan:

"The state is marked by chronic poverty from which all communities suffer, and lags behind the national average in virtually every area. Protracted conflict, insecure land tenure and lack of livelihood opportunities have resulted in significant migration out of the state, reducing the size of the work force and undermining prospects of development and economic growth. Movement restrictions on the Muslim population hurt the economy. The failure to improve inter-communal relations, enforced segregation and the simmering threat of violence and instability continue to deter private sector investment."[4]

Later in the report, the Advisory Commission notes the importance of large-scale development projects and special economic zones in the Arakan, which will

be created in partnership with the governments of India and China, among others. Many of these projects will require removal of people of the Arakan off their lands.[5] Civil society representatives reported to the Advisory Commission that they were not being given their "fair share" and that the government's behavior was "exploitative."[6]

The recommendations the Advisory Commission made with regard to the economic and social development of the Arakan focused on "resource sharing," compensation for "appropriated" land, reducing barriers to entry for local businesses, empowering women, and climate resilience.[7] The Advisory Commission failed to recommend that the government of Myanmar incorporate and emphasize a human rights regime with the corporations it does business with. This was a missed opportunity, particularly given the fact that the U.N. Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights (Principles) was endorsed by the United Nations Human Rights Council in June 2011. While the Principles themselves are "nonbinding," the basis for the Principles derives from other U.N. treaties, some of which Myanmar is a party to.

Paper Tiger? Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights

The Principles are broken into three main areas. The first area is the state's duty to protect human rights, which is consistent with treaties, conventions, and customary international law. The second area addresses a corporation's responsibility to respect human rights. This section emphasizes that businesses not undermine a state's obligation to protect human rights, emphasizes coherence between policy and procedure and human rights, and emphasizes corporate due diligence. The last area covers access to remedies, specifically focusing on inclusionary methods within the corporate structure to prevent and remedy intentional or unintentional rights violations.

In 2021, the United Nations conducted a review of the Principles and found "governance gaps" that allow "too many instances of business-related abuses across all sectors and regions."[8] The report also found that businesses are employing strategic lawsuits against human rights defenders and critics.[9] This parallels the behavior of many states that disregard human rights laws (even ones that are codified in their own national legislation) and silence human rights defenders and critics, despite the existence of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders (1998).[10]

When sanctions were lifted beginning in 2012 in Burma, the European Union cautioned the business community to "adhere to the highest standards of business practices," which included the Principles, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, and EU policy on corporate social responsibility.[11] John Ruggie saw an opportunity for business to utilize the Principles, noting, "governments, international bodies, and foreign investors must encourage the government of Myanmar to demonstrate its own commitment to more accountable governance." As highlighted in the cases discussed below, these instruments appeared to be nothing more than paper tigers. A year before the February coup, Professor Catherine Renshaw examined the Principles and their utilization in Burma. She noted that the country serves as a case study of the challenges of adhering to the Principles in the midst of a democratic transition, when a state has little control over corporate actors.[12]

The Complicity Factor? The Role of Corporations During Genocide

This paper highlights four important court cases with regard to the Rohingya genocide and engagement with perpetrators of genocide. These cases serve to emphasize the importance of due diligence practices, pursuing strategies for corporate accountability, and ensuring there is remedy when there is corporate participation/complicity in cases of genocide. The first two corporations involved in these cases, Facebook and Telenor, are considered part of the telecommunications industry. The telecommunications sector was part of Burma's "ambitious economic, political, and governance reform program" whereby the sector was "liberalized to attract foreign investment, create jobs, support development of the local IT industry, and promote ICT as a catalyst for social and economic change."[13] In 2013, Human Rights Watch alerted the international community that while internet

and mobile technologies "have an enormous potential to advance human rights" and enhance economic growth in Burma, "democratic reforms remain incomplete and the government and its security forces continue to commit serious human rights violations."[14] Despite the warnings and the conditions in the country, the international community assisted in growing this sector and companies started doing business in Burma.

The third corporation, Daewoo International/POSCO, is involved in the oil and gas sector in the Arakan, namely the Shwe Gas Project. In order to make huge profits from these "vast, untapped reserves of oil and natural gas," foreign companies are required to partner with local companies to bid, and these companies, in turn, make a profit that benefits the military junta.[15] A cautionary tale of the role of oil and gas in genocide is exemplified in Darfur, Sudan. The government of Sudan "cleared" land in 2003 to promote oil development. The people in these areas resisted this operation, and the government responded by massacring scores of people via the Janjaweed armed group. The petroleum exploration and blocs were awarded to the China National Petroleum Corporation.[16] The China National Petroleum Corporation has been and is currently an active participant in the Arakan gas fields, as will be discussed below.

The last examination of corporate involvement in the Rohingya genocide is the British American Tobacco company and Rothmans Myanmar Holdings Singapore, both part of the tobacco industry. While there appears to be no direct link to the Arakan in its business operations, the tobacco industry has continued to prop up the military junta with enormous profits, and some of those who profit belong to active military units assigned in the Arakan.[17] The tobacco industry appears to justify its engagement with the junta despite repeated reports of significant and gross human rights violations.

Facebook (U.S.)

The role of Facebook in the Rohingya genocide has been widely discussed, and Facebook has faced criticism for its "determining" role in the 2017 purge.[18] Perpetrators used the platform to further genocide through hate speech and to plan coordinated attacks. Facebook's leadership admitted publicly that groups had used its platform to further violence against the Rohingya and that it needed to "get it right."[19] Two Rohingya groups pursued two different avenues of legal recourse against the company. In December 2022, a judge in California dismissed a $1 billion lawsuit that was brought by lawyers claiming negligence and strict product liability.[20] The second path, lesser known and discussed, was a complaint filed against Facebook before the OECD.[21] Despite their lack of success through these avenues, Rohingya organizations such as the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation have requested that Facebook pay reparations directly to the Rohingya people.[22] Although these strategies have yet to bear fruit, Facebook has indicated that it has cooperated with the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. In 2021, Gambia pursued a case against Facebook to obtain documents related to the Rohingya genocide for the ICJ matter. A U.S. federal court in Washington, D.C., ordered Facebook to hand over related documents.[23]

Global Witness reported in 2022 that despite hiring more content reviewers who speak Burmese, improving artificial intelligence to detect hate speech, and establishing a team dedicated to working on Myanmar, "Facebook's ability to detect Burmese language hate speech remains abysmally poor."[24]

Telenor (Norway)

In August 2017, snipers belonging to the junta security forces climbed cell towers belonging to Telenor in Alethankyaw village in Maungdaw. The snipers shot at people who were fleeing from the ongoing violence.[25] While Telenor investigated this matter, prior to the 2021 coup there were also intermittent internet shutdowns that Telenor appeared helpless in stopping.

In 2019, the Committee Seeking Justice for Alethankyaw filed an OECD complaint against Telenor. The complaint focused specifically on Telenor's cell towers being used by the military to kill Rohingya people in August 2017. The complaint alleged that Telenor should have known of the apartheid-like conditions in the country in 2013 when it began business operations in Burma. Further, Telenor has had to pull its personnel out of the country due to previous "clearance operations."[26] In August 2022,

the National Contact Point (NCP) in Norway issued a final statement and decided it was "not found that Telenor caused or contributed to the misuse of the mobile tower."[27] There was a parallel letter/complaint sent to the U.K. government. The letter alleged that because the U.K. had "invested its citizens' funds into IGT structures actively used by the Burma army for genocide, the UK has a particular obligation to investigate fairly and without bias its connection to the atrocities in Alethankyaw."[28] There is no information to date to indicate whether the U.K. has evaluated the complaint.

After the February 2021 coup, due to pressures from activists for their links with the military junta,[29] Telenor sold its stake in Burma later that year. Telenor engaged with civil society actors and third-party intermediaries to determine how to proceed with its business venture in Burma.[30] To date, and similar to the situation with Facebook, many complaints have been recorded but the company has walked away relatively unscathed despite efforts by activists. Security issues around the cell towers have worsened. The Myanmar military junta has reportedly laid land mines "indiscriminately across mobile and tower operators."[31]

Daewoo International – POSCO (South Korea)

Over the past two decades, the Arakan has become a particularly lucrative area for oil and gas companies because it is resource rich. As early as 2000, Daewoo International signed contracts with the Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, an entity that is owned and run by the military junta. Besides exploration of the A-1 gas block, Daewoo International started a venture, known as the Shwe Gas Project, with other companies from South Korea and India. Daewoo International owned the majority of the venture. In addition to gas exploration, agreements were made to build pipelines that would carry the gas into China. The company responsible for the pipelines, which would cut through the Arakan, was the China National Petroleum Corporation, which was the majority shareholder, with Daewoo as a minority shareholder in this project. Construction of the pipelines began sometime around 2010.[32]

By 2006, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) began pressuring Daewoo International to quit investments in the region and its financial support of the military junta.[33] Researchers estimated that the junta would stand to gain approximately $12 billion to $17 billion from the sale of natural gas. Besides the income received from this venture, NGOs also described an increase in security forces in areas where projects were taking place – in this instance in the Arakan, the traditional homeland of the Rohingya.

In 2008, EarthRights International filed a complaint with the OECD regarding Daewoo's pipeline project in Burma. EarthRights International alleged that "human rights projects such as forced relocation and violations of the right to freedom of expression are linked to the project." The NCP Korea responded and rejected the complaint. The NCP found "the general situation in Burma and specifically around the Shwe Project does not merit an investigation or arbitration between the companies and complainants."[34]

In 2011, Daewoo (now POSCO)[35] reported to the Council of Ethics of the Government Pension Global Fund that human rights violations "had not been reported," and it elaborated:

> Some organizations might imply the human right violation in connection with the Pipeline, but we wish you would understand that there can be different interpretation on the facts in accordance with what the interpreting parties wish to achieve. As we previously pointed out, there was no known report of human rights issue regarding the Yetagun Project, which came after the Yadana project. This illustrates that the human rights issue can be avoided as long as the participating stakeholders are determined to it.[36]

The Council on Ethics recommended the exclusion of Daewoo and co-investors from the Government Pension Global Fund. It is important to underscore that the people of the Arakan have never benefited materially from the oil and gas reserves.[37] In 2017, the Kofi Annan Commission report would reiterate the need for the people of the Arakan to be included in economic processes and to benefit from such projects.

Daewoo International also dabbled in the arms trade with the military junta. It is alleged that in 2002

Daewoo International signed a contract worth over $100 million with the junta to construct a factory and transfer technology that would allow the junta "to produce tens of thousands of six varieties of cannon shells a year."[38] In 2006, the prosecutor's office in South Korea began its investigation of Daewoo leadership for alleged shipments of military weapons to Myanmar. By 2007, the prosecutor had charged 14 officials from Daewoo for "conspiring to illegally export weapons to the Burmese military regime."[39] To date, this is the only known prosecution of a corporation that was held accountable for aiding and abetting the junta.

This situation did not deter POSCO from making the same egregious mistake, however. Justice for Myanmar, an NGO campaigning for justice and accountability for the people of Myanmar, reported that in 2017 POSCO made plans to sell a multipurpose vessel to the junta, and by 2019 the ship, outfitted with assault weapons, was delivered to Myanmar.[40] Justice for Myanmar and Korean NGOs filed a complaint with the Korea OECD National Contact Point regarding the transfer. The Korea NCP rejected the complaint. This time, the NCP opined that "the threshold for contribution had not been met" and that the activity of the companies in the complaint were not "directly related to the Myanmar military nor its policies on the Rohingya …"[41]

In 2021, civil society groups appeared to have cautiously applauded POSCO's decision to end its relationship with Myanmar Economic Holdings Limited (MEHL), another company owned by the military junta. POSCO indicated that it would purchase Myanmar's stake in its steelmaking business, but would continue to do business in Myanmar.[42] There has been no change in POSCO's operations in the Shwe Gas fields.

British American Tobacco (U.K.) and Rothmans Myanmar Holdings Singapore (Singapore)

In the 1980s and into the 1990s, British American Tobacco (BAT) attempted to establish a joint venture for manufacturing with the junta.[43] BAT was "restricted" to imports and promotion of its products until 1999, when the company acquired Rothmans of Pall Mall International, which owned a stake in a Burmese cigarette factory. BAT began a partnership with MEHL to manufacture and sell cigarettes. In 2003 BAT was facing significant pressure from the U.K. government to withdraw from Myanmar given the junta's violent crackdown on opposition groups.[44] Burma Campaign, an NGO in the U.K., continued to pressure BAT to leave Myanmar. Burma Campaign alleged that the BAT factories earned the military junta significant revenue, which it used to purchase AK-47 assault rifles, and that BAT used child labor.[45] BAT's stake in Rothmans of Pall Mall was sold to an investment house in Singapore.

BAT's fortune changed in 2013 when Myanmar was "opened" for business. BAT reentered the market under a joint venture with IMU Enterprise, part of Sein Wut Hmon Group, a distribution company in Myanmar. Sein Wut Hmon Group would be accused in 2015 of participating in and collaborating with the military junta in land confiscations in the Shan state.[46] Despite reports from various NGOs on the deteriorating conditions for the Rohingya (including but not limited to the massacre in Yan Thei village in Mrauk-U Township),[47] companies continued to operate and work with the military junta.

On the heels of the February 2021 coup, BAT ceased operations in Myanmar without providing an exact reason. The cessation of operations included the sustainable agriculture development program in Kayah state.[48] Not all tobacco companies have left because of the coup, however. Rothmans Myanmar Holdings and MEHL operate a joint venture known as Virginia Tobacco Co. Ltd. Virginia Tobacco currently enjoys a monopoly in the Myanmar market as the producer of the country's popular cigarette brands. In 2020, Rothmans announced it would sue MEHL for transparency over requested donations from Virginia Tobacco.[49] Rothmans alleges that Virginia Tobacco is required to make donations to a disabled veterans fund. Additionally, Rothmans claims that MEHL refused to cooperate with paying bonuses to employees during COVID-19. Rothmans has indicated that it is not aware of how the money was spent. In 2021, the case was filed in Yangon's district court under section 193 of Myanmar Companies Law.[50] Shortly after the coup, one of the owners in the Virginia Tobacco joint venture withdrew their stake in Virginia Tobacco due to the coup.[51]

Future Considerations

The international community must pay particular attention to the role that corporations play in fueling genocide. Despite the existence of the Principles and the U.N. Convention on Genocide, it appears that there is a significant policy gap on this issue that must be rectified. As the Rohingya genocide rages on, the junta clearly has not been deterred in its efforts to perpetuate genocide and crimes against humanity. In fact, corporations appear to be yet another avenue for the junta to complete its policy of annihilation.

It is time for more targeted approaches against corporations to be considered in this arena. What exactly corporations should be held accountable for and how should be identified and clearly outlined in legislation. Of course, a more amicable approach would be for governments around the world to legislate what appropriately constitutes due diligence, removing immunities for companies that decide to work in extremely at-risk markets, and to mandate reparations when there is significant evidence of complicity and aiding and abetting of criminal regimes. As the case of the Rohingya highlights, not all national governments will prioritize human rights and therefore, corporations' home countries must make more efforts to uphold human rights and prevent mass atrocities. Further, mass atrocity prevention frameworks must incorporate corporate actors. The Rohingya genocide, sadly, is not an exception when it comes to the lack of corporate accountability during genocide.[52]

N. Hasan is an advocate working at the intersection of information technology, journalism, human rights, sustainable development goals, displaced persons, and religious freedom. Hailing from a diverse background, Hasan has dedicated his life to positively impacting marginalized communities. He is an expert on Rohingya issues and is involved in the promotion of Rohingya human rights and Rohingya empowerment. He is the founder of the Rohingya Khobor. Twitter: @rohingya

Regina M. Paulose is an attorney based in the U.S., focusing on international criminal law, international human rights, and related intersections. She is the editor of People's Tribunals, Human Rights and the Law (Routledge) and Green Crimes and International Criminal Law (Vernon Press). Twitter: @reginapaulose

Endnotes

1 See Rosenthal, G. (2019, May 29). A brief and independent inquiry into the involvement of the United Nations in Myanmar from 2010 to 2018. https://www.un.org/sg/sites/www.un.org.sg/files/atoms/files/Myanmar%20Report%20-%20May%202019.pdf

2 See, generally, Advisory Commission on Rakhine State, http://www.rakhinecommission.org/.

3 Myint, M. (2016, August 25). *ANP demands cancellation of Kofi Annan-led Arakan State Commission.* The Irrawaddy. https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/anp-demands-cancellation-of-kofi-annan-led-arakan-state-commission.html

4 Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. (2017, August). *Towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine.* P. 9. https://www.kofiannanfoundation.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport_Eng.pdf

5 Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. (2017, August). *Towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine.* P. 22. http://www.rakhinecommission.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport_Eng.pdf

6 Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. (2017, August). *Towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine.* P. 23. http://www.rakhinecommission.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport_Eng.pdf

7 Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. (2017, August). *Towards a peaceful, fair and prosperous future for the people of Rakhine.* Pp. 24–25. http://www.rakhinecommission.org/app/uploads/2017/08/FinalReport_Eng.pdf

8 United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures. *Guiding principles on business and human rights at 10: Taking stock of the first decade.* A/HRC/47/39. Report of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/UNGPs10/Stocktaking-reader-friendly.pdf

9 United Nations Human Rights Special Procedures. *Guiding principles on business and human rights at 10: Taking stock of the first decade.* A/HRC/47/39. Report of the Working Group on the issue of human rights and transnational corporations and other business enterprises. P. 15. https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Issues/Business/UNGPs10/Stocktaking-reader-friendly.pdf

10 Nolan, H. (2022, March 25). *Protecting those who protect human rights: Opportunities and risks for action at the UN.* Stimson Center. https://www.stimson.org/2022/protecting-those-who-protect-human-rights-opportunities-and-risks-for-action-at-the-un/

11 Ruggie, J. G. (2012, June 19). Aung San Suu Kyi signals change in Burma, but investors should proceed with caution. *The Christian Science Monitor*. https://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2012/0619/Aung-San-Suu-Kyi-signals-change-in-Burma-but-investors-should-proceed-with-caution

12 Renshaw, C. (2020, August 10). *Myanmar's military: Its power over business and human rights and the UN Guiding Principles.* Melbourne Asia Review. https://melbourneasiareview.edu.au/myanmars-military-its-power-over-business-and-human-rights-and-the-uns-guiding-principles/

13 Norbhu, T. (2015, December 8). *Myanmar's telecom sector takes off.* World Bank Blog. https://blogs.worldbank.org/ppps/myanmars-telecom-sector-takes

14 Human Rights Watch. (2013). *Reforming telecommunications in Burma.* P. 11. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burma0512_ForUpload.pdf.

15 Ahmed, N. (2013, April 26). The dirty fossil fuel secret behind Burma's democratic fairytale. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/environment/earth-insight/2013/apr/26/fossil-fuel-secret-burma-democratic-fairytale

16 Kelly, M. J. (2011). Ending corporate impunity for genocide: The case against China's state-owned petroleum company in Sudan. *Oregon Law Review, 90*, 419–420. https://ssrn.com/abstract=2041380

17 Al Jazeera. (2020, September 10). *Myanmar military gets billions from profitable business: Amnesty.* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/10/myanmar-military-gets-billions-from-profitable-business-amnesty

18 Choudhury, A. (2020, August 25). *How Facebook is complicit in Myanmar's attacks on minorities.* The Diplomat. https://thediplomat.com/2020/08/how-facebook-is-complicit-in-myanmars-attacks-on-minorities/

19 BBC News. (2018, November 6). *Facebook admits it was used to 'incite offline violence' in Myanmar*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-46105934

20 Rohingya Khobor. (2022, December 16). *California court dismisses Rohingya Facebook case.* https://rohingyakhobor.com/california-court-dismisses-rohingya-facebook-case/

21 Referring to: *Rohingya refugees supported by Victim Advocates International vs. Facebook.* https://www.oecdwatch.org/complaint/rohingya-refugees-vs-facebook/. See also Sawyedullah, M. (2022, November 23). *Your tech, our tears: Rohingya activists call on Facebook to remedy its role in atrocities.* Silicon Republic. https://www.siliconrepublic.com/business/rohingya-muslims-genocide-myanmar-facebook-meta-oecd-complaint

22 Rohingya Khobor. (2022, October 21). *Rohingya demands for remediation from Meta.* https://rohingyakhobor.com/rohingya-demands-for-remediation-from-meta/

23 Mcpherson, P. (2021, September 23). *U.S. court orders Facebook to release anti-Rohingya content records for genocide case.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/business/media-telecom/us-court-compels-facebook-release-records-anti-rohingya-content-report-2021-09-23/

24 *Facebook approves adverts containing hate speech inciting violence and genocide against the Rohingya*. (2022, March 20). Global Witness. https://www.globalwitness.org/en/campaigns/digital-threats/rohingya-facebook-hate-speech/

25 ARNO. (2018, December 21). *Press release – Norway must take action over atrocities uncovered at Telenor tower in Alethankyaw*. https://www.rohingya.org/press-release-norway-must-take-action-over-atrocities-uncovered-at-telenor-tower-in-alethankyaw/

26 OECD Watch. (n.d.). *Committee seeking justice for Alethankyaw vs. Telenor.* Filed December 16, 2019. https://www.oecdwatch.org/complaint/committee-seeking-justice-for-alethankyaw-vs-telenor/

27 *Norwegian exoneration of Telenor in tower massacre 'indefensible,' Rohingya survivors say.* (2022, August 31). Myanmar Now. https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/norwegian-exoneration-of-telenor-in-tower-massacre-indefensible-rohingya-survivors-say/

28 Kaladanpress. (2021, May 31). *Rohingya villagers: UK government loans were used to support genocide.* Kaladan Press Network. https://kaladanpress.com/rohingya-villagers-uk-government-loans-were-used-to-support-genocide/

29 Dunant, B. (2022, September 27). Companies quitting Myanmar provide hollow victories against junta. *Foreign Policy*. https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/09/27/western-companies-leaving-myanmar-totalenergies-telenor-human-rights/

30 National Contact Point for Responsible Business Norway. (2022, October 28). *Update in specific instance – MoU.* https://www.responsiblebusiness.no/news/update-in-specific-instance-mou/

31 *Telecoms tower sites mined by Myanmar military.* (2021, November 5). Myanmar Now. https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/telecoms-tower-sites-mined-by-myanmar-military/

32 Council on Ethics of the Government Pension Global Fund. (2011, May 2). *Recommendation on the exclusion of Daewoo International Corporation, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd., GAIL India and Korea Gas Corporation from the investment universe of the Government Pension Fund Global.* https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/77bc58e7819a4057be75915e74bda8f7/recommendation_burma_020511.pdf

33 Wong-Anan, N. (2006, July 11). *Korean, Indian firms urged to withdraw from Myanmar*. Reuters. https://earthrights.org/wp-content/uploads/shwe-reuters-article.pdf

34 The conflict of interest of NCP, given the fact that Daewoo and KOGAS were Korean companies, was not addressed. OECD Watch. (2008, October 29). *Earthrights International et al. v. Daewoo*. https://www.oecdwatch.org/complaint/earthrights-international-et-al-vs-daewoo/

35 POSCO acquired Daewoo International for well over 2 billion dollars. See POSCO buys Daewoo International for $2.8 billion. (2010, August 30). *The Korea Herald*. https://www.koreaherald.com/view.php?ud=20100830000797

36 Council on Ethics of the Government Pension Fund Global. (2011, May 2). *Recommendation on the exclusion of Daewoo International Corporation, Oil and Natural Gas Corporation Ltd., GAIL India and Korea Gas Corporation from the investment universe of the Government Pension Fund Global.* (Unofficial English translation.) https://www.regjeringen.no/contentassets/77bc58e7819a4057be75915e74bda8f7/recommendation_burma_020511.pdf

37 See Radio Free Asia. (2019, October 31). *Fallow fields, empty tourist attractions as conflict takes toll on economy of Myanmar's Rakhine state*. https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/economy-10312019151917.html. See also EarthRights International. (2006, July 12). *The Shwe Gas Movement: New report: Burma's military dictatorship to gain over US$12 billion in profits from western Burma gas finds* [Press release]. https://earthrights.org/wp-content/uploads/july-12-press-release-final.pdf

38 Hankyoreh. (2006, December 7). *14 indicted for selling weapons technology to Myanmar.* https://english.hani.co.kr/arti/english_edition/e_international/176719.html

39 Cho, V. (2007, November 13). *Daewoo officials, others on trial for exporting weapons to Burma.* The Irrawaddy. https://www2.irrawaddy.com/article.php?art_id=9293

40 Justice for Myanmar. (2022, October 19). *JFM and Korean civil society in support of democracy in Myanmar call for swift indictment over transfer of US$42M Korean warship.* https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/stories/justice-for-myanmar-and-korean-civil-society-in-support-of-democracy-in-myanmar-call-for-swift-indictment-over-transfer-of-us-42m-korean-warship

41 *Korean civil society in solidarity with Rohingya, Korean Transnational Corporation Watch and Justice for Myanmar vs. POSCO*. (2020, December 16). OECD Watch. https://www.oecdwatch.org/complaint/korean-civil-society-in-solidarity-with-rohingya-korean-transnational-corporation-watch-and-justice-for-myanmar-vs-posco/

42 Lee, J., & Kim, C. (2023, April 15). *S.Korea's POSCO C&C says to end Myanmar military-backed joint venture.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/business/skoreas-posco-cc-says-end-myanmar-military-backed-joint-venture-2021-04-16/

43 MacKenzie, R. (2018). "An example for corporate social responsibility": British American Tobacco's response to criticism of Myanmar subsidiary, 1999–2003. *Asia Pacific Policy Studies*, 302. https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/app5.242

44 Macalister, T. (2003, July 2). Minister tells BAT to quit Burma. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/business/2003/jul/03/burma.smoking

45 Macalister, T. (2002, November 11). Clarke embarrassed as attack on Burma goes up in smoke. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/politics/2002/nov/12/uk.smoking

46 Tang, A. (2015, March 26). *Business, military, government seize land for rubber in Myanmar – rights group – TRFN.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-rights-land/business-military-government-seize-land-for-rubber-in-myanmar-rights-group-trfn-idINL3N0WS45D20150326

47 Human Rights Watch. (2013, April 22). *All you can do is pray*. https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims

48 The Irrawaddy. (2021, October 13). *International cigarette firm ditches military-ruled Myanmar.* https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/international-cigarette-firm-ditches-military-ruled-myanmar.html

49 Paing, T. H. (2020, December 26). *Singapore-based tobacco company takes MEHL to court.* Myanmar Now. https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/singapore-based-tobacco-company-takes-mehl-to-court/

50 Paing, T. H. (2021, January 27). *Joint-venture partner urges court to take action in case against MEHL.* https://myanmar-now.org/en/news/joint-venture-partner-urges-court-to-take-action-in-case-against-mehl/

51 The Irrawaddy. (2021, February 9). *Singapore's Lim Kaling exits firm with ties to Myanmar military conglomerate.* https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/singapores-lim-kaling-exits-firm-ties-myanmar-military-conglomerate.html

52 See Kelly, M. (2013, June). Prosecuting corporations for genocide under international law. *Harvard Law and Policy Review*. https://harvardlpr.com/wp-content/uploads/sites/20/2013/06/Prosecuting-Corporations-for-Genocide-Under-International-Law.pdf

Nur Begum, center, who believes she is between 14 and 16 years old, prepares to walk to her husband's house in the Rohingya refugee camp at Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh in November 2017. Arranged marriages like hers, which often include dowry payments, are common among the Muslim Rohingya. (Allison Joyce, Getty Images)

Deconstructing Dowry: A Call for NGOs to Examine Underlying Social and Economic Factors in the Rohingya Camps

Camilla Gray and Umme Tamima

This article implores nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) to rethink the way they combat dowry, underscoring how honor and *purdah* are integral to the practice's proliferation in the Rohingya camps. Dowry has become one of the greatest concerns the Rohingya community faces, particularly given its relationship with child marriage, polygamy, and human trafficking. One way NGOs attempt to counter this practice is by sensitizing the Rohingya community to its harmful nature and inconsistency with Islamic teachings. NGOs also frequently collaborate with religious leaders to communicate this message, enlisting their support as advocates against the practice. However, this ethnographic study revealed that dowry's prevalence is not due to an ignorance of the Quran's core tenets and that spreading awareness of dowry's un-Islamic character fails to debunk a belief held by the Rohingya community. NGOs' current method for cooperating with religious leaders disregards the indispensable relationship between dowry and honor, resulting in these leaders often being the practice's most harmful perpetrators. Ultimately, the content of NGO sensitization sessions should focus on working against the idea that greater honor can be cultivated and demonstrated through increased dowry pricing and that a woman's worth is determined by her adherence to restrictive understandings of *purdah*.

Introduction

The persecution of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar has engendered one of the largest concentrations of stateless people in the world. Over the past several decades, this ethnoreligious minority, who consider their homeland to be situated in modern-day Rakhine, have endured unbelievable suffering, intergenerational abuse, and systematic discrimination. In 2017, violence reached a genocidal apex, causing nearly 1 million people to flee into neighboring Bangladesh. After crossing the border, the Rohingya population continues to find themselves amid one of the world's most severe humanitarian crises. Despite humanitarian organizations' remarkable efforts, restrictions on movement, shortage of space, and intense population density continue to severely hinder the capacity for basic human needs to be met.

These challenges are even more pronounced for women, as displacement greatly threatens their dignity, security, and mobility. One harmful practice that has become increasingly present since the Rohingya community arrived in Bangladesh is dowry, which consists of the property, cash, or commodities given to a husband by the bride and her family upon marriage. This practice dehumanizes women because it means that they are perceived as burdensome property that will be eventually passed along to the groom's family. Low-earning households, or families with several daughters, have also often come to resort to child marriage, polygamy, and human trafficking to absolve debt.

One way NGOs have attempted to work against this practice is by setting up awareness sessions for Rohingya community stakeholders on issues related to dowry. For the vast majority of the Rohingya population, matters of religion seem to hold significant importance. In recognizing this, nearly all NGOs structure their awareness sessions on demonstrating that dowry is not a tenet of Islam, and they involve religious leaders in the distribution of such messages. Discussions also largely focus on the harmfulness of the practice to the livelihoods of Rohingya women. However, this ethnographic study conducted in the Rohingya camps reveals that the prevalence of dowry is not related to the population's unfamiliarity with Islamic teachings or an unawareness of its negative impact on women's rights. Instead, it is primarily driven by a shared understanding that the practice functions to maintain and elevate individual and familial honor. Across the camp context, brides' families are compelled to engage in hypergamy, resulting in many accruing exorbitant debts to ensure their daughters marry men well positioned within society. Due to dowry, Rohingya girls' lives must be increasingly controlled by families, and their worth has been monetized through adherence to restrictive understandings of *purdah* – a South Asian Muslim tradition that requires women's seclusion.

This article contends that NGOs should reconsider their present strategies for mitigating the harmful effects of dowry. Awareness sessions on the un-Islamic and dangerous nature of the practice, as well as collaboration with religious leaders who continue to request payment for their sons, ignore the intrinsic relationship between dowry and honor, and they fail to effectively work against dowry. To illustrate this, an overview is first provided on dowry and its current impact on the Rohingya population obtained from this ethnographic study conducted in the camps and from preexisting research. The article then outlines the existing strategies employed by NGOs to tackle the issue of dowry. Subsequently, it provides an analysis that explores the limitations of this approach. By acknowledging and highlighting the significance of honor and *purdah*, this article concludes by recommending that NGOs should shape their engagement strategies around the actual beliefs and perspectives of the Rohingya community regarding dowry, rather than superimposing their own preconceived notions about the community on their programs.

Methodology and Scope

This article is based on three months of ethnographic research conducted in the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Semistructured focus group discussions (FGDs) were undertaken with different community stakeholder groups, including 320 women, 112 male religious leaders, and a small sample of community leaders (*mahjis*) and men from the camps. These discussions with the Rohingya community were largely undertaken in Camps 3 and 4, but a small number of other FGDs were completed in

Camp 4-extension, 11, 12, 22, and 24. This sample is limited in size; in turn, this article does not claim to be exhaustive or statistically representative. The Rohingya community is not monolithic, and conditions, concerns, and intercommunal dynamics vary greatly across the camps. For example, it is often considered that the camps closest to the southern tip of Bangladesh, near the township of Teknaf, are inhabited by those who come from a lower socioeconomic background, whereas in the Kutapolong camps, many residents more often possess connections to family in Malaysia and generally possess greater wealth. Further research is needed to comprehensively understand the differential impacts of this practice on the Teknaf Rohingya community in comparison with the Kutapalong community.

These FGDs with Rohingya community members were triangulated with one-on-one interviews with humanitarian workers and extensive desk research on dowry and gender in the Rohingya camps. Within this study, humanitarian workers from 10 different organizations were spoken with. Information gathered during these discussions is anonymized, and specific organizations are only mentioned if information has been gathered from public sources. These discussions with humanitarian workers were vital in understanding NGOs' strategies for tackling dowry and their perceived impact. It should be noted that dowry practices in the Rohingya community have received relatively minimal academic analysis, and as a result, this article had to rely on studies undertaken in India and Bangladesh, where the practice is also prevalent, to unpack why dowry is worsening.

Dowry is influenced by attitudes toward gender and social hierarchy and informed by surrounding economic conditions. Currently, in the Rohingya camps, restrictions have been put in place that prevent most community members from being legally employed. Long-standing changes in this practice will likely require shifts in the way women's worth is understood and providing the community with alternative means for men to become economically solvent. Moreover, while NGOs employ a range of methods to address the issue of dowry in the camps, this article specifically seeks to evaluate the content of dowry-related awareness sessions and collaborations with religious leaders to disseminate information on the practice. The outcome of this research is not to suggest that awareness sessions on gender and dowry have no positive effect on how the community perceives women's rights. Many Rohingya women in the FGDs articulated feeling empowered by discussions during these awareness sessions through understanding the negative impact dowry can have on many facets of their lives. In a U.N. Women report, it was also noted that those who participated in gender-related activities were more open to changes in gender roles compared to those who did not.[1] Thus, this article seeks only to critique the notion that greater communal awareness of dowry's harmful and un-Islamic nature is the sole solution to the practice, particularly when this information is disseminated through religious leaders, who are often the practice's greatest adherents.

It is important to acknowledge that this article presents only an initial hypothesis regarding potential solutions and alternatives to the content of NGO awareness sessions. Prioritizing the perspectives of the Rohingya community is crucial for the success of any humanitarian or development intervention in the camps. To ensure this, it is necessary to engage Rohingya women in a dialogue on how they believe awareness sessions for men and community leaders can be improved. During this study, women and other community stakeholders recognized the value of these awareness sessions but also elucidated that the issues discussed during these sessions are perhaps not the driving forces behind dowry's proliferation. Greater insight into Rohingya women's perspective on how these initiatives can be improved to best support women is vital. It is also likely that women themselves have a strong understanding of which men and religious leaders could serve as legitimate advocates against dowry.

NGO Awareness Sessions to Combat Dowry

One of the ways that NGOs have attempted to address the issue of dowry in the Rohingya camps is by running awareness sessions on the harmful and un-Islamic nature of the practice. These sessions normally involve humanitarian organizations gathering community stakeholder groups (women, men, religious leaders, mahjis, et al.) in a multipurpose center run

by an NGO to discuss issues surrounding dowry. For example, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) put together sessions for influential persons in the refugee community to discuss a variety of topics such as mental health, dowry, early marriage, family and community violence, and polygamy.[2] Humanitarian workers from several NGOs highlighted that discussing the un-Islamic nature of dowry was often at the forefront of such awareness sessions. They emphasized that the practice of dowry within the Rohingya community is a result of their limited understanding of Islam, a perspective seemingly supported by the prevalent opinion among Bangladeshi and foreign humanitarian workers that the religious knowledge of the Rohingya lags significantly behind that of their Bangladeshi Muslim counterparts. Often, these discussions were tinged with a notable degree of prejudice, wherein the values and ideals of the Rohingya community were dismissed rather than respected, leading to a perception of them as a more "primitive" community whose actions were attributed to their lack of education.

One humanitarian worker also described how their organization creates audio and visual material on issues related to dowry, which is then distributed to nearly all NGOs that work within the Rohingya context. Across the camps, this material was suggested to be deployed as a way of making community members more conscious of how harmful dowry can be to the lives of women. For example, in one of the visual materials, a bride's parents were depicted as being compelled to provide dowry even though they could not afford to do so. Within the video, a cartoon version of a religious leader describes how the practice negatively impacts the community. They are advised not to demand dowry from the bride's parents by pointing out the further consequences of dowry practices for domestic and marital relationships. Some religious leaders also articulated that they were provided with a speaker to play the audio material as a means of spreading such messages around the camp. These discussions with humanitarian workers overarchingly demonstrated a focus on two key topics when discussing dowry: that it is not Islamic, and that it negatively impacts the lives of women.

Disentangling Dowry from Islam

One area where NGOs fall short in their efforts to combat dowry effectively is centering their awareness sessions around the idea that dowry does not align with the fundamental principles of Islam. In a Western humanitarian context, confusion is often a product of misunderstanding the distinction between dowry and dower. A dower, or a *mahr*, is an obligation imposed by Islam on husbands as a mark of respect for their new wife and a method of protection against divorce or their husband's death.[3] In Islamic law, there is no specific amount of dower that must be paid, but it is obligatory for a husband to provide whatever amount is decided between the two families. It should be noted that there are a small number of individuals in the Muslim community who argue that dowry is part of Muslim practice due to the Prophet Muhammad's presentation of some valuables during his daughter Fatima's wedding. These valuables consisted of very simple items, such as a leather mattress, a flour grinder, and two pitchers. For many, this presentation of gifts was because the husband, Ali, was essentially the son of the Prophet and had lived with him since he was a child. Ali also did not own anything when he married Fatima, compelling the Prophet to provide some valuables for the couple to start a new life. Due to this, it is overarchingly believed that dowry is a practice condoned for Muslims.[4]

Rohingya community members spoken with understood dowry to be something un-Islamic. All Rohingya respondents detailed how dowry was prohibited in Islam and was not a practice that could be found within the Quran. Religious leaders also described how the belief that dowry is not Islamic is widespread in the camps. Other reports corroborate this finding, with Rohingya community members noting that "the dowry system is our culture, not our religion. According to our religion, it is not allowed," and "the dowry system should be banned because it is not allowed according to Islamic law and the Holy Qu'ran. The camp authorities should collaborate with the religious leaders in the camps to finish this system."[5]

Instead, the custom of dowry in South-Asian Muslim contexts is largely considered to originate from Hindu marriage practices.[6] This marriage tradition was first practiced as wedding gift-giving among higher

Hindu castes.[7] To complete the marriage ritual, the bridegroom was offered a special gift by the bride's parents as repayment for their daughter's lack of financial contribution. Dowry was historically practiced in upper castes, whereas in lower castes, where women were more likely to be economic contributors to their families, *mahr* was more common.[8] There are few cases where the requested *mahr* amounts to a significant burden to the groom, whereas it is common for a dowry to amount to several times more than the total annual household income of the bride's family. In Bangladesh, this practice first appeared among wealthy families in urban areas during the 1950s, with the earlier practices being described as completely different in nature from what is seen today.[9] There was neither compulsion nor haggling, and this shift from voluntary gift-giving in the upper classes to a precondition for any marriages, even those in rural areas, can arguably not be explained only by looking at the Hindu roots of this practice.

Dowry, Honor, and Hypergamy

Instead of being merely a traditional practice, dowry in the Rohingya camps and across South Asia at large has evolved into a way to maintain, elevate, and demonstrate honor and one's position in the social hierarchy. The main function of marriage negotiation in South Asia can be viewed as a means to balance disparities in status, education, and social standing between two families. Shahana Nasrin frames her study of dowry in Bangladesh through the lens of hypergamy – a system of selecting a spouse of higher status in terms of social, political, economic, or educational background.[10] As a result, the amount of dowry is often perceived as an investment by the bride's family in the hopes of acquiring increased social and economic status.[11] This logic goes some way to explaining the outcome of results during FGD discussions with Rohingya women. It was articulated that many Rohingya parents believed that a greater dowry should be provided to sons who are from well-respected families, educated, and financially secure. Men from good families – such as sons of religious leaders, *mahjis*, teachers, and others who are respected in the community – often requested the highest dowry. These leaders often did not directly participate in the dowry-demanding conversation and instead would involve someone from the family to bring up the subject of dowry with the bride's parents. One group of Rohingya women described how they knew of *mahjis* and imams who asked for gold buttons for their punjabis as a way of showing off the dowry they have received. From this comment, dowry may revolve around the flaunting of status in the Rohingya camps, making an element of class systems and a way of maintaining the superiority of higher groups over lower ones.[12] Rohingya women from this study noted that imams believe that they are well-known and knowledgeable members of the community, and, in turn, request a higher dowry. Many women felt frustrated by the contradiction of having religious leaders speaking out against the practice in public while demanding large sums for dowry in private. Partnering with Rohingya religious leaders to spread these messages has proven to be relatively ineffective, as these leaders often contribute significantly to the perpetuation of this practice. Ultimately, overlooking the connection between social status and the dowry system has led to a disconnect between the content of awareness sessions and the actual reasons for the prevalence of dowry in the camps.

This study also revealed that increased value was placed on young men who are educated and possess financially secure jobs, resulting in many of those who were educated within the Rohingya community being complicit in this harmful practice. Some of those surveyed said teachers asked for a higher dowry price because of their educated and employed status.[13] Dowry was labeled as always necessary, but many Rohingya women from this study believed that sons who earn income deserve more dowry compared with those in the community who are unemployed.

It is not only the members of the groom's family who are exerting pressure to receive a dowry; the bride's family is also complicit in this practice. A daughter's chances of happiness and the family's prestige will increase if she is married to a good family, and a groom will also gain prestige as a high dowry demonstrates a high measure of the worth of the son and family.[14] Gaining employment, education, and financial security garners honor and respect in the Rohingya context and is deemed a justifiable reason to request more money from brides' families. Much like what has been seen across Bangladesh in recent years, Rohingya parents are wanting to marry their

daughters to educated men with higher incomes.[15] Thus, brides' families do not employ dowry as a means to provide financial stability to an unemployed husband and boost his capacity to provide for the future family but rather as a way of ensuring that their daughter is married to someone who already possesses the capacity to earn and provide for themselves. Therefore, the social and economic factors that exacerbate the prevalence of dowry within the Rohingya community are far more complex and nuanced than previously recognized. Addressing these underlying dynamics is central to designing effective strategies that challenge the harmful practice of dowry.

Purdah

The specific way in which a woman's honor is determined plays a dramatic role in heightening the harmful nature of dowry. In the Rohingya community, honor is described to be something obtained through the public performance of certain actions, cultivation of specific qualities, and general adherence to religious and social norms.[16] However, the construction of honor in the camps is distinctly gendered in nature. For men, honor can be cultivated through increased piety, wealth, and education, but for women, honor is only something that can be lost. A woman's honor also determines the price of a dowry and is something that is often defined by her adherence to *purdah*. This South Asian tradition is a pervasive concept, consistently mentioned by religious leaders, men, and women as an ideal that men must enforce and women must strive to keep up. *Purdah* has shown itself to control female action prior to marriage, and a breach of this tradition can have dire monetary ramifications for the family.

As a result, *purdah's* interpretation has become increasingly restrictive, morphing from something that requires women to cover themselves from wrist to ankle when outside the home to limiting a woman's mobility so that she cannot leave the home without being accompanied by a male family member. When a girl reaches puberty, she is removed from public spaces, as this arena "belongs to men, boys, children, and to some extent married women."[17] Some religious leaders spoken with for this study suggested that they perceived even a woman's voice to be a breach of *purdah*, resulting in the restriction of the capacity for women to go to school or even speak within the confines of their homes. It was noted by a Rohingya mosque committee member that "purdah means not only covering from top to toe, but a woman's voice can also be considered [in it]. If a woman speaks … loud from inside the house, and a man hears it and thinks … how beautiful she might be, creating this desire is also a sin. … So a woman should speak in a low voice to maintain her *purdah*."[18] Dowry has meant that adolescent girls must become invisible to ensure they are not burdensome to the family. Attempting to deconstruct these restrictive conceptions of women's honor during awareness sessions will potentially aid in more effectively targeting the root causes of why dowry exists, and in turn, yield greater success in NGO programming.

Rethinking Awareness Sessions

There is a pressing need to reevaluate the design and delivery of awareness sessions conducted in the Rohingya camps. These sessions primarily concentrate on illustrating the divergence between the practice the divergence between the practice of dowry and the fundamental tenets of Islam and the detrimental consequences this practice has for women's well-being. Discussions with Rohingya community members demonstrated that while these points are indeed crucial, they fail to address the intricate sociocultural matrix in which dowry is embedded. Honor dynamics and the tradition of *purdah* play pivotal roles in perpetuating the dowry system and exacerbating its danger to women's lives. The omission of these aspects of dowry from current awareness has resulted in the implementation of strategies that are not holistic or all-encompassing.

Dowry's relationship with restrictive interpretations of *purdah*, which equate a woman's worth with her adherence to seclusion and modesty, should also be challenged. Women during FGDs articulated the great value in deconstructing restrictive patriarchal values during awareness sessions. For women, these conversations have empowered them within the community, encouraging them to question and rethink norms that have promoted their subordination. However, it was equally stressed that despite a better understanding of their rights, dowry continues to persist. Thus, while awareness sessions are largely regarded as valuable, their capacity to effectively address dowry as they stand remains limited. To bolster the effectiveness of such sessions, they

must be imbued with a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the community's sociocultural fabric.

This article makes a first attempt to outline potential content that could be included in discussions with the Rohingya community. However, NGOs must open dialogue with Rohingya women and other stakeholders to gain a more comprehensive grip on the realities of why dowry exists and how the community believes this practice can be ameliorated. These discussions should not shy away from the influence of socioeconomic stratification and how dowry is perceived as a mechanism for achieving or demonstrating social status.

Another essential aspect that should be rethought is the current reliance on religious leaders to disseminate antidowry messages. While on the surface this may seem like an effective strategy given religious leaders' capacity to reach large crowds during Friday prayer, it overlooks the complex role these leaders often play as significant perpetrators of dowry. Instead, NGOs need to identify and collaborate with community influencers who can champion the cause without such conflicts of interest. Rohingya women likely have important insights into what religious leaders are genuine in their desire to see the practice eradicated from the community and should be relied upon in the development of future initiatives related to dowry. Rather than taking at face value all Rohingya religious leaders' claim that they stand against dowry because it is un-Islamic, investigation must be undertaken to find individuals who are genuine advocates against dowry.

Conclusion

To address dowry in the Rohingya camps, NGOs must reassess their current methodologies, which currently lean heavily on spreading awareness about the practice's nonconformity to Islamic principles and its negative impact on women. This approach is limited in its success as it bypasses critical sociocultural elements that fuel the practice, such as the dynamics of honor and the implications of the *purdah* tradition. This ethnographic study underscores the need for a more nuanced understanding of dowry and its proliferation in the Rohingya community. It is evident that dowry is perceived as a marker of social prestige, tied intimately to familial honor, hypergamy, and the observance of *purdah*. Future NGO initiatives should prioritize a more comprehensive, community-centric approach to combating dowry. Sensitization sessions should work against the belief that higher dowry equates to greater honor and that a woman's worth is predicated on her adherence to restrictive interpretations of *purdah*. Simultaneously, they should foster dialogue that challenges the harmful dynamics of honor and hypergamy, thereby empowering the members of the Rohingya community to reevaluate and reshape their attitudes towards dowry. By doing so, NGOs can more effectively address the root causes of dowry and contribute to sustainable change within the Rohingya community.

Camilla Gray has a master's degree in Theological Studies from Harvard University, with a focus on Islamic studies and the intersection of religion and humanitarianism. From 2021 to 2023, she traveled several times to Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, to conduct field research on NGOs' relationships with religious leaders and prevailing belief systems in the Rohingya camps. She is currently a security adviser for the International NGO Safety Organization in Northeast Syria. She previously has worked with the United States Institute of Peace, the International Committee for the Red Cross, Oxfam, and the United Nations Development Programme. Twitter: @Camillagray

Umme Tamima, a humanitarian worker in Bangladesh, began her journey by volunteering with Oxfam in livelihood programs during the Rohingya crisis of 2017. Over three years, she worked with Rohingya women, empowering them and advocating for their rights. Transitioning to the World Food Programme (WFP), she now contributes her expertise to the accountability team, ensuring efficient aid distribution. Previously, she served in protection roles with ActionAid Bangladesh.

Endnotes

1 UNHCR. (2022). *Four years on: Shifting gendered perceptions and experiences.* Gender in Humanitarian Action Working Group. P. 27

2 IOM Bangladesh. (2020, October). *Rohingya humanitarian crisis response: Monthly situation report.* IOM UN Migration. https://bangladesh.iom.int/sites/g/files/tmzbdl1006/files/documents/IOM%20Rohingya%20Crisis%20Response_External%20Sitrep_October%202022.pdf, p. 4

3 Singh, R. K. (2010). Law of Dower (*Mahr*) in India. *Journal of Islamic Law and Culture, 12*(1). P. 59

4 Waheed, A. (2009). Dowry among Indian Muslims: Ideals and practices. *Indian Journal of Gender Studies, 16*(1)

5 Centre for Peace and Justice, Brac University, & The Asia Foundation. (2021, June 14). *Perceptions of Rohingya refugees: Marriage and social justice after cross-border-displacement.* XCEPT. https://www.xcept-research.org/publication/perceptions-of-rohingya-refugees-marriage-and-social-justice-after-cross-border-displacement/. Pp. 6, 7

6 Huda, S. (2006). Dowry in Bangladesh: Compromizing women's rights. *South Asia Research, 26*(3), 249–268. https://doi.org/10.1177/0262728006071707

7 Nasrin, S. (2012). *Crime or custom?: Dowry practice in rural Bangladesh.* Lambert Academic Publishing. P. 28

8 Bradley, T., Subramaniam, M., & Tomalin, E. (Eds.) (2009). *Dowry: Bridging the gap between theory and practice*. Zed Books Ltd. P. 5

9 Nasrin, S. (2012). *Crime or custom?: Dowry practice in rural Bangladesh.* Lambert Academic Publishing. P. 29

10 Nasrin, S. (2012). *Crime or custom?: Dowry practice in rural Bangladesh.* Lambert Academic Publishing. P. 31

11 Nasrin, S. (2012). *Crime or custom?: Dowry practice in rural Bangladesh.* Lambert Academic Publishing

12 Chowdhury, F. D. (2016). *Islam and Women's Income: Dowry and Law in Bangladesh*. Routledge. P. 82

13 Some humanitarian Rohingya workers stated that after learning about the harmful nature of dowry practices, they and others who were educated stopped requesting dowry. However, this response should be tempered by the fact that these humanitarian workers would likely lose their jobs if they openly admitted to taking dowry. The practices, reasoning, and perception of dowry are far from monolithic in the camps.

14 Mandelbaum, D. G. (1998). *Women's seclusion and men's honor: Sex roles in North India, Bangladesh, and Pakistan.* The University of Arizona Press. P. 68

15 Chowdhury, F. D. (2016). *Islam and Women's Income: Dowry and Law in Bangladesh*. Routledge

16 Coyle, D., Sandberg-Petterson, M. S., & Jainul, M. A. (2020). *Honour in Transition: Changing gender norms among the Rohingya.* IOM & UN Women. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/06/Honour%20in%20Transition-reduced.pdf, p. 14

17 Save the Children. (n.d.). *Results for Children: 2014 Annual Review.* https://www.savethechildren.org/content/dam/usa/reports/annual-report/annual-report/sc-2014-annualreport.pdf, p. 24

18 Coyle, D., Sandberg-Petterson, M. S., & Jainul, M. A. (2020). *Honour in Transition: Changing gender norms among the Rohingya.* IOM & UN Women. https://asiapacific.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/Field%20Office%20ESEAsia/Docs/Publications/2020/06/Honour%20in%20Transition-reduced.pdf, p. 21

References

ACAPS. (2022, May 2). *Bangladesh: Protection implications of polygamous marriages in the Rohingya camps*. ACAPS-NPM Analysis Hub. https://www.acaps.org/fileadmin/Data_Product/Main_media/20220502_acaps_thematic_report_protection_implications_of_polygamy.pdf

The Asia Foundation and Centre for Peace and Justice, Brac University. (2020, August). *Navigating at the margins: Family, mobility and livelihoods amongst Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.* https://asiafoundation.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Navigating-the-Margins_Family-Mobility-and-Livelihoods-Amongst-Rohingya-in-Bangladesh.pdf

Bashar, S. B. (2020). *Contextualizing impermanence: Reevaluating the planning paradigms of Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh* [Masters thesis, The University of Texas at Austin]. Texas ScholarWorks, University of Texas Libraries. http://dx.doi.org/10.26153/tsw/14451

Musawah. (2019). *Comparative legal review of the impact of Muslim family laws on women across commonwealth Asia and Africa.* Sisters for Change. https://www.musawah.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/Comparative-Legal-Review-Impact-Muslim-Family-Laws-on-Women-Commonwealth-Asia-Africa.pdf

UN Women. (2019, 24 January). *16 days of activism against gender based violence in Cox's Bazar*. https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/16-days-activism-against-gender-based-violence-cox-s-bazar

Al Mamun, M. A., Bailey, N., Koreshi, M. A., & Rahman, F. (2018, November). *Violence against women within the Rohingya community: Prevalence, reasons and implications for communication.* BBC Media Action. https://downloads.bbc.co.uk/mediaaction/pdf/research/briefing-violence-against-rohingya-women.pdf

The Rohingya living in the vast refugee camps in Cox' Bazar, Bangladesh, are officially stateless and have no basic rights thanks to policies pursued by the military government of Myanmar. (Mondal Falgoonee Kumar/iStock via Getty Images)

Statelessness – the Root Cause of the Rohingya Crisis – Needs to Be Addressed

Md Mahbubur Rahman

Executive Summary

Rohingyas, who make up the world's largest stateless population of more than 3.5 million, are an ethnoreligious minority group originating in Myanmar. Although the ancestors of the Rohingyas and their ancestors have been living in northern Rakhine state since the 8th century, Myanmar does not recognize their citizenship rights. Government-sponsored discrimination, detention, abuse, violence, and torture have been unleashed against them.

In Myanmar, Rohingyas do not seem to have the right to have rights. The country's military government enacted the apartheid-like Citizenship Act in 1982, which made the Rohingyas stateless. They fled persecutions to various countries, including neighboring Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Thailand, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Australia. After the recent genocide of August 2017, only 600,000 out of the total Rohingya population is left in Myanmar. The rest are dispersed around the world as stateless people. Currently, the highest number of Rohingyas – more than 1.6 million – live in Bangladesh. Among them about 1 million are sheltering in the 33 camps of Cox's Bazar, the South-Eastern district of the country, and thousands live in Bhashan Char, an island in the Bay of Bengal.

In the refuge countries including Bangladesh, Rohingyas are denied basic rights and protection because of their statelessness. Intense and continued diplomatic efforts from international organizations – such as the United Nations, European Union, Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) – and regional powers, including China and India, are essential for solving the decades-long Rohingya crisis. A crucial point in resolving the crisis should have been to ensure an end to the Rohingyas' stateless identity.

Introduction

Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) is a South Asian country surrounded by Thailand, Laos, China, India, and Bangladesh.[1] Its population includes various ethnic communities, such as the Karen, Shan, Mon, Chin, Kachin, Rakhine, and Karenni people. The country's Constitution divides Myanmar into seven ethnic states[2] and recognizes 135 distinct ethnic groups.[3] However, the Rohingyas have not been included in this list. Consequently, they have been stripped of their citizenship rights, despite living in the Rakhine state for centuries, and have been rendered stateless[4]. The latest census, in 2014, which reported that Myanmar had a population of more than 51.4 million, excluded the Rohingyas.[5] Many believe that more than 1.1 million Rohingyas lived in Myanmar at the time of the census.[6] But the authorities refused to count them as "Rohingyas"; instead, they used the terms "Bengalis" or "foreigners" to label them.[7]

The Rakhine state of Myanmar is one of the poorest among the country's seven states.[8] The state was known as "Arakan" until 1989.[9] The entire country changed its name from "Burma" to "Myanmar," also in 1989.[10] In Rakhine state, apart from a few hundred Hindus and Christians, the vast majority of Rohingyas are Muslims, and they constitute 4% of Rakhine's population.[11] The Rohingyas constituted 1% of the total population of Myanmar, and 45% of the country's total Muslim population.[12] However, this estimate was made before 2017, when the military government perpetuated a massacre against the Rohingyas and expelled about 90% of them from the country.[13] Rohingyas are Muslims, but Buddhism is the state religion of Myanmar, and almost 90% of the population practices Theravada Buddhism.[14] Lynn observed that in the last 35 years the total Muslim population of Myanmar decreased to 2.3% from 3.9% (excluding Rohingyas).[15] This decrease can be contrasted with the Islamophobic claim of Myanmar's leaders that the Muslim population of Myanmar could be the majority.[16]

Following Myanmar's independence from Britain in 1948, the civilian governments recognized Rohingyas as citizens and issued them identity cards as Burmese citizens.[17] This recognition continued until 1962, when the military took political power and started to curtail the Rohingyas' citizenship rights.[18] The military junta suspended the 1947 Constitution and introduced a new one in 1974. Following this new Constitution, the military authorities disqualified many Rohingyas as Burmese citizens.[19] The authorities then enacted the 1982 Citizenship Act, which completely denied the Rohingyas' citizenship rights.[20] Since 1982, the Rohingya communities have been living in Myanmar but have been denied the "right to have rights."[21] Thus, the long history of discrimination, persecution, and violence against the Rohingyas began in 1962, and these stateless people are still suffering this misery.

Literature Review

A stateless person may be defined as one not having a nationality from any country. In other words, no country recognizes the person as belonging to it. According to Article 1 of the 1954 Convention on Statelessness, this term means, "not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law."[22] The exact number of stateless people in the world is unknown, but the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimates that this figure is more than 10 million).[23] However, according to the UN, so far, the UNHCR has managed to count only 4.3 million people as stateless.[24] Of them, the Rohingyas constitute the largest group.[25] The total Rohingya population is more than 3.5 million, but the majority is stateless and is scattered around the world.[26] The highest number of stateless Rohingyas currently live in Bangladeshi camps, since their expulsion from Rakhine.[27] However, the Bangladeshi authorities do not recognize these Rohingyas as refugees; instead, they label these displaced people as Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals, or FDMNs.[28]

Many critics have observed that the Rohingyas' marginalization and persecution stem from their statelessness.[29] Chicker, Debnath, Chatterjee, & Afzal, and Eisenman observed that the Myanmar government expeditiously stripped the Rohingyas of their nationality and forced the condition of statelessness on them.[30] Caster noted that without any citizenship rights, the Rohingyas were also deprived of their human rights, including education, health care, and freedom of movement in Myanmar.[31] The Myanmar government's "Operation Dragon King" (Naga Min) program, designed to check the Rohingyas' citizenship registration cards, prompted the first expulsion of Rohingyas in 1978.[32] The next two influxes (in 1991-92 and 2012), during which a significant number of Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh, were the consequences of the 1982 Citizenship Act.[33] The largest human exodus in Asia since the Vietnam War occurred in August 2017, when the Rohingyas fled in droves to Bangladesh.[34] This incident was also the consequences of Rohingya statelessness. The Time magazine journalist Feliz Solomon termed it the "exodus of the stateless."[35]

The stateless Rohingya refugees do not have any identity or legal documents. This lack of documentation makes them susceptible to discrimination.[36] For example, confiscation of land belonging to the Rohingyas has been widespread in Rakhine since the 1990s. Until today, many members of the Myanmar armed forces have occupied Rohingya lands without compensating the owners.[37] When a Rohingya individual loses lands in Myanmar, he or she becomes homeless in addition to being stateless.[38] The Rohingyas, who do not have citizenship rights, also do not have access to education, health care, or employment, and they are unable to participate in the political process.[39] Kaufman and Lewa observed that more than 60% of Rohingya children between the age of 5 and 17 years have never been enrolled in any school in Myanmar.[40] The illiteracy rate among Rohingya children is nearly 80%, as they are excluded from accessing formal education.[41] So, the Rohingyas continue to flee their country in the face of this deprivation of their rights and state-sponsored persecutions and violence. However, the countries where they take shelter – for example, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Indonesia, India, and Pakistan – do not recognize the Rohingyas as refugees due to their stateless status.[42]

The Stages of Rohingya Statelessness

The authorities in Myanmar accepted the Rohingyas as a separate indigenous ethnic group immediately after the country's independence in 1948. The Rohingyas then enjoyed all rights as citizens.[43] However, the Rohingyas' miseries ensued after the military takeover in the 1960s.[44] Over the years, military governments have created, pursued, and implemented various discriminatory policies to legally exclude the Rohingyas from their citizenship rights.[45] The Rohingya political activist Nay San Lwin noted that "Rohingya statelessness is not an accident of history, it was deliberately produced by the Myanmar military."[46]

From 1948 to 1962: Civil Administration – Full Citizenship for Rohingyas

Myanmar achieved its independence following an agreement, signed on October 17, 1947, between British Prime Minister Clement Attlee and Burmese Constituent Assembly President Thakin Nu.[47] Article 3 of the Nu-Attlee Agreement identified Rohingyas as bona fide citizens of Myanmar.[48] In independent Myanmar, individuals were not required to belong to an officially recognized race to be a citizen. Thus, the Rohingyas were considered citizens.[49] The first prime minister of Myanmar, U Nu, granted special area status, titled "Mayu Frontier Administration (MFA)," to northern Arakan, where the Rohingyas were dominant.[50] Later, the military administration was less inclined to use the term "Rohingya," but the people of MFA continued to describe themselves as such. The term "Rohingya" turned out to be an ethnic and political identity.[51] During the U Nu government, some Rohingya Muslims leaders served as parliament members.[52] One of them, Sultan Mahmud, was the health minister from 1960 to 1962 under the U Nu administration.[53]

From 1962 to 2015: Junta Administration – the Rohingyas are shifted from being Citizens to refugees

General Ne Win's coup in 1962 led to increased ethnic discrimination in Myanmar. His military administration banned all political parties, including MFA, except for his own, the Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP).[54] During this time, "national race," or *taingyintha*, became a preeminent political idea in Myanmar. In

1964, the junta government founded the Institute of Development of National Races to advance this idea.[55] In 1965, the military government scrapped the ethnic Rohingya-language broadcast programs of the Burmese Broadcasting Service.[56] In 1974, the military regime formulated the new Constitution for Myanmar, which recognized 135 races but excluded the Rohingyas.[57] Later that year, the parliament passed the Emergency Immigration Act, requiring all citizens to carry an identity card, called the National Registration Certificate (NRC).[58] However, the Rohingyas were declared ineligible for NRCs; instead, they were offered Foreign Registration Cards (FRCs).[59]

This 1974 act was the first official initiative to formally snatch the Rohingyas' citizenship status, making them foreigners in their motherland.[60] The Burmese authorities launched Operation "Naga Min" (Dragon King) in 1978 to register and verify the status of citizens. This operation expelled more than 250,000 Rohingyas from Myanmar, although most of them managed to return later.[61] The Rohingya repatriation of 1979 was followed by the new Citizenship Law in 1982 that made the Rohingyas legally stateless. This law is the central legal instrument to render Rohingyas stateless.[62] In 1989, color-coded Citizens Scrutiny Cards (CRCs) were introduced in Myanmar: pink cards for full citizens, blue cards for associate citizens, and green cards for naturalized citizens. The Rohingyas did not receive any cards.[63] In 1995, following UNHCR advocacy, the Myanmar authorities issued the white-colored Temporary Registration Card (TRC) to the Rohingyas. This white card allowed the Rohingyas to cast their votes in the 2010 general elections and 2012 by-elections.[64] However, these white cards were subsequently revoked in early 2015, barring cardholders from voting or standing for parliament seats in the 2015 elections.[65] Thus, the Rohingyas lost their voting rights, their last human right in Myanmar, in 2015.

From 2016 to Today: From Suu Kyi to the present Junta Administration – No change of statelessness

The landslide victory of the National League for Democracy (NLD) in the 2015 elections saw Aung San Suu Kyi, the daughter of Myanmar's father of the nation, Aung Sun, become the state counsellor of Myanmar (equivalent to a prime minister). Suu Kyi was the state counsellor and minister of foreign affairs from 2016 to 2021.[66] During this period, the general hope that the miseries of the minority Rohingyas would be alleviated was dashed, and the situation further deteriorated for them.[67] In 2016, during Suu Kyi's regime, the term "Rohingya" was banned from both public and private use.[68] In 2018, the Myanmar authorities allegedly prohibited Radio Free Asia from using this term.[69] Then the worst of all occurred in August 2017, during Suu Kyi's regime. The military unleashed systematic genocide, including widespread murder, rape, and burning of homes of Rohingyas, forcing more than 700,000 to flee Rakhine.[70]

The Myanmar military once again seized power on February 1, 2021, detaining Suu Kyi and other NLD government officials. Since then, nothing positive has happened with regard to the Rohingyas' statelessness status. The remaining 600,000 Rohingyas in Myanmar, including 142,000 confined to camps for internally displaced persons (IDPs), still live without any citizenship rights.[71] The only positive development is that the shadow National Unity Government, formed by the ousted politicians of Myanmar, has declared that it will accept the ethnicity and term "Rohingya" in a future democratic Myanmar.[72]

Since Myanmar's independence, the Rohingyas have been issued different types of identity cards. However, after the 1962 military coup, the Rohingya identity cards were either declared invalid or taken away from them. Each replacement card carried fewer rights and more restrictions. Here is a chronology of Rohingya statelessness and the various cards issued to them as a proof of citizenship:

- **1948:** Full citizenship of Rohingyas with National Registration Certificates (NRCs).
- **1962:** Since November 5, 1962, no NRCs were issued to Rohingyas.
- **1974:** Foreign Registration Cards (FRCs) were given designating Rohingyas as non-nationals under the Emergency Immigration Act.
- **1978:** Verification of citizenship program expelled more than 250,000 Rohingyas
- **1982:** Rohingyas became stateless with the enactment of the Citizenship Act. Three

categories of citizens – full citizens, associate citizens, and naturalized citizens were introduced, based on 135 recognized races.

- **1989:** Color-coded Citizenship Scrutiny Cards (CSC) – pink, blue, and green, respectively – were given. Only a few Rohingyas have been issued a CSC.
- **1995:** Temporary Registration Cards (TRCs), or white cards were given to Rohingyas. White cards did not serve as a proof of citizenship, they only allowed voting rights.
- **2014:** Rohingyas were excluded from the census count, as the then-Myanmar authorities proposed that they would be counted if they agreed to be labeled "Bengalis."
- **2015:** Presidential order for the invalidation of white cards.
- **2016:** Of the 759,672 white cards distributed, 469,183 have been returned and exchanged for new green cards (NVC-National Verification Card).
- **2017:** Most of the Rohingyas (90%) were expelled from Myanmar; they described NVCs as genocide cards
- **2017 to today:** NVCs are offered to Rohingyas that identify them as non-citizens.

Sources: Own data file compiled from multiple sources: Dulal, 2017; Hein, 2018; Minorities at Risk Project, 2004; MSF, 2022; Ullah, 2019

Data Collection for This Study

The required information for this study was collected from both primary and secondary sources. The study uses both qualitative and quantitative approaches in analyzing the issue. Primary data have been collected through open-ended, in-depth interviews and Focused Group Discussions (FGDs) with Rohingya refugees, utilizing the Culture-Centered Approach (CCA). CCA is a meta theoretical framework that works through dialogue with the research participants so that the local meanings of participants' problems and probable solutions can be articulated and understood. The author conducted 41 in-depth interviews and a number of FGDs of the Rohingyas living in Bangladeshi refugee camps from December 2021 to January 2022. The author also conducted 12 in-depth interviews of the Rohingya refugees during his earlier visit to the camp in February 2020. He first visited the Rohingya refugee camps as a Bangladesh Television (BTV) reporter in July 2018 to cover the news of U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres's visit to the Rohingya camps. In addition, the author conducted more than 50 in-depth interviews, joined in a number of FGDs, and recorded participants' observations of the Rohingyas who have been living in New Zealand (resettled through the third-country settlement process of UNHCR). He conducted these interviews in New Zealand between September 2020 and November 2021, while working as a research assistant for the Center for Culture-Centered Approach to Research and Evaluation of Massey University. In addition, the author's experiences working as a television journalist and covering the Rohingya crisis from 2017 to 2020 and his current involvement as a Rohingya researcher have been utilized in this article.

This article refers to only a small number of individual stories. However, the semi structured, in-depth interviews and observations carried out over a six-year period outlined the lived experiences of all the Rohingya refugees. As mentioned above, more than 100 in-depth interviews were conducted during two extensive field visits to Cox's Bazar camps and the author's more than three years of work with the Rohingya refugees living in the city of Palmerston North in New Zealand. In addition, oral histories of the Rohingyas were collected, and participant observations were recorded at different family gatherings, community events, and everyday activities as the author and the Rohingya refugee families interacted with each other in Palmerston North. Also, the author's work with the New Zealand Red Cross as a settlement cross-cultural worker helped him gain insights into the lived experiences of Rohingya families and their cultural and historical backgrounds.

The Culture-Centered Approach to Refugee Studies

The culture-centered approach is an analytical framework that foregrounds the intersection of culture, structure, and agency.[73] In CCA, cultural contexts are the entry points for theoretical insights to describe any community-led solutions experienced by a marginalized community like the Rohingya refugee community.[74] CCA unlocks the definition, meaning,

and design of participation to community voices (Rohingya refugees), with the goal of building theories from below.[75] Those who practice CCA believe that the community is the best place to solve any problem experienced by the cultural members of a subaltern community.[76] Dialogue between researchers and participants appears as a tool in CCA, where the lived experiences of the participants are used to find out community-driven solutions.[77] CCA argues for the central role of community participation through dialogue to define any problem faced by the community – for example, the members of the Rohingya refugee community, who are "systematically erased from dominant discursive spaces of knowledge production."[78]

Statelessness: The Root Cause of the Rohingya Crisis

The Rohingya crisis is a multidimensional quandary that has remained unresolved for more than 75 years, since Myanmar achieved its independence. With the denial of citizenship under the 1982 Citizenship Act, the Rohingyas were rendered stateless in their country, and they lost basic human rights, such as the right to protection. The state-sponsored discrimination and atrocities against the stateless Rohingyas have resulted in a massive wave of forced migrations to neighboring countries.

A Rohingya man (age 65) living in New Zealand, who came to this country from Malaysia under the UNHCR's third-country resettlement process, observed that statelessness was the main cause of their persecutions in Myanmar. It is worth mentioning here that, during our interview, the man continued to use the name "Burma" instead of Myanmar. When this author drew his attention to this, he responded, "My country is Burma, not Myanmar." He said the Burmese government intentionally changed Arakan's name to the state of "Rakhine." He emphatically declared that, "we are Arakanese. We do not know Rakhine or Myanmar. We are Arakanese or Burmese and, of course, Rohingya."

He continued:

We the Rohingyas are not terrorists. But the Burmese military government tried to label us as terrorists. From 1962, we have been oppressed and persecuted. Even we could not go to another village without permission. And, from 1982, we have been totally stateless and have lost all our rights. I think before the independence of Burma in 1948 and some years after the independence, Rohingyas were in good condition. Then in 1962 when the Army took power, Rohingyas lost everything.

The Rohingya refugees are also known as "boat people" in the outside world, as they risked their lives to reach a developed country, voyaging in wooden boats).[79] Rohingyas used to undertake boat journeys from Myanmar to flee genocide and persecution, but now they undertake it to escape cramped and overcrowded camps in Bangladesh in search of a better life.[80] This author spoke with some of these Rohingya "boat people" who came to New Zealand from Malaysia under the third-country resettlement program. They said that they had been forced to leave Myanmar as the authorities denied them citizenship. One Rohingya man (age 33) who fled Myanmar through boat mentioned:

I left my country, Burma (Myanmar) in 2008 without any identity document via a boat. After 18 to 20 days of boat journey, I reached Thailand from Burma. Even some days (during the journey), we had only salty sea water to drink as there was shortage of food in the boat. After some days in Thailand, I managed to enter Malaysia. The whole boat journey was carried out with the help of a "Dalal" (broker). I had to pay him a lot of money.

This man explained his decision to leave the country in the following way:

I had taken the decision to leave my country as I was unable to study or find a job. My siblings are younger than me, but I could not help them. Sometimes even we could not manage our food. In 2008, I was 20 years old. At that time, there was no opportunity in my country to educate ourselves, no opportunity to work. As stateless Muslims, we could not even move freely. The "Maugh" people [Rakhine Buddhists], who lived in my village as neighbors, always insulted us, disturbed us, and even persecuted us. Seeing all this, I had decided to leave my motherland.

A Rohingya female interviewee (age 58) at a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, who fled in August 2017, insisted that they were Rohingyas and loved to be identified as Rohingyas. During the interview, she asked this author to call her a Rohingya as it was her ethnicity and identity. When the elderly lady mentioned the loss of lives of many Rohingyas and their properties, she could not hold back her tears. The interviewee observed:

We are Rohingyas. You should also call us Rohingya. We want to live as Rohingya, we want to go back to our country [Myanmar]. We want to move and walk freely in our country. We have the same rights as the Maugh people [Rakhine Buddhists] are currently enjoying; we want back those rights in Myanmar. We lost everything as we are stateless. In 2017, my sister's daughter and her husband were killed by the Burmese military. We want back our citizenship rights and live in our ancestor's land peacefully.

Rohingya Statelessness Needs to be Addressed

This study argues that although there are many causal factors pertinent to the Rohingya crisis – such as Islamophobia, racism, economic interests, and power dynamics – statelessness is the root cause of all the problems. Resolving the statelessness or Rohingya nationality issue can fix most of other issues. The "stateless" Rohingyas cannot protest misdeeds perpetuated against them or seek redress in the justice system. This author's experience of working on the Rohingya issue for more than six years has made him aware that the legal recognition of Rohingyas as Myanmar citizens would resolve the crisis once and for all. This recognition will enable them to enjoy all the social, political, and civil rights of other citizens. Interviewees for this study also categorically mentioned that the statelessness crisis should be resolved first.

When Rohingyas fled persecution in 1978 and 1991, the UNHCR facilitated their repatriation to Myanmar without addressing the root cause of their forced migration, which was their identity of statelessness. Consequently, persecutions against the Rohingyas have been continuing unabated until today. During the interviews at one of the Cox's Bazar refugee camps, the author encountered a Rohingya man (age 62) who had fled Myanmar three times. The Rohingya man mentioned that in 1978, when the Myanmar military started to scrutinize their citizenship identity, he first came to Bangladesh. Then, in 1991, he came again. Finally, in August 2017, this man fled Myanmar to avoid the atrocities perpetuated by the local authorities. From 1978 to 2017, for 39 years of his life, he could not find a secured place in Myanmar due to his stateless status. He described his to-ing and fro-ing in the following way:

In 1978, I fled to Bangladesh for the first time when the Burmese authorities scrutinized our identity document (citizenship). Then I went back to Burma after 2 to 3 years. Again, in 1991, I was tortured by the Burmese government people and forced to come to Bangladesh. I stayed two years here in Bangladesh. Again, I went back to Burma and tried to stay there. At that time, just after 10 days of our arrival in Burma, torture and persecutions started against us. Then, they had taken our houses, lands, property, and placed us in a camp [i.e., IDP camps]. After living 20 years in IDP camp, I managed to flee and came to Bangladesh in August 2017.

Currently, the highest number of Rohingyas, more than 1.6 million, live in Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi government considers repatriation as the only viable solution to the Rohingya crisis. However, the Rohingyas living in various camps demanded that their citizenship issue should be resolved first. A Rohingya youth (age 29) interviewed by the author at a Cox's Bazar refugee camp, who also fled from Myanmar in 2017, observed that they were interested in going back to Myanmar if citizenship rights had been ensured. He talked about five demands to be fulfilled before their repatriation from Bangladesh to Myanmar:

Our demands are – at first, we want security; then our citizenship right, our freedom of movement, free and fair marriage rights, our religious right of practicing Islamic rituals, and lastly, our right to get government jobs. If these five demands are fulfilled, we will definitely go to our country, Myanmar. Returning of our citizenship right is the main demand. And our lands and other properties taken away by the Burmese government should be returned to us.

There is a saying in the Rohingya language: "*Duniyaye Burmarttun waro Roaingare beshi sine*," meaning "Rohingyas are better known around the world than Myanmar itself."[81] This saying also means that the term "'Rohingya'" is now well accepted all over the world, although the crisis has yet to be resolved.[82] The policy literature produced by various international aid agencies, humanitarian organizations, and think tanks, – such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch (HRW), and Fortify Rights, – argues for amending the 1982 Citizenship Act to enable the Rohingyas to get back their citizenship rights. For example, a Euro Burma Office briefing paper claims that "until the 1982 Citizenship Law is changed, the status of Arakan Muslims (Rohingyas) will remain in limbo.".[83]

Discussion

Citizenship, or nationality, is a fundamental human right that facilitates other rights. According to Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), "everyone has the right to a nationality," and "no one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his nationality."[84] However, despite Rohingyas' substantial historical presence in Myanmar, Myanmar does not recognize the Rohingyas' identity. Rather, the state of Myanmar has converted the Rohingyas to be stateless.[85] According to Linda Bosniak, a reputed scholar, citizenship is composed of four components: legal status, rights, political activity, and identity.[86] The Rohingyas are unable to demand any rights in Myanmar due to the stripping of their legal status. Instead, they have been fleeing state-sponsored persecutions in Myanmar since 1962. Their statelessness has been the key element in their decades-long persecutions in Myanmar. This factor is also a key reason for their lack of protection as refugees outside Myanmar.[87]

In today's world, a citizenship document is the gateway to all rights for a migrant, asylum seeker, or refugee. Conferring citizenship on the Rohingyas, the largest stateless community living in Myanmar and elsewhere, is the best way to begin resolving the crisis. The Kofi Annan Advisory Commission had urged Myanmar to review the Citizenship Law of 1982 to bring peace to Rakhine state.[88] While the National Unity Government enjoys popular support in Myanmar, it does not have the power to address the problem of the Rohingyas' citizenship documentation. The present military government of Myanmar lacks popular support in the country, but it governs the country. The international community, if sincere about resolving the crisis, should put further pressure on the present Myanmar military government to address the Rohingyas' legal citizenship issue. This author's long experience dealing with the Rohingya crisis indicates that a permanent solution to the crisis lies in the Myanmar government's intention to recognize the Rohingyas and grant them citizenship.

Recommendations

- Full legal recognition of the right to citizenship and issuance of appropriate civil documentation to all Rohingya people, irrespective of their residing countries should be ensured first.
- For ensuring citizenship of Rohingyas, the 1982 Citizenship Act of Myanmar should be amended in line with international standards.
- The "Rohingya" ethnic status needs to be ensured.
- Since the military coup of February 2021, Myanmar has been governed by the military, so dialogue between the military and Rohingya is important. Again, as Rakhine state is governed by the Arakan Army, a tripartite dialogue between the militia, the Arakan Army, and the Rohingya should be organized.
- Any repatriation of Rohingyas from any country should be safe, voluntary, and sustainable. The repatriation effort should be supervised by the U.N. bodies.
- Without resolving the root cause of the Rohingya crisis, – that is, without ensuring citizenship rights for the Rohingyas, – no repatriation should be undertaken.
- Community rehabilitation and integration of Rohingyas should be prioritized in Myanmar, including through identifying and combating hate speech.
- The Bangladeshi government should work with the UNHCR to resume the third-country resettlement process for the Rohingyas living in the country.

Conclusion

The current Rohingya crisis is complex. A durable resolution to the problem is difficult. Since the latest Myanmar military coup in February 2021, the crisis has become even more complex. Safe, voluntary, and sustainable Rohingya repatriation from various countries to Myanmar will be the best fix for this crisis. However, unless the Rohingya statelessness issue can be resolved, the repatriation may be futile. This futility was evident in the cases of repatriation after the 1978 and 1991-92 exoduses. A long-term, permanent solution is required that will help the Rohingyas repatriate from Bangladesh and other countries to Myanmar peacefully and stay there safely.

Providing humanitarian aid to the Rohingyas is not the real solution to the crisis. Rather, measures for effective repatriation are required, with the help of regional and international bodies, so that the Rohingya crisis can be permanently ended. International organizations, – such as the United Nations, Organization of Islamic Cooperation, European Union, and ASEAN, – should come forward wholeheartedly to settle the crisis. Especially, genuine interest from Myanmar's two giant neighbors – China and India – is crucial. Myanmar regularly enjoys pivotal support from China. Consequently, critics sometimes describe Myanmar as a "de facto Chinese client state."[89] Myanmar is also the gateway for India's "Act East" policy, and thus is receiving heavy economic attention.[90] These factors point to the genuine interest of these two neighbors, which is crucial for resolving the Rohingya crisis. However, as stated above, the root cause of the crisis – the Rohingyas' stateless identity – needs to be fixed first; unless this issue is resolved, the Rohingya crisis cannot be settled.

Md Mahbubur Rahman is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Communication, Journalism and Marketing of Massey University, New Zealand. His Ph.D. topic is "Construction of Health Among the Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: A Culture-Centered Approach." Rahman began working with Rohingya refugees during the crisis in 2017 as a journalist for Bangladesh Television . Since 2020, he has been working with Rohingya refugees resettled in New Zealand. He has 35 international journal articles with more than 750 citations. He is a co-author of a book chapter titled "Covid-19 and health of Rohingya refugees." Twitter: @btvmahbub

Endnotes

1 Htun, K. M., Lwin, N. N., Naing, T. H., & Tun, K. (2011). ASEAN-India connectivity: A Myanmar perspective. In F. Kimura and S. Umezake (Eds.), *ASEAN-India connectivity: The comprehensive Asia development plan [Phase II, ERIA Research Project Report 2010-7] (pp.151-203). ERIA.*

2 Martin, M. F. (2021). *The importance of ethnic minorities to Myanmar's future. [Asia Policy* Report]. Stimson Center. https://www.stimson.org/2021/the-importance-of-ethnic-minorities-to-myanmars-future/.

3 Cheesman, N. (2015). Problems with facts about Rohingya statelessness. *E-International Relations, 8.*

4 Chaturvedi, M. (2012). *Myanmar's ethnic divide: The parallel struggle.* Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. South-East Asia Research Programme (SEARP). https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/152594/SR131-SEARP-Medha.pdf; Ibrahim, A. (2016). *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's genocide. C. Hurst & Co. Ltd.; Rahman, M. M. (2023). "Health means just to live" at the Rohingya camps of Bangladesh: A culture-centred intervention. Global Journal of Addiction & Rehabilitation Medicine, 7(2): 555710.* https://doi.org/10.19080/GJARM.2023.07.555710.

5 McLaughlin, T. (2015, May 30). Myanmar publishes census, but Rohingya minority not recognized. *Reuters.* https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-migrants-myanmar-census-idUSKBN0OE1S420150529.

6 Ferguson, J. M. (2015). Who's counting? Ethnicity, belonging, and tha national census in Burma/ Myanmar. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde/ Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia, 171(1), 1-28. https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17101022; Leider, J. (2018). Rohingya: The History of a Muslim Identity in Myanmar. Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.115.

7 IRIN (2014, September 15). *Myanmar's Rohingya: What's in a name? [Briefing].*https://www.refworld.org/docid/5417f6204.html.

8 Burke, A. (2016). New political space, old tensions: History, identity and violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar. *Contemporary Southeast Asia, 258-283.* https://doi.org/10.1355/cs38-2d; Smith, M. (2019). *A land in conflict on Myanmar's western frontier. Transnational Institute.*

9 Leider, J. (2018). Rohingya: The History of a Muslim Identity in Myanmar. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History.* https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.115.

10 Chan, A. (2005). The development of a Muslim enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) state of Burma (Myanmar). *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, 3(2), 396-420,* https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64388.pdf; Faye, M. A. (2021). Forced migration from Myanmar to Bangladesh and beyond: Humanitarian response to Rohingya refugee crisis. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action. 6*, **13.** https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00098-4.

11 Ahmed, S., Simmons, W. P., Chowdhury, R., & Huq, S. (2021). The sustainability–peace nexus in crisis contexts: How the Rohingya escaped the ethnic violence in Myanmar but are trapped into environmental challenges in Bangladesh. *Sustainability Science, 16(4), 1201-13.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-00955-6.

12 Chan, B. (2017, November 29). A brief historical background of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. *OWP (Organization for World Peace).* https://theowp.org/a-brief-historical-background-of-rohingya-muslims-in-myanmar/.

13 Ibrahim, A. (2018, April 9). First they came for the Rohingya. *FP.* https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/09/first-they-came-for-the-rohingya-myanmar-genocide-war-human-rights/; Furcoi, S. (2018, August 23). One year on: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2018/8/23/one-year-on-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh; Wells, M. (2019, September 9). "My heart cries": For one Rohingya refugee, a dream of home that may never be fulfilled. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/9/3/20837372/rohingya-refugee-myanmar-bangladesh-camp-violence.

14 Fulton, A. (2022, September 20). Amid Myanmar's civil war, unity emerges. *Christianity Today.* https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/september/myanmar-unity-buddhism-fighting-free-burma-rangers.html; HRW. (2009). *The resistance of the monks: Buddhism and activism in Burma.* https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burmamonks0909web.pdf.

15 Lynn, K. Y. (2016, July 23). Census data shows Myanmar Muslim population has fallen. *Anadolu Agency.* https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/census-data-shows-myanmar-muslim-population-has-fallen/612764.

16 Juergensmeyer, M. (2017, September 11). Burmese Buddhists and the persecution of Rohingya Muslims. *UC Press Blog.* https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/30734/burmese-buddhists-and-the-persecution-of-rohingya-muslims/#:~:text=Burmese%20leaders%20claimed%20that%20the,activists%20monks%20like%20Ashin%20Wirathu.

17 Poling, G. B. (2014, February 13). Separating Fact from Fiction about Myanmar's Rohingya. *Center For Strategic & International Studies.* https://www.csis.org/analysis/separating-fact-fiction-about-myanmar%E2%80%99s-rohingya; Rahman, M. M., & Mohajan, H. (2019). Rohingya: The stateless community becoming the lost generation. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People, 8, 24-36.* http://dx.doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v8i2.621.

18 Ali, M. (2021, December 7). A language in crisis. *Cultural Survival.* https://donate.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/language-crisis-rohingya; Selth, A. (2018). *Myanmar armed forces and the Rohingya crisis. United States Institute of* Peace (USIP). https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/pw140-myanmars-armed-forces-and-the-rohingya-crisis.pdf.

19 Hung, A. H. (2021, August 19). Citizens or foreigners? A socio-legal perspective on persecution of Rohingyas. *New Mandala.* https://www.newmandala.org/citizens-or-foreigners-a-socio-legal-perspective-on-persecution-of-rohingyas/.

20 Alam, J. (2015). The impacts of the Burmese citizenship law on the "'Rohingyaas": A critical appraisal. *Society & Change, 9(2), 61–80; Brinham, N. (2019). Looking beyond invisibility: Rohingyas' dangerous encounters with papers and cards. Tilburg Law Review 24(2), 156–169.* https://doi.org/10.5334/tilr.151.

21 Christopher, C. M. & Schiffer, S. (2019, June 12). *Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: How the absence of citizenship rights acts as a barrier to successful repatriation. LSE Blog.* https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2019/06/12/rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-how-a-lack-citizenship-rights-are-a-barrier-to-successful-repatriation/; D' Costa, B. (2012, July 4). The Rohingya and the denial of the 'right to have rights.' *OCHA*. https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/rohingya-and-denial-%E2%80%98right-have-rights%E2%80%99.

22 UNHCR. (2021). *About statelessness. https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/about-statelessness/.*

23 Refugee Council Australia. (2021). *Statelessness.* https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/stateless/#:~:text=How%20many%20people%20are%20stateless,been%20formally%20identified%20by%20UNHCR.

24 UN News. (2022). *UN refugee chief urges stronger action to end 'legal limbo' of statelessness.* https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/11/1130197.

25 Vaidyanathan, R. (2022, August 25). Rohingya: Kill us, but don't deport us to Myanmar. *BBC.* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-62658647.

26 Hossain, S., & Hosain, S. (2019). Rohingya Identity Crisis: A Case Study. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 238-243. https://doi.org/10.21276/sjhss.2019.4.4.3; Rahman, M. M., & Dutta, M. J. (2023a). The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the health of Rohingya refugees. In S. Kaur-Gill & M. J. Dutta (Eds.), *Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic,* (pp. 51-67). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7384-0_3.

27 Rahman, M. M. (2022a). Challenges and strategies to conduct research at restricted Rohingya refugee camps of Bangladesh. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 3(9), 22-31.* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7123481; Uddin, N. (2023, January 6). Understanding the Rohingya crisis. *East-West Centre.* https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/understanding-rohingya-crisis.

28 Faiz, A., Deen, J., Dondorp, A. & Seidein, L. V. (2022, February 28). *Forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals in Bangladesh: A view from the ground. [LSE Blog].* https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2022/02/28/forcibly-displaced-myanmar-nationals-in-bangladesh-a-view-from-the-ground/; Rahman, M. M., Mohajan, H. K., & Bose, T. K. (2021). Future of Rohingyas: Dignified return to Myanmar or restoring their rights or both. *IKAT: The Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 4(2), 145-170.* https://doi.org/10.22146/ikat.v4i2.57706.

29 Rhoads, E. L. (2022). Citizenship denied, deferred and assumed: a legal history of racialized citizenship in Myanmar. *Citizenship Studies, 1-21.* https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2022.2137468.

30 Chickera, A. D. (2021). *Stateless and Persecuted: What Next for the Rohingya? Migration* Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/stateless-persecuted-rohingya; Debnath, K., Chatterjee, S., & Afzal, A. B. (2022). Natural resources and ethnic conflict: A geo-strategic understanding of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations, 26(2), 186-207.* https://doi.org/10.1177/09735984221120309; Eisenman, D. (2017, February 24). Explainer: What's happening to Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims? *ASIA Society.* https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/explainer-whats-happening-myanmars-rohingya-muslims.

31 Caster, M. (2016, June 1). Statelessness and Rohingya rights. *Himal, South Asian.* https://www.himalmag.com/statelessness-and-rohingya-rights/.

32 Chen, K. (2016). *A vicious circle caused by Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in Rakhine State.* https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/25869469.pdf.

33 Kaveri & Rajan, S. I. (2023). The politics of statelessness, refugeehood, and humanitarianism of the Rohingyas. *Frontiers in Human Dynamics, 4.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2022.921461.

34 Desale, A. (2020, July 28). Diversity and inclusion: Blockchain technology and digital identity for stateless Rohingya refugees. *Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law, UNSW, Sydney.* https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/diversity-and-inclusion-blockchain-technology-and-digital-identity-stateless-rohingya; Rahman, M. S., & Sakib, N. H. (2021). Statelessness, forced migration and the security dilemma along borders: An investigation of the foreign policy stance of Bangladesh on the Rohingya influx. *SN Social Sciences, 1(7), 1-21.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00173-y.

35 Solomon, F. (2017). Exodus of the stateless. *Time.* https://time.com/exodus-of-the-stateless/.

36 Gonzalez, A (2019, June 3). "We have a state": Confronting the statelessness of the Rohingya people. Refugees International. https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/6/3/wenbsphave-anbspstate-confronting-the-statelessness-of-the-rohingya-peoplenbsp.

37 Forino, G., Meding, J. V., & Johnson, T. (2017, September 12). Religion is not the only reason Rohingyas are being forced out of Myanmar. *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/religion-is-not-the-only-reason-rohingyas-are-being-forced-out-of-myanmar-83726; Minority Rights Group International (2017). *World directory of minorities and Indigenous peoples: Myanmar/ Burma - Muslims and Rohingya.* https://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cdcc.html

38 Milton, A. H., Rahman, M., Hussain, S., Jindal, C., Choudhury, S., Akter, S., Ferdousi, S., Mouly, T. A., Hall, J., & Efird, J. T. (2017). Trapped in statelessness: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health, 14(8), 942.* https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080942.

39 Sudheer, N., & Banerjee, D. (2021). The Rohingya refugees: A conceptual framework of their psychosocial adversities, cultural idioms of distress and social suffering. *Global Mental Health, 8, e46, 1-15.* https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2021.43.

40 Kaufman, K. (2016, February 23). Myanmar: Rohingya children losing future without education. *VOA.* https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-rohingya-children-losing-future-without-education/3203595.html; Lewa, C. (2012). *The Arakan Project. Issues to be raised concerning the situation of stateless Rohingya children in Myanmar (Burma).* https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1054364/1930_1331561232_myanmar-ap-crc-report-updated.pdf.

41 Carroll, A. (2021). Let Rohingya learn: Confronting the need for Rohingya education. https://www.justiceforallcanada.org/uploads/4/6/8/9/46897513/letrohingyalearn_btfreport_06232021-min.pdf.

42 Brunt, H. (2017). The stateless Rohingya. ISI (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion). http://children.worldsstateless.org/3/migration-displacement-and-childhood-statelessness/the-stateless-rohingya.html; Rahman, M. M., & Dutta, M. J. (2023b). The United Nations (UN) card, identity, and negotiations of health among Rohingya refugees. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 20*(4), 3385. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043385 .

43 Mithun, M. B. (2018). Ethnic conflict and violence in Myanmar: The exodus of stateless Rohingya people. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights, 25(4), 647-663.* https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02504003.

44 Selth, A. (2018). *Myanmar armed forces and the Rohingya crisis. United States Institute of* Peace (USIP). https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/pw140-myanmars-armed-forces-and-the-rohingya-crisis.pdf.

45 Kaveri & Rajan, S. I. (2023). The politics of statelessness, refugeehood, and humanitarianism of the Rohingyas. *Frontiers in Human Dynamics, 4.* https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2022.921461.

46 As cited in ISI (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion) *(2020). Human Rights and Covid-19. What now for the Rohingya? [Briefing paper].* https://files.institutesi.org/Covid19_The_Rohingya_Briefing_Paper.pdf.

47 Aung, W. Y. (2019, October 17). The day Myanmar's independence from Britain was agreed. *The Irrawaddy.* https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/on-this-day/day-myanmars-independence-britain-agreed.html.

48 EFSAS (European Foundation for South Asian Studies). (2018). The Rohingya issue: Its wider ramifications for South Asia. https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/the-rohingya-issue-%E2%80%93-its-wider-ramifications-for-south-asia/.

49 Farris, S. (2017). From citizen to stateless. *Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan*. https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/umich-upr/symposium-2017/farris-from-citizen-to-stateless/.

50 Smith, M. (2019). *A land in conflict on Myanmar's western frontier. Transnational Institute.*

51 Tonkin, D. (2017). Exploring the issue of citizenship in Rakhine State. In A. South & M. Lall (Eds.), *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of being in and from Burma (Lectures, Workshops, and Proceedings of International Conferences, pp. 222-263). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.*

52 Lee, R. (2019). Extreme speech in Myanmar: The role of state media in the Rohingya forced migration crisis. *International Journal of Communication, 13, 3203–3224; Parnini, S. N. (2013). The crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim minority in Myanmar and bilateral relations with Bangladesh. Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 33(2), 281-297.* https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.826453.

53 Leider, J. (2020). Rohingya: The foundational years. *TEOAP. https://www.toaep.org/pbs*-pdf/123-leider.

54 Arraiza, S. M., & Vonk, O. (2017). Report on citizenship law: Myanmar. *European University Institute.* https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/48284/RSCAS_GLOBALCIT_CR_2017_14.pdf.

55 Farris, S. (2017). From citizen to stateless. *Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan.* https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/umich-upr/symposium-2017/farris-from-citizen-to-stateless/; Kingston, L. N., & Seibert Hanson, A. E. (2022). Marginalized and misunderstood: How anti-Rohingya language policies fuel genocide. *Human Rights Review, 23(2), 289-303.* https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-022-00654-4.

56 Ullah, A. A. (2016). Rohingya crisis in Myanmar: Seeking justice for the "stateless." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 32(3), 285–301.* https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986216660811.

57 Ullah, A. A. (2016). Rohingya crisis in Myanmar: Seeking justice for the "stateless." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice, 32(3), 285–301.* https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986216660811.

58 Warzone Initiatives (2015). *Rohingya Briefing Report, 1–18.*https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Rohingya%20Briefing%20Report.pdf.

59 Busyairi, M., & Bui, T. K. S. (2021). Rohingya: A struggle for recognition as «Indigenous». *Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Keimigrasian, 4(1), 117-124.* https://doi.org/10.52617/jikk.v4i1.169; HRW (Human Rights Watch). (1996). *Burma: The Rohingya Muslims - ending a cycle of exodus?* https://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/b/burma/burma969.pdf.

60 Siddiqui, H. (2005, August 22). Rohingya: The forgotten People. *Islam City.* https://www.islamicity.org/2698/rohingya-the-forgotten-people/.

61 HRW. (2000). *Burmese refugees in Bangladesh: Still no durable solution.* https://www.hrw.org/report/2000/05/01/burmese-refugees-bangladesh/still-no-durable-solution.

62 Chickera, A. D. (2021). *Stateless and Persecuted: What Next for the Rohingya? Migration* Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/stateless-persecuted-rohingya.

63 Lewa, C. (2009). Northern Arakan: An *open prison for the Rohingya in Burma. Forced Migration Review, 32, 11–13.*https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/statelessness/lewa.pdf.

64 Albert, E., & Maizland, L. (2020). *What forces are fueling Myanmar's Rohingya crisis?* Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis.

65 Green, P., Macmanus, T., & De la Cour Venning, A. (2015). *Countdown to annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar. International State Crime Initiative.* http://statecrime.org/data/2015/10/ISCI-Rohingya-Report-PUBLISHED-VERSION.pdf.

66 Selth, A. (2021). Myanmar: An enduring intelligence state, or a state enduring intelligence. [Policy paper]. Stimson Institute. https://www.stimson.org/2021/myanmar-an-enduring-intelligence-state/.

67 McPherson, P. (2017, March 31). Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar's great hope fails to live up to expectations. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmars-great-hope-fails-to-live-up-to-expectations.

68 Lloyd, P. (2016, June 22). Burma leader Aung San Suu Kyi bans use of Rohingya name for oppressed Muslims. *ABC News.* https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-22/aung-san-suu-kyi-bans-use-of-rohingya-name/7534410.

69 RSF (Reporters Without Border). (2018, June 12). *Myanmar bans Radio Free Asia for using the term "Rohingyas."* https://rsf.org/en/news/myanmar-bans-radio-free-asia-using-term-rohingyas.

70 Wright, R., Hunt, K., & Berlinger, J. (2017, September 19). Aung San Suu Kyi breaks silence on Rohingya, sparks storm of criticism. *The CNN.* https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/18/asia/aung-san-suu-kyi-speech-rohingya/index.html#:~:text=Myanmar's%20de%20facto%20leader%20Aung,%E2%80%9Cafraid%20of%20international%20scrutiny.%E2%80%9D

71 HRW. (2023). *Future bleak for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Myanmar.* https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/20/future-bleak-rohingya-bangladesh-myanmar; Root, R. (2023, January 11). More than 100 Rohingya refugees jailed for trying to flee Myanmar camps. *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/11/more-than-100-rohingya-refugees-jailed-for-trying-to-flee-myanmar-camps.

72 Kamruzzaman, M. (2021, June 5). Rohingya urge Myanmar shadow government to keep promise, denounce role in past. *Anadolu Agency.* https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/rohingya-urge-myanmar-shadow-government-to-keep-promise-denounce-role-in-past/2264440; Rahman, M. M. (2022b). Term "Rohingya" accepted worldwide but still taboo in Myanmar. *Academia Letters.* Article 5788. https://doi.org/10.20935/AL5788.

73 Dutta, M. J. (Ed.) (2008). *Communicating Health: A Culture-Centered Approach.* Polity Press.

74 Kumar, R. (2020). Refugee articulations of health: A culture-centered exploration of Burmese refugees' resettlement in the United States. *Health*

Communication, *36*(6), 682–692. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2020.1712035.

75 Dutta, M. J. (2007). Communicating about culture and health: Theorizing culture-centered and cultural sensitivity approaches. *Communication Theory*, *17*(3), 304–328. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00297.x.

76 Dutta, M. J., Moana-Johnson, G., & Elers, C. (2020). COVID-19 and the pedagogy of culture-centered community radical democracy: A response from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Communication Pedagogy, 3*, 11-19. https://doi.org/10.31446/JCP.2020.03.

77 Dutta, M. J., Zhuo, B., & Pal, M. (2012). Engaging worldviews, cultures, and structures through dialogue: The culture-centered approach to public relations. *PRism*, *9*(2).

78 Dutta, M. J. (2011). *Communicating social change: Structure, culture, and agency*. Routledge.

79 McKirdy, E., & Mohsin, S. (2015, May 20). Lost at sea, unwanted: The plight of Myanmar's Rohingya 'boat people.' *The CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/19/asia/rohingya-refugee-ships-explainer/index.html.

80 Khin, T. (2023, January 26). Rohingya are drowning at sea: Asia's leaders are to blame. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/26/rohingya-are-drowning-at-sea-asias-leaders-are-to-blame.

81 Johar, A. (2021, December 7). The Rohingya: Road to nowhere. *Asia Media Centre*. https://www.asiamediacentre.org.nz/opinion-and-analysis/new-article-6/.

82 Rahman, M. M. (2022a). Challenges and strategies to conduct research at restricted Rohingya refugee camps of Bangladesh. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 3(9), 22-31.* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7123481.

83 EBO (Euro Burma Office). (2009). *The Rohingyas: Bengali Muslims or Arakan Rohingyas?* [Briefing paper]. https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs6/EBO_Briefing_Paper_No._2_-_The_Rohingyas.pdf.

84 UN Booklet. (2015). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR).* https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf.

85 Pugh, C. L. (2013). *Is citizenship the answer? Constructions of belonging and exclusion for the stateless Rohingya of Burma [Working Paper no. 107]. International Migration Institute, University of Oxford.* http://cgsdu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/daafb30c7073b79d16fc1786c4a903731e7e-1.pdf.

86 Bosniak, L. (2000). Citizenship denationalized. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, 7(2), 447-509.*

87 Kader, M. F., & Choudhury, A. H. (2019). Historical background of the Rohingya refugee crisis and the implication of their statelessness. *International Journal of Social sciences and Economic Review, 1(1), 8-15.* https://doi.10.9116/ijsser.2019.1.1.02.

88 Khaine, M. M. & Htway, K. P. (2017, August 24). Rakhine commission: Myanmar must end restrictions of Rohingya. *VOA*. https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-rakhine-state-commission/3998911.html.

89 Zhao, H. (2008). China and India: Competing for good relations with Myanmar. *The Journal of East Asian Affairs, 22(1), 175-194.*

90 Atmakuri, A., & Izzuddin, M. (2020, January 8). Why Myanmar should matter to India. *The Diplomat.* https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/why-myanmar-should-matter-to-india/.

References

Ahmed, S., Simmons, W. P., Chowdhury, R., & Huq, S. (2021). The sustainability–peace nexus in crisis contexts: How the Rohingya escaped the ethnic violence in Myanmar but are trapped into environmental challenges in Bangladesh. *Sustainability Science*, *16*(4), 1201-13. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11625-021-00955-6.

Alam, J. (2015). The impacts of the Burmese citizenship law on the "'Rohingyaas": A critical appraisal. *Society & Change, 9*(2), 61–80.

Albert, E., & Maizland, L. (2020). *What forces are fueling Myanmar's Rohingya crisis?* Council on Foreign Relations (CFR). https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis.

Ali, M. (2021, December 7). A language in crisis. *Cultural Survival*. https://donate.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/language-crisis-rohingya.

Arraiza, S. M., & Vonk, O. (2017). Report on citizenship law: Myanmar. *European University Institute*. https://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/48284/RSCAS_GLOBALCIT_CR_2017_14.pdf.

Atmakuri, A., & Izzuddin, M. (2020, January 8). Why Myanmar should matter to India. *The Diplomat*. https://thediplomat.com/2020/01/why-myanmar-should-matter-to-india/.

Aung, W. Y. (2019, October 17). The day Myanmar's independence from Britain was agreed. *The Irrawaddy*. https://www.irrawaddy.com/specials/on-this-day/day-myanmars-independence-britain-agreed.html.

Bosniak, L. (2000). Citizenship denationalized. *Indiana Journal of Global Legal Studies, 7*(2), 447–509.

Brinham, N. (2019). Looking beyond invisibility: Rohingyas' dangerous encounters with papers and cards. *Tilburg Law Review 24*(2), 156–169. https://doi.org/10.5334/tilr.151.

Brunt, H. (2017). The stateless Rohingya. ISI (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion). http://children.worldsstateless.org/3/migration-displacement-and-childhood-statelessness/the-stateless-rohingya.html.

Burke, A. (2016). New political space, old tensions: History, identity and violence in Rakhine State, Myanmar. *Contemporary Southeast Asia*, 258-283. https://doi.org/10.1355/cs38-2d.

Busyairi, M., & Bui, T. K. S. (2021). Rohingya: A struggle for recognition as "Indigenous". *Jurnal Ilmiah Kajian Keimigrasian*, *4*(1), 117-124. https://doi.org/10.52617/jikk.v4i1.169.

Carroll, A. (2021). Let Rohingya learn: Confronting the need for Rohingya education. https://www.justiceforallcanada.org/uploads/4/6/8/9/46897513/letrohingyalearn_btfreport_06232021-min.pdf.

Caster, M. (2016, June 1). Statelessness and Rohingya rights. *Himal, South Asian.*https://www.himalmag.com/statelessness-and-rohingya-rights/.

Chan, A. (2005). The development of a Muslim enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) state of Burma (Myanmar). *SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, 3*(2), 396-420,https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64388.pdf.

Chan, B. (2017, November 29). A brief historical background of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar. *OWP (Organization for World Peace)*. https://theowp.org/a-brief-historical-background-of-rohingya-muslims-in-myanmar/.

Chaturvedi, M. (2012). *Myanmar's ethnic divide: The parallel struggle*. Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies. South-East Asia Research Programme (SEARP). https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/152594/SR131-SEARP-Medha.pdf

Cheesman, N. (2015). Problems with facts about Rohingya statelessness. *E-International Relations*, *8*.

Chen, K. (2016). *A vicious circle caused by Buddhist-Muslim conflicts in Rakhine State*. https://www.atlantis-press.com/article/25869469.pdf.

Chickera, A. D. (2021). *Stateless and Persecuted: What Next for the Rohingya?* Migration Policy Institute. https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/stateless-persecuted-rohingya.

Christopher, C. M. & Schiffer, S. (2019, June 12). *Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: How the absence of citizenship rights acts as a barrier to successful repatriation*. LSE Blog. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2019/06/12/rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh-how-a-lack-citizenship-rights-are-a-barrier-to-successful-repatriation/.

D' Costa, B. (2012, July 4). The Rohingya and the denial of the 'right to have rights.' *OCHA*. https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/rohingya-and-denial-%E2%80%98right-have-rights%E2%80%99.

Debnath, K., Chatterjee, S., & Afzal, A. B. (2022). Natural resources and ethnic conflict: A geo-strategic understanding of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. *Jadavpur Journal of International Relations*, *26*(2), 186-207. https://doi.org/10.1177/09735984221120309.

Desale, A. (2020, July 28). Diversity and inclusion: Blockchain technology and digital identity for stateless Rohingya refugees. *Andrew & Renata Kaldor Centre for International Refugee Law*, *UNSW, Sydney*. https://www.kaldorcentre.unsw.edu.au/publication/diversity-and-inclusion-blockchain-technology-and-digital-identity-stateless-rohingya.

Dulal, A. O. (2017, September 23). Timeline: Being Rohingya in Myanmar, from 1784 to now. *The Wire.* https://thewire.in/external-affairs/rohingya-myanmar-timeline.

Dutta, M. J. (2007). Communicating about culture and health: Theorizing culture-centered and cultural sensitivity approaches. *Communication Theory*, *17*(3), 304-328. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2885.2007.00297.x.

Dutta, M. J. (Ed.) (2008). *Communicating Health: A Culture-Centered Approach.* Polity Press.

Dutta, M. J. (2011). *Communicating social change: Structure, culture, and agency*. Routledge.

Dutta, M. J., Zhuo, B., & Pal, M. (2012). Engaging worldviews, cultures, and structures through dialogue: The culture-centered approach to public relations. *PRism*, *9*(2).

Dutta, M. J., Moana-Johnson, G., & Elers, C. (2020). COVID-19 and the pedagogy of culture-centered community radical democracy: A response from Aotearoa New Zealand. *Journal of Communication Pedagogy, 3*, 11-19. https://doi.org/10.31446/JCP.2020.03.

EBO (Euro Burma Office). (2009). *The Rohingyas: Bengali Muslims or Arakan Rohingyas?* [Briefing paper]. https://www.burmalibrary.org/docs6/EBO_Briefing_Paper_No._2_-_The_Rohingyas.pdf.

EFSAS (European Foundation for South Asian Studies). (2018). The Rohingya issue: Its wider ramifications for South Asia. https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/the-rohingya-issue-%E2%80%93-its-wider-ramifications-for-south-asia/.

Eisenman, D. (2017, February 24). Explainer: What's happening to Myanmar's Rohingya Muslims? *ASIA Society*. https://asiasociety.org/blog/asia/explainer-whats-happening-myanmars-rohingya-muslims.

Faiz, A., Deen, J., Dondorp, A. & Seidein, L. V. (2022, February 28). *Forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals in Bangladesh: A view from the ground*. [LSE Blog]. https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/southasia/2022/02/28/forcibly-displaced-myanmar-nationals-in-bangladesh-a-view-from-the-ground/.

Farris, S. (2017). From citizen to stateless. *Center for Southeast Asian Studies, University of Michigan*. https://sites.lsa.umich.edu/umich-upr/symposium-2017/farris-from-citizen-to-stateless/.

Faye, M. A. (2021). Forced migration from Myanmar to Bangladesh and beyond: Humanitarian response to Rohingya refugee crisis. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action. 6*, 13. https://doi.org/10.1186/s41018-021-00098-4.

Ferguson, J. M. (2015). Who's counting? Ethnicity, belonging, and the national census in Burma/ Myanmar. *Bijdragen tot de taal-, land-en volkenkunde/ Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences of Southeast Asia*, *171*(1), 1-28. https://doi.org/10.1163/22134379-17101022.

Forino, G., Meding, J. V., & Johnson, T. (2017, September 12). Religion is not the only reason Rohingyas are being forced out of Myanmar. *The Conversation.* https://theconversation.com/religion-is-not-the-only-reason-rohingyas-are-being-forced-out-of-myanmar-83726.

Fulton, A. (2022, September 20). Amid Myanmar's civil war, unity emerges. *Christianity Today*. https://www.christianitytoday.com/news/2022/september/myanmar-unity-buddhism-fighting-free-burma-rangers.html.

Furcoi, S. (2018, August 23). One year on: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/gallery/2018/8/23/one-year-on-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh.

Gonzalez, A (2019, June 3). "We have a state": Confronting the statelessness of the Rohingya people. Refugees International. https://www.refugeesinternational.org/reports/2019/6/3/wenbsphave-anbspstate-confronting-the-statelessness-of-the-rohingya-peoplenbsp.

Green, P., Macmanus, T., & De la Cour Venning, A. (2015). *Countdown to annihilation: Genocide in Myanmar*. International State Crime Initiative. http://statecrime.org/data/2015/10/ISCI-Rohingya-Report-PUBLISHED-VERSION.pdf.

Habibollahi, A., McLean, H. & Diker, Y. (2013). Crimes against humanity: The case of the Rohingya people in Burma. *Norman Paterson School of International Affairs*. https://carleton.ca/cifp/wp-content/uploads/1443-1.pdf.

Hein, P. (2018). The re-ethnicisation of politics in Myanmar and the making of the Rohingya ethnicity paradox. *India Quarterly*, *74*(4), 361-382. https://doi.org/10.1177/0974928418802072.

Hossain, S., & Hosain, S. (2019). Rohingya Identity Crisis: A Case Study. *Saudi Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*, 238-243. https://doi.org/10.21276/sjhss.2019.4.4.3.

HRW (Human Rights Watch). (1996). *Burma: The Rohingya Muslims - ending a cycle of exodus?* https://www.hrw.org/reports/pdfs/b/burma/burma969.pdf.

HRW. (2000). *Burmese refugees in Bangladesh: Still no durable solution*. https://www.hrw.org/report/2000/05/01/burmese-refugees-bangladesh/still-no-durable-solution.

HRW. (2009). *The resistance of the monks: Buddhism and activism in Burma*. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/reports/burmamonks0909web.pdf.

HRW. (2023). *Future bleak for Rohingya in Bangladesh, Myanmar*. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/08/20/future-bleak-rohingya-bangladesh-myanmar.

Htun, K. M., Lwin, N. N., Naing, T. H., & Tun, K. (2011). ASEAN-India connectivity: A Myanmar perspective. In F. Kimura and S. Umezake (Eds.), *ASEAN-India connectivity: The comprehensive Asia development plan* [Phase II, ERIA Research Project Report 2010-7] (pp.151-203). ERIA.

Hung, A. H. (2021, August 19). Citizens or foreigners? A socio-legal perspective on persecution of Rohingyas. *New Mandala*. https://www.newmandala.org/citizens-or-foreigners-a-socio-legal-perspective-on-persecution-of-rohingyas/.

Ibrahim, A. (2016). *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's genocide*. C. Hurst & Co. Ltd.

Ibrahim, A. (2018, April 9). First they came for the Rohingya. *FP*. https://foreignpolicy.com/2018/04/09/first-they-came-for-the-rohingya-myanmar-genocide-war-human-rights/.

IRIN (2014, September 15). *Myanmar's Rohingya: What's in a name?* [Briefing].https://www.refworld.org/docid/5417f6204.html.

ISI (Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion). (2020). *Human Rights and Covid-19. What now for the Rohingya?* [Briefing paper]. https://files.institutesi.org/Covid19_The_Rohingya_Briefing_Paper.pdf.

Johar, A. (2021, December 7). The Rohingya: Road to nowhere. *Asia Media Centre*. https://www.asiamediacentre.org.nz/opinion-and-analysis/new-article-6/.

Juergensmeyer, M. (2017, September 11). Burmese Buddhists and the persecution of Rohingya Muslims. *UC Press Blog*. https://www.ucpress.edu/blog/30734/burmese-buddhists-and-the-persecution-of-rohingya-muslims/#:~:text=Burmese%20leaders%20claimed%20that%20the,activists%20monks%20like%20Ashin%20Wirathu.

Kader, M. F., & Choudhury, A. H. (2019). Historical background of the Rohingya refugee crisis and the implication of their statelessness. *International Journal of Social sciences and Economic Review, 1*(1), 8-15. https://doi.10.9116/ijsser.2019.1.1.02.

Kamruzzaman, M. (2021, June 5). Rohingya urge Myanmar shadow government to keep promise, denounce role in past. *Anadolu Agency*. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/rohingya-urge-myanmar-shadow-government-to-keep-promise-denounce-role-in-past/2264440.

Kaufman, K. (2016, February 23). Myanmar: Rohingya children losing future without education. *VOA*. https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-rohingya-children-losing-future-without-education/3203595.html.

Kaveri & Rajan, S. I. (2023). The politics of statelessness, refugeehood, and humanitarianism of the Rohingyas. *Frontiers in Human Dynamics*, *4*. https://doi.org/10.3389/fhumd.2022.921461.

Khaine, M. M. & Htway, K. P. (2017, August 24). Rakhine commission: Myanmar must end restrictions of Rohingya. *VOA*. https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-rakhine-state-commission/3998911.html.

Khin, T. (2023, January 26). Rohingya are drowning at sea: Asia's leaders are to blame. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/1/26/rohingya-are-drowning-at-sea-asias-leaders-are-to-blame.

Kingston, L. N., & Seibert Hanson, A. E. (2022). Marginalized and misunderstood: How anti-Rohingya language policies fuel genocide. *Human Rights Review*, *23*(2), 289-303. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12142-022-00654-4.

Kumar, R. (2020). Refugee articulations of health: A culture-centered exploration of Burmese refugees' resettlement in the United States. *Health Communication*, *36*(6), 682-692. https://doi.org/10.1080/10410236.2020.1712035.

Lee, R. (2019). Extreme speech in Myanmar: The role of state media in the Rohingya forced migration crisis. *International Journal of Communication*, *13*, 3203-3224.

Leider, J. (2018). Rohingya: The History of a Muslim Identity in Myanmar. *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*. https://doi.org/10.1093/acrefore/9780190277727.013.115.

Leider, J. (2020). Rohingya: The foundational years. *TEOAP*. https://www.toaep.org/pbs-pdf/123-leider.

Lewa, C. (2009). Northern Arakan: An open prison for the Rohingya in Burma. *Forced Migration Review*, *32*, 11–13.https://www.fmreview.org/sites/fmr/files/FMRdownloads/en/statelessness/lewa.pdf.

Lewa, C. (2012). *The Arakan Project. Issues to be raised concerning the situation of stateless Rohingya children in Myanmar (Burma)*. https://www.ecoi.net/en/file/local/1054364/1930_1331561232_myanmar-ap-crc-report-updated.pdf.

Lloyd, P. (2016, June 22). Burma leader Aung San Suu Kyi bans use of Rohingya name for oppressed Muslims. *ABC News*. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-06-22/aung-san-suu-kyi-bans-use-of-rohingya-name/7534410.

Lynn, K. Y. (2016, July 23). Census data shows Myanmar Muslim population has fallen. *Anadolu Agency*. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/census-data-shows-myanmar-muslim-population-has-fallen/612764.

Martin, M. F. (2021). *The importance of ethnic minorities to Myanmar's future*. [Asia Policy Report]. Stimson Center. https://www.stimson.org/2021/the-importance-of-ethnic-minorities-to-myanmars-future/.

McKirdy, E., & Mohsin, S. (2015, May 20). Lost at sea, unwanted: The plight of Myanmar's Rohingya 'boat people.' *The CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2015/05/19/asia/rohingya-refugee-ships-explainer/index.html.

McLaughlin, T. (2015, May 30). Myanmar publishes census, but Rohingya minority not recognized. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-asia-migrants-myanmar-census-idUSKBN0OE1S420150529.

McPherson, P. (2017, March 31). Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar's great hope fails to live up to expectations. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2017/mar/31/aung-san-suu-kyi-myanmars-great-hope-fails-to-live-up-to-expectations.

Milton, A. H., Rahman, M., Hussain, S., Jindal, C., Choudhury, S., Akter, S., Ferdousi, S., Mouly, T. A., Hall, J., & Efird, J. T. (2017). Trapped in statelessness: Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, *14*(8), 942. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph14080942.

Minorities at Risk Project. (2004). *Chronology for Rohingya (Arakanese) in Burma*. https://www.refworld.org/docid/469f3872c.html.

Minority Rights Group International (2017). *World directory of minorities and Indigenous peoples: Myanmar/ Burma - Muslims and Rohingya*. https://www.refworld.org/docid/49749cdcc.html

Mithun, M. B. (2018). Ethnic conflict and violence in Myanmar: The exodus of stateless Rohingya people. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights*, *25*(4), 647-663. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-02504003.

MSF (Médecins Sans Frontières, or Doctors Without Borders). (2022). *Timeline: A visual history of the Rohingya refugee crisis.* https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/timeline-visual-history-rohingya-refugee-crisis.

Parnini, S. N. (2013). The crisis of the Rohingya as a Muslim minority in Myanmar and bilateral relations with Bangladesh. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, *33*(2), 281-297. https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2013.826453.

Poling, G. B. (2014, February 13). Separating Fact from Fiction about Myanmar's Rohingya. *Center For Strategic & International Studies*. https://www.csis.org/analysis/separating-fact-fiction-about-myanmar%E2%80%99s-rohingya.

Pugh, C. L. (2013). *Is citizenship the answer? Constructions of belonging and exclusion for the stateless Rohingya of Burma [Working Paper no. 107]*. International Migration Institute, University of Oxford. http://cgsdu.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/daafb30c7073b79d16fc1786c4a903731e7e-1.pdf.

Rahman, M. M., & Mohajan, H. (2019). Rohingya: The stateless community becoming the lost generation. *Journal of Economic Development, Environment and People, 8*, 24-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.26458/jedep.v8i2.621.

Rahman, M. M. (2022a). Challenges and strategies to conduct research at restricted Rohingya refugee camps of Bangladesh. *Indiana Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences, 3*(9), 22-31. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7123481. Rahman, M. M. (2022b). Term "Rohingya" accepted worldwide but still taboo in Myanmar. *Academia Letters.* Article 5788. https://doi.org/10.20935/AL5788.

Rahman, M. M. (2023). "Health means just to live" at the Rohingya camps of Bangladesh: A culture-centred intervention. *Global Journal of Addiction & Rehabilitation Medicine, 7*(2): 555710. https://doi.org/10.19080/GJARM.2023.07.555710.

Rahman, M. M., & Dutta, M. J. (2023a). The COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the health of Rohingya refugees. In S. Kaur-Gill & M. J. Dutta (Eds.), *Migrants and the COVID-19 pandemic,* (pp. 51-67). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-7384-0_3.

Rahman, M. M., & Dutta, M. J. (2023b). The United Nations (UN) card, identity, and negotiations of health among Rohingya refugees. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health. 20*(4), 3385. https://doi.org/10.3390/ijerph20043385.

Rahman, M. M., Mohajan, H. K., & Bose, T. K. (2021). Future of Rohingyas: Dignified return to Myanmar or restoring their rights or both. *IKAT: The Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *4*(2), 145-170. https://doi.org/10.22146/ikat.v4i2.57706.

Rahman, M. S., & Sakib, N. H. (2021). Statelessness, forced migration and the security dilemma along borders: An investigation of the foreign policy stance of Bangladesh on the Rohingya influx. *SN Social Sciences*, *1*(7), 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1007/s43545-021-00173-y.

Refugee Council Australia. (2021). *Statelessness*. https://www.refugeecouncil.org.au/stateless/#:~:text=How%20many%20people%20are%20stateless,been%20formally%20identified%20by%20UNHCR.

Rhoads, E. L. (2022). Citizenship denied, deferred and assumed: a legal history of racialized citizenship in Myanmar. *Citizenship Studies*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.1080/13621025.2022.2137468.

Root, R. (2023, January 11). More than 100 Rohingya refugees jailed for trying to flee Myanmar camps. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2023/jan/11/more-than-100-rohingya-refugees-jailed-for-trying-to-flee-myanmar-camps.

RSF (Reporters Without Border). (2018, June 12). *Myanmar bans Radio Free Asia for using the term "Rohingyas."* https://rsf.org/en/news/myanmar-bans-radio-free-asia-using-term-rohingyas.

Selth, A. (2018). *Myanmar armed forces and the Rohingya crisis*. United States Institute of Peace (USIP). https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2018-08/pw140-myanmars-armed-forces-and-the-rohingya-crisis.pdf.

Selth, A. (2021). Myanmar: An enduring intelligence state, or a state enduring intelligence. [Policy paper]. Stimson Institute. https://www.stimson.org/2021/myanmar-an-enduring-intelligence-state/.

Siddiqui, H. (2005, August 22). Rohingya: The forgotten People. *Islam City*. https://www.islamicity.org/2698/rohingya-the-forgotten-people/.

Smith, M. (2019). *A land in conflict on Myanmar's western frontier*. Transnational Institute.

Solomon, F. (2017). Exodus of the stateless. *Time*. https://time.com/exodus-of-the-stateless/.

Sudheer, N., & Banerjee, D. (2021). The Rohingya refugees: A conceptual framework of their psychosocial adversities, cultural idioms of distress and social suffering. *Global Mental Health*, *8*, e46, 1-15. https://doi.org/10.1017/gmh.2021.43.

Tonkin, D. (2017). Exploring the issue of citizenship in Rakhine State. In A. South & M. Lall (Eds.), *Citizenship in Myanmar: Ways of being in and from Burma* (Lectures, Workshops, and Proceedings of International Conferences, pp. 222-263). ISEAS–Yusof Ishak Institute.

Uddin, N. (2023, January 6). Understanding the Rohingya crisis. *East-West Centre*. https://www.eastwestcenter.org/publications/understanding-rohingya-crisis.

Ullah, A. A. (2016). Rohingya crisis in Myanmar: Seeking justice for the "stateless." *Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice*, *32*(3), 285–301. https://doi.org/10.1177/1043986216660811.

Ullah, A. (2019, April 05). The Rohingya and the white card saga. *Rohingya Post*. https://www.rohingyapost.com/the-rohingya-and-the-white-cards-saga/.

UN Booklet. (2015). *Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR)*. https://www.un.org/en/udhrbook/pdf/udhr_booklet_en_web.pdf.

UN News. (2022). *UN refugee chief urges stronger action to end 'legal limbo' of statelessness*. https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/11/1130197.

UNHCR. (2021). *About statelessness*. https://www.unhcr.org/ibelong/about-statelessness/.

Vaidyanathan, R. (2022, August 25). Rohingya: Kill us, but don't deport us to Myanmar. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-india-62658647.

Warzone Initiatives (2015). *Rohingya Briefing Report*, 1–18.https://www.equalrightstrust.org/ertdocumentbank/Rohingya%20Briefing%20Report.pdf.

Wells, M. (2019, September 9). "My heart cries": For one Rohingya refugee, a dream of home that may never be fulfilled. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/the-highlight/2019/9/3/20837372/rohingya-refugee-myanmar-bangladesh-camp-violence.

Wright, R., Hunt, K., & Berlinger, J. (2017, September 19). Aung San Suu Kyi breaks silence on Rohingya, sparks storm of criticism. *The CNN*. https://edition.cnn.com/2017/09/18/asia/aung-san-suu-kyi-speech-rohingya/index.html#:~:text=Myanmar's%20de%20facto%20leader%20Aung,%E2%80%9Cafraid%20of%20international%20scrutiny.%E2%80%9D

Zhao, H. (2008). China and India: Competing for good relations with Myanmar. *The Journal of East Asian Affairs, 22*(1), 175-194.

Rohingya children at the Kutupalong refugee camp attend class. Efforts to preserve the group's cultural heritage have been hampered by a general lack of literacy. (Munir Uz Zaman / AFP via Getty Images)

Rohingya Cultural Preservation: An Internationally Coordinated Response Is Urgent

Saqib Sheikh and Carolyn Morris

Executive Summary

The Rohingya people face an existential threat, not merely to their physical survival as genocide victims but also to their ethnic identity itself. The state-backed disenfranchisement of the Rohingya in Myanmar, including stripping them of citizenship in the 1980s and other exclusionary policies that followed, leading to their mass expulsion in 2017, have had calamitous effects on the free expression and development of Rohingya cultural and linguistic practices in the civic space. Given that now the majority of the Rohingya people have been forced outside of their homeland, the international community, including host states, INGOs, and other stakeholders, have principally fixated on addressing the immediate humanitarian needs of these refugee populations and renewing demands for their safe repatriation.

One of the more overlooked aspects of the current Rohingya genocide is the targeted campaign against the Rohingya ethnic identity. Rohingya cultural traditions and their unique language have been subjected to sustained attacks within their homeland,

resulting in a distinct lack of institutions within the Rohingya community concentrated on cultural retention and reproduction. Due to the assimilatory and globalizing pressures that the Rohingya face disconnected from their country of origin, it is imperative that Rohingya culture and language preservation be given due attention.

This paper maps the current stakeholders and heritage initiatives among the Rohingya community, chronicles existing challenges, and presents policy recommendations for integrating cultural preservation schemes into the international response to the Rohingya crisis. The report ends with a series of recommendations to the international community to play a proactive role in efforts at cultural preservation and production toward the Rohingya people. This report has been produced with the consultation of numerous independent experts, whose insights have been included throughout.

Background of the Rohingya Crisis

The United Nations has termed the crimes of the Burmese regime against the Rohingya people as acts of genocide.[1] Genocides take place as targeted campaigns of destruction based on aspects of collective identity, including along cultural and linguistic lines.[2] The Rohingya people were driven out of their ancestral homeland and continue to experience the effects of the genocide. Due to their history of persecution, they have lacked centralized institutions focused on cultural production, which traditionally preserves culture beyond geographical belonging.

In Myanmar, Rohingya people were slowly stripped of their citizenship status by the state as part of a broader process of identity destruction and violence. The state-sponsored denial of their history and post-independence ethnic and legal status has occurred alongside state terror and mass expulsions from their homelands in the Rakhine region of Myanmar. The first wave of migrations of the Rohingya from their ancestral homeland in Arakan (modern-day Rakhine state) began in the 1950s and 1960s and accelerated in the 1970s following a series of military incursions into the state.[3] While less than a million Rohingya remain in their homelands in Myanmar, an estimated 2 million to 3 million live in diaspora in Bangladesh, Pakistan, Saudi Arabia, and the Middle East, as well as Malaysia and other parts of Southeast Asia.

Post-independence, the Rohingya people in Arakan were full citizens and had varying levels of civic participation and expression of their culture. The government permitted shortwave radio broadcasts in the Rohingya language, and Muslim representatives from the region were elected to Parliament. The military regime's coup in 1962 began a gradual sidelining of the Rohingya people and their cultural identity and language under a program of Burmese nationalization.[4]

The Burmese Broadcasting Service eventually removed the Rohingya language. In 1982, the Rohingya were excluded from being listed as a Taingyintha ethnicity under the Burma Citizenship Act, gradually removing their citizenship rights and rendering subsequent generations stateless. In the late '80s, under the Burmanization program, names of traditional townships and landmarks historically resided in by Rohingya were changed.[5] In effect, the Rohingya were denied the capacity to freely build and reproduce their cultural identity within their homeland for decades.

The Rohingya identity has been a contested subject within the scholarship on Burmese ethnic groups. A Rohingya communal narrative asserts the historical presence of their people for centuries in the land of Arakan, dating from the time of first contact by Arab traders in the littoral in the ninth century and including a flourishing period in the Kingdom of Mrauk U from the 15th to 18th centuries. Historian Jacques Leider asserts that the Rohingya represent a politically constructed, hybridized ethnoreligious identity formed post-independence by largely settler communities tracing their historical origins primarily to Bengali migrants brought during the British colonial period.[6] Anthropology scholars Elliott Prasse-Freeman and Kirt Mausert push back against the notion of a completely constructed political identity formation for the Rohingya, arguing for the probability of a proto-Rohingya ethnic strain that predated independence and British colonialism of the 18th and 19th centuries, and through a process of ethnogenesis led to the development of the modern Rohingya formation, which is still fluid to a certain extent.[7] Nevertheless,

international relations scholar Niloy Ranjan Biswas maintains that Rohingya identity in the diaspora continues to be at a crossroads between politics and society.[8] The individual community member does not form such an identity in a cultural vacuum but also in relation to how host societies deal with him or her; the language itself that the Rohingya speak is an example of this intersectionality.

The Development of the Written Rohingya Language

Ethnic state suppression of the Rohingya has also led to a stunting of the development of written Rohingya resources in Rakhine state. Hence, Rohingya remains largely a spoken language among the Rohingya worldwide, with only recent efforts to introduce written scripts that have gained some currency in the diaspora. These competing efforts include the introduction of Rohingyalish, formalized in 1999 by E.M. Siddique Basu, which employs Roman characters as a modern typeface.[9] The other alternative offered is the Hanafi Rohingya script, developed by Mohammed Hanif in the 1980s and used for limited newsprint circulation in the following decades. It has recently been accepted by the Unicode Consortium to become a recognized digital script, allowing Rohingya to text and email in their own language.[10]

However, there has yet to be widespread adoption of either of these written formats by the Rohingya. In the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, a majority of the Rohingya surveyed are unaware that such scripts even exist, even though they indicate their desire to use the script should they have access to and knowledge of it. Aside from their lack of familiarity with the scripts, nearly 80% of the Rohingya in the camps are illiterate.[11] At the same time, those with basic literacy are primarily familiar with the Burmese written language, having been taught it in Myanmar before migrating, or with Urdu, or with Arabic, which is used as the medium for religious education in madrassa schooling.[12] In the absence of a formal script, events of Rohingya historical and cultural memory are inevitably passed down through oral storytelling and folk songs.[13] Given that there is no universally agreed-upon Rohingya written script and high levels of illiteracy among the Rohingya, the loss of language represents a threat to those wishing to maintain a sense of collective cultural identity in the diaspora across generations.

Community Concerns

Community leader and founder of Rohingya Women's Development Network Sharifah Shakirah conveys the complications of rebuilding Rohingya heritage post-genocide, as those who fled Myanmar have divergent experiences from their contemporaries in the diaspora community. Customs and traditions practiced in villages in Myanmar, such as *honlas*, songs communicating emotions at weddings, funerals, or special celebrations, are unfamiliar to and not performed by most diaspora members. Shakirah says genocide "disrupted" preservation, producing a "gap" in the cultural production process, exacerbated by the lack of land or physical location to express and enact their heritage freely. In utilizing UNESCO's conceptual framework to map prevailing threats to intangible culture across at-risk communities, Shakirah's insights classify the Rohingya people as vulnerable to "negative attitudes," experiencing "weakened practice and transmission," and coping with the "loss of objects or systems."[14]

Many Rohingya in the refugee camps are troubled by the barriers to practicing their religious duties, ceremonies, and rituals, as one community member and respondent noted while raising the apprehensions voiced during his field research in Cox's Bazar. As the Rohingya are a stateless Muslim minority group, Islam remains significant not only to identity but also in governing the daily lives and decisions of the majority of Rohingya families. Community members mourn that few children are able to attend madrassas to receive primary training on Islam. Families fear the erosion of social respect as they raise their children with degrees of separation from their cultural homeland. The Rohingya people were historically an agricultural community in rural Rakhine state, where around 75% of the population engaged in farming.[15] Barred from this facet of their identity, Rohingya people have been deprived of exercising and transmitting the expertise of their trade vocations.

Daniel Coyle, a field researcher in Cox's Bazar, implicates refugee camp conditions in ongoing

cultural decay. He cites the community's distress over their children lacking livelihoods and education, their inability to accumulate resources to follow the proper ceremonies for their holidays, and the lack of assets and support in consolidating oral histories as "tantamount proof and evidence of the loss of culture." Coyle also recounted high levels of anxiety around elders dying, in particular. Besides the bereavement of human life, this represents the loss of cultural memory, especially of their physical homeland, Arakan, and broaches an often-unspoken dynamic of displacement involving families being forced to choose one grandparent to assist throughout the refugee journey.

The Significance of Cultural Heritage in Post-Genocide Contexts

Genocide manifests through the intentional destruction of social identity, which comprises the common faculties binding individuals to a group, including language, traditions, social structures, land, or physical objects.[16] Group identity reinforces a shared history and memory, with one cultural heritage scholar naming genocide a "memoricide."[17] This mutual narrative provides a stable positioning in the world associated with the ability to perceive a meaningful future. Regarding the Rohingya crisis, several international law scholars have contested that the overemphasis on physical destruction disregards the severity of "crimes that destroy the very fabric of a group."[18]

Framing Cultural Heritage

Dr. Anne Gilliand, director and professor at the Center for Information Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles, distinguishes three aspects of cultural heritage targeted in instances of genocide. The first is religious, cultural, and other physical sites being deliberately attacked, erasing the imprints of home and sense of belonging. Second, other aspects of tangible culture might be eliminated, including the destruction or denial of documentation of participation in civil life. Lastly, the intangible aspects dissipate more inadvertently. UNESCO defines intangible cultural heritage, sometimes termed "living cultural heritage," as "practices, expressions, knowledge and skills" that are validated by the community and frequently manifested through "oral traditions; performing arts; social practices, rituals, and festive events; knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe; and traditional craftsmanship."[19]

This definition highlights emerging theories in the heritage sector exploring the historical Western proclivity for tangible culture, with funding precedence given to monuments, cultural sites, and other physical artifacts.[20] Heritage scholars hypothesize that the West, oriented toward a more "scientific materialism," has been less inclined to espouse culture's metaphysical and transcendental aspects.[21] Moreover, some fret that this materialism has constructed static definitions of culture focused mainly on "concrete manifestations," yielding interventions attempting to merely catalog while "fixing or freezing intangible cultural heritage to some pure or primordial form."[22] Research from the International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property alternatively asserts that culture is not stagnant but, while constantly evolving, is "dynamic and can be seen as production."[23]

These theories could be relevant to the Rohingya crisis due to an intuitive reliance on intangible heritage as a people cut off from their physical territory and cultural sites and thus already dependent on oral traditions. Outside of their homeland, shifting localities over time may engender varying Rohingya cultural expressions and ways of being among the diaspora. Therefore, recognizing the living nature of culture embraces the past, present, and future in the "massively creative enterprise," as Rasa Davidavičiūtė puts it, of ongoing heritage production.[24] Preservation efforts may require more innovative and underfunded approaches to uphold cultural memory, capture and revitalize intangible heritage, and integrate the metamorphosis of Rohingya identity.

Integrating Cultural Heritage Into Crisis Response Policy

In post-genocide and conflict literature, research suggests the necessity of merging cultural heritage activities into the recovery process, ensuring holistic solutions equivalent to the severity of the offense. The intuitive community reaction of immediately reviving culturally significant structures and practices in post-conflict settings showcases the "strong psychosocial need to re-establish the familiar and

cherished following a phase of violent disruption of normal life."[25] Besides reclaiming familiarity, post-conflict settings have demonstrated how "reaffirming identity" through cultural heritage work can build resilience amidst precarious circumstances.[26]

The high volume of immediate physical needs following war or genocide results in cultural heritage rarely achieving precedence and the phenomena of "culture must wait."[27] When funding perchance is procured for cultural reconstruction activities, the amount tends to be meager, often financing monitoring and evaluation reporting or lending itself to "narrow interpretations" of heritage concerned with physical property and structures.[28]

In persuading humanitarian actors of the urgency of cultural preservation efforts among genocide survivors, Gilliand raises the case of the International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, established by the United Nations to hold accountable those responsible for crimes of ethnic cleansing and mass atrocities in the Balkan region throughout the 1990s.[29] Their efforts converged on building databases of documentation and testimonies as evidence against perpetrators, an argument understood by aid agencies, justifying the immediacy of preserving documents. Nevertheless, Gilliand claims that "what victims did not understand was that prosecution was not interested particularly in the human aspects of being a victim" and that the intangible and narrative nature of the database became more important to survivors.

When surveying other heritage intervention approaches, Gilliand included Native American populations, where U.S. federal action has aimed to apprehend their dissipating language. Among the Bosnian diaspora, a surge of digital efforts has spawned "trans-local virtual villages" as a platform for community members to experience their heritage immersively; however, project longevity limits the understanding of its effectiveness. Gilliand noted the Armenian community's success in achieving community-driven approaches due to their innate resilience and unified determination for heritage preservation in response to the sheer extent of the brutality during the Armenian genocide.

Mapping Current Cultural Preservation Efforts

The movement by international actors to address unique cultural threats facing the Rohingya has been slow, with much of the attention and resources poured toward humanitarian relief. In the past five years, though, several initiatives have arisen, both within and outside of the Rohingya community, that are particularly focused on aspects of Rohingya cultural memory. At the moment, this handful of initiatives represents individual efforts of concerned grassroots actors or development agencies operating more or less independently of each other, with some situated at the heart of Cox's Bazar refugee settlements while others operate across the diaspora networks.

Centers for Rohingya Cultural Expression

Various centers promoting Rohingya culture have been founded throughout the crisis. One flagship project is the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre (RCMC) located in Cox's Bazar. The RCMC is the product of an in-depth study conducted in the camps in 2019, which revealed that the loss of identity was a central issue in the Rohingya's sense of depleted well-being. Following this was an intensive effort by field workers to map tangible and intangible aspects of the Rohingya cultural experience.

The RCMC initially began as a virtual archive and subsequently as a physical showcase of a comprehensive collection of tangible objects, such as domestic items used in everyday life, including basketry, pottery, and embroidery, as well as woodwork, architectural models, visual arts, and various artifacts related to the ancestral heritage of the Rohingya in their homeland in Arakan. David Palazón, the former curator of the RCMC, describes the mapping procedure as a research-to-production process. The resulting cultural memories were graded, edited, archived, and presented back to the community in an enhanced format for their perusal through a series of community consultations, focus groups, workshops, and interviews with knowledge-holders.

According to Palazón, through this process, the RCMC aimed to "mediate a narrative of the Rohingya experience fully owned by the community." He

explained that the items in the collection are framed on one side by memories of their beloved homeland of Arakan and on the other by the endurance of the Rohingya refugee community in Bangladesh. He further added that these mementos could be classified into three major areas: items of emotional or economic value rescued during their escape from Myanmar, items produced by artisans through their own memory, knowledge, and skills, and lastly, ingenious items created in the refugee camp as a practical mode of survival.

Aside from the RCMC, other centers have been established outside the region serving resettled Rohingya populations. This includes the Rohingya Culture Center serving an expanding Rohingya refugee population in Chicago. The center not only facilitates the assimilation of the newly arriving refugees into American society but also acts as a platform for the Rohingya to practice and present their own cultural experience while in the diaspora.

Rohingya Women's Development Network, one of the first Rohingya woman-led organizations, provides language, livelihood, and religious programming for Rohingya women in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The organization also provides a communal space where Rohingya can coalesce and connect to their culture through events, workshops, and celebrations. Founder Sharifah Shakirah encourages her community to engage in seemingly small yet powerful acts of heritage transmission, like speaking the Rohingya language with their children and preparing Rohingya cuisine in their homes to cultivate a deeper attachment to their cultural roots. Shakirah has emerged as a global activist tackling gender inequality in her community and championing the cause of justice for the Rohingya genocide.

The spark in international attention toward the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar since the communal riots in Rakhine state in 2012 coincided with an awakening among much of the Rohingya diaspora in the region toward solidarity with those fellow Rohingya victims on the ground. This also manifested in a renewed effort by many transnational diasporic groups toward the revitalization of Rohingya ethnic identity that was not only suppressed in Rakhine state but also seen to have been at threat of multigenerational loss in the diaspora, given the assimilatory pressures faced by communities in their various host countries. Shakirah represents this concerned group of diaspora members. In an interview on the urgency of Rohingya cultural preservation, she stresses the importance of Rohingya voices telling the world "who we are" and showing them "we are equal human beings" in order to defeat genocidal intentions, claiming "if we don't have that, then we are supporting the Burmese military to clear our names and identity and destroy everything that we have, chasing us away from the land. So we cannot let it happen."

Rohingya Media, Language, and Artistic Revival

A proliferation of Rohingya media can be seen in the past decade, mostly available on digital channels, given that most Rohingya outside of Myanmar manage to access smartphones as a survival tool. While many of the products generated by Rohingya content creators cover current affairs and situations on the ground in the conflict zone, a minor portion of the content has been devoted to themes of Rohingya cultural art forms, ancestral history of their land of Arakan, and religious programming. Since 2012, R-Vision, considered the first Rohingya television channel, has broadcasted limited cultural segments, filming Rohingya expounding upon the meaning of cultural proverbs, hosting Rohingya singers and musicians, and endorsing reading and writing in the Rohingya language. Co-Founder Mohammad Noor says they "promote reviving the culture" by influencing viewers to preserve, save, document, and share cultural practices or artifacts.

Along with promoting Rohingya cultural identity, Noor's recent focus has shifted toward preserving the documentary record relating to the Rohingya presence in Arakan. One of his initiatives in this regard has been the Rohingya Historical Archive, which seeks to mobilize members of the Rohingya diaspora to create a digital record of a variety of identity documents and aspects of cultural memory related to the lived experiences of those who have lived in Arakan.

As the identity crisis and threat of language loss have become more pronounced in recent years, there has been a resurgence within Rohingya diaspora communities around language retention. When the Unicode Consortium officially accepted the Hanafi

script in 2022, community members began translating the Quran into the Rohingya script for the first time as well. Noor states that "preservation will ultimately be through the manifestation of the language," and so "nourishing and empowering language is one of the key factors if we as a people want to survive."

Aside from these attempts at halting cultural loss, there has been a flowering of disparate works across the wider Rohingya diaspora demonstrating a range of artistic and creative talent, particularly online. A prominent voice has been Mayyu Ali, a Rohingya poet and writer who has attempted to capture the narrative of the struggle of the Rohingya in his works. Hailing originally from Rakhine state and with a background in literature, he has sought to inspire other young Rohingya to move toward capturing their cultural experience and broadcasting it to a broader international audience. To this end, he founded The Art Garden Rohingya, a virtual platform showcasing the works of over 100 Rohingya writers, artists, and poets. His work has evolved into a youth-led research initiative, the Rohingya Language Preservation Project, which recently published a report titled "First They Targeted Our Language and Culture," chronicling the history of Myanmar's attacks on Rohingya identity and exploring the implications of genocide seen through the decline of the Rohingya vernacular in the Bangladesh camps.

Lastly, there has been the recent launch of the Rohingyatographer, an online magazine composed of works by trained Rohingya photographers on the ground in Cox's Bazar. Photography acts as a medium of empowerment and self-expression for these refugees to capture the unique moments in the lives of community members as they seek to negotiate the harsh realities of the camps.

Current Challenges

Funding Crisis

The prospect of the Rohingya experiencing a communitywide loss of identity and cultural erasure comes at a time when there is an overwhelming humanitarian crisis to meet the survival needs of their population, particularly in the largest refugee settlement in the world in Cox's Bazar. In the past year, the situation in the camps has dramatically worsened, with a spike in crime and gangsterism, as well as the proliferation of drugs. The desperate conditions have resulted in an increased wave of migration of Rohingya to Southeast Asia this past winter, further deepening the regional nature of the issue. Unfortunately, the past year has also coincided with donor fatigue, due mainly to the shift in international focus to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and the aftermath of the pandemic stretching national budgets, as the Bangladesh government is now struggling to bear most of the burden of hosting such a large population. A recent effort by the international donor conference to raise sufficient funds to meet the Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya in Bangladesh resulted in an over 50% shortfall of over $400 million.[30] This led to the United Nations' unprecedented and highly criticized move to cut food rations, citing a lack of funds.[31] Currently, the U.N. is making a renewed push for further funds from donors to meet needs such as nutrition and health care.[32] Given the present realities of funding shortages, the enduring cultural crisis for the Rohingya will likely receive less financial consideration from certain stakeholders involved.

Participation and Audience

Furthermore, a community consultation research project during the COVID-19 pandemic executed by the International Organization for Migration exhibits a growing distrust among the Rohingya community in Cox's Bazar toward humanitarian organizations and aid workers, identifying a feeling of suspicion due to underrepresentation.[33] Even regarding preservation initiatives and decision making on which aspects of culture to safeguard, one field researcher in Cox's Bazar remarked that "rarely were Rohingya leading that conversation." The researcher also identified the potential harm by the humanitarian sector in projects catering to an audience of donors and the international community rather than to the Rohingya community itself.

Externally led projects risk the persistence of speculating about the Rohingya community instead of engaging their voices to ensure dignity and promote community-driven efforts. Further limitations include the "short-term, quick-fix, pre-planned project culture" of many humanitarian organizations or donor-funded

initiatives requiring expedited visual displays of success.[34] Instead, some heritage scholars contend for conditions and values promoting "participatory reconstruction" where local community involvement is prioritized to produce more tailored solutions and resist uniform responses from outside actors.[35] The risk looms of international organizations inserting their values into delicate post-conflict or crisis settings.[36] A healthy repercussion of responses administered by the Rohingya community includes transferring justice into the hands of internal group members and beyond external geopolitical actors.[37]

Siloization of Current Efforts

Recent efforts lack the scale and resources to effectively deal with this community-wide cultural identity crisis that spans the region and several Rohingya population centers in various host states. These efforts, spearheaded by INGOs or CSOs, normally cater to the needs of the Rohingya refugee communities in their particular settings and lack transnational cooperation. Within the Rohingya diaspora organizations themselves, such coordination across boundaries on these issues is also rare, with disparate areas concentrating on isolated aspects of culture. On top of this, the deterioration of ground conditions in the camps in Cox's Bazar, which hosts the largest single Rohingya population, further renders the task of fieldwork on cultural preservation or production unfeasible until the situation can improve. Consequently, Muhammad Noor advocates that "now the heavy burden on preserving culture is on people in diaspora." He notes that while some diaspora members are still in dire situations, they are socioeconomically more advantaged than the community in Bangladesh and not endangered by cultural enactment, as are those still in the Rakhine state in Myanmar. Therefore, he urges those at liberty to practice Rohingya culture to participate in Rohingya festivals, cuisine, clothing, and language with their families.

The Impending Generational Loss of Cultural Memory

While the Rohingya possess a multilayered and intricate cultural fabric linked with their lived existence in Arakan, the reservoir for much of this cultural memory can be found in the hearts and minds of the older generation of Rohingya. This generation lived in the post-independence era in Myanmar, in which the Rohingya people had a degree of limited freedom to express themselves culturally in their own land and a vibrant society, before the imposition of the junta's exclusionary policies and military persecutions beginning in the 1970s.

The elders retain, for the most part, the realities of that lived experience of the Rohingya people and the complex cultural matrix that had developed in Arakan, including a period of relatively harmonious intercommunal relations with their Rakhine neighbors and a more thriving local economy in which the Rohingya played an active part in fishery and farming. They, in turn, have passed their recollections of these experiences down to succeeding generations, mostly to those living in the diaspora who have never set foot in Arakan itself. The forms these recollections take are varied. They include the Rohingyas' own historical narrative of the origins of the Rohingya people, dating their link to the land back centuries. They cover forms of oral storytelling of popular tales and incidents of note, interwoven with the struggles of the Rohingya people who persevered in the face of oppression and stories of those cultural icons who resisted the military regime. They encompass an entire lexicon of Rohingya special phrases, idioms, and a range of other terminological references connected back to their homeland. They also relate to the knowledge behind the practices of trades and crafts for which the Rohingya had their own distinctive methods that were deeply connected to the communal context and differed depending on clan, township, and village in Arakan.

The elders then represent the most significant resource for the Rohingya in retaining their intangible cultural heritage. Given their age and the precarious conditions in which they often live, they are also most vulnerable to various threats. Yet there has not been a concerted effort by the international community to consolidate and preserve their cultural memory despite the urgency presented by the extent of the loss once this generation passes away. Rather, the emphasis has been diverted toward preserving the more material and physically visible aspects of Rohingya culture. While these no doubt are valuable from the standpoint of the

Rohingya, they do not fully capture the broader context and organic reality of life back in Arakan, which holds a more profound significance for the people concerned. Unfortunately, UNESCO's mechanism designed to protect intangible heritage is inaccessible to the Rohingya community due to their civil and political status as a stateless population. In 2003, UNESCO's General Convention included a provision to publish annually the Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity and a List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding.[38] However, the nomination process relies on the submission by a State Party, therefore excluding communities without government recognition and corroboration.

Illiteracy as a Cultural Barrier

Cultural reproduction predicates a level of literacy among the population concerned. A significant challenge for the Rohingya is the desperately low literacy level among the population due to their being denied access to formal education at primary, secondary, and tertiary levels in Myanmar and as primarily refugees in their host states in the region. Even for the few Rohingya who gained an education in Myanmar, any historical trace of the Rohingya people as a member of the diverse ethnic makeup of the country is absent from their teaching due to the decades-old policy of national Burmanization of the educational curriculum. In the diaspora, most Rohingya can only gain a religious education by attending an informal learning center, normally a community madrassa.

The historical legacy of lack of education access has led to the relative dearth of written cultural works and the delay in standardizing the Rohingya script. As the Rohingya continue in many contexts without education access, the likelihood of Rohingya now and in the future being able to engage with the Rohingya script and contribute constructively to perpetuating it as a written language dwindles. As mentioned previously, approximately 80% of the Rohingya who arrived in Bangladesh in 2017 lacked literacy. The Bangladesh authorities subsequently banned access to local education curricula for these Rohingya as well, and only a minority in the camps are now able to be taught from the Myanmar national curriculum.

Therefore, the Rohingya cultural crisis is directly linked to the Rohingya educational crisis, given that those literary and cultural products written in Rohingya scripts are limited in terms of readership among the wider Rohingya audience. Additionally, many aspects of the Rohingya historical and cultural narrative, which may be shared across the more privileged and vocal sections of the Rohingya diaspora, remain inaccessible to many lay Rohingya due to the literacy barrier. As these Rohingya outside Myanmar live longer in their host societies as informal residents, there will be an increasing tendency to assimilate. The sole force toward cultural retention of their Rohingya identity is the physical enclavization of the Rohingya themselves in clustered urban communities, such as in Malaysia, or camp settlements, as in Bangladesh.

Recommendations

1. Incorporate cultural preservation as a key theme in current international stakeholder and donor conferences focused on humanitarian relief, with the aim of drawing attention to the necessity of integrating heritage preservation in the Rohingya crisis response.
2. Given the present difficulties faced by the Rohingya in the Cox's Bazar refugee camps, empower voices in the Rohingya diaspora toward cultural production and facilitate the creation of a formal working group to connect and foster collaboration between disparate organizations, academics, and community members.
3. Redirect current interventions on Rohingya cultural preservation to target intangible aspects of Rohingya cultural identity as opposed to purely material demonstrations of Rohingya heritage to certify that efforts are upholding the most vulnerable and at-risk aspects of culture.
4. Given the present funding crisis faced in responding to the Rohingya humanitarian disaster, facilitate the opening of funds from alternative sources dedicated to cultural protection and restoration for Rohingya communities to ensure cultural preservation efforts are adequately resourced.
5. Support the production and utilization of materials in the Rohingya language, whether literature, poetry,

digital media, or educational materials, to promote the communitywide use of the spoken and written Rohingya language.

6. In addition to current archival efforts around documentation for genocide prosecution, build comprehensive archives capturing the oral histories of elders and others' accounts of life in Arakan, and the lived experiences of Rohingya communities in the diaspora, lending data to be used by researchers, authors, artists, and future generations.
7. Apply pressure on UNESCO to include the Rohingya community on their List of Intangible Heritage in Need of Urgent Safeguarding, forming other pathways for nomination outside State Parties. This action will raise awareness and provide additional resources to protect the Rohingya's cultural heritage.
8. Engage academic institutions regionally and internationally on topics beyond the humanitarian crisis and genocide, promoting anthropological research around Rohingya heritage. While broadening and deepening academic research on Rohingya culture, this will simultaneously cultivate intervention efforts less hindered by expedited project outputs or regional political agendas.
9. Allocate more funding toward grassroots projects being led by community leaders, where possible, to ensure community-led initiatives are supported and that preservation efforts are guided by those with the most credible and intimate knowledge of the Rohingya language, culture, and history.
10. Embrace decentralized and smartphone-accessible apps and platforms with the power to circulate cultural content to unite Rohingya throughout the global diaspora around a shared identity, traditions, language, and practices.
11. Develop consolidated reference books and other teaching materials on Rohingya ancestral heritage and culture to be taught in the current curriculum directed toward Rohingya youth who are able to access primary and secondary schooling to ensure transmission through education for future generations.

Conclusion

The Rohingya community continues to express serious concerns regarding the erosion of its language and culture. The challenges faced by Rohingya diaspora members, such as the pressures to assimilate in various host countries, dire living conditions in the Bangladesh refugee camps, legal statelessness, and the inevitable passing of the elderly, have all raised the task of heritage preservation to a status of urgency. Considering their displacement from their physical homeland and the predominantly oral nature of their linguistic traditions, the intangible aspects of their culture remain at the highest risk of diminishing, underscoring the need for concerted efforts toward archiving them.

As survivors of a genocide, the revitalization and production of their cultural heritage are paramount in the process of healing and establishing a cohesive communal identity to nurture a sense of belonging among its members. Scholarly evidence suggests that cultural preservation initiatives for survivors of conflicts and genocides are as imperative as humanitarian aid in addressing the multifaceted needs of affected communities.

In response, the international community should make coordinated efforts to champion the protection of Rohingya heritage through immediate action. Policymakers and donors must advocate for funding toward Rohingya-led initiatives, accessible technology solutions that can increase engagement and unity throughout the diaspora, and endeavors that uphold interdisciplinary partnerships. Moreover, a crucial step would be the establishment of a dedicated working group to bring together cross-sector stakeholders to function as a cooperative task force. This network would aim to collaborate through consolidating resources and expertise, thus mitigating redundant efforts and moving forward with a coherent strategy.

Community members may continue embracing the practice of the Rohingya language and heritage collectively in their households and local communities, simultaneously engaging in activism and advocacy efforts through their involvement and leadership in various organizations. Furthermore, efforts to produce and disseminate cultural content should demonstrate

ingenuity in reaching a broader Rohingya audience and efficiently storing essential data, spanning educational materials, entertainment, and media, as well as literature and traditional proverbs in the Rohingya script. The response to such a task necessitates comprehensive, innovative, and synergetic approaches for the paramount work of safeguarding the rich heritage and language of the Rohingya community.

Acknowledgments

The authors wish to thank the numerous independent experts who offered their insight for this piece, including the following:

Dr. Anne Gilliand: Director and Professor at the Center for Information Studies, University of California, Los Angeles

Daniel Coyle: Field Researcher in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

David Palazón: Former Curator of the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre

Muhammad Noor: Co-Founder of R-Vision and Founder of Rohingya Project

Sharifah Shakirah: Founder and Director of Rohingya Women's Development Network

Shahirah Mujumdar: Former Editor/Producer of the Rohingya Cultural Memory Centre

Anonymous community member and Field Researcher in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh

Saqib Sheikh's work centers on advocacy, social inclusion and educational access for refugees and stateless people. He serves as Project Director for the Rohingya Project, a grassroots initiative for the empowerment of the Rohingya diaspora using blockchain technology. He is also a cofounder and adviser for the Refugee Coalition of Malaysia, where he focuses on creating formal pathways for refugee placement in higher education institutes in Malaysia. Sheikh is currently a PhD researcher at the S. Rajaratnam School of International Studies, Singapore, researching Rohingya identity, statelessness, and assimilation strategies. Find his LinkedIn profile at: https://www.linkedin.com/in/saqib-m-sheikh

Carolyn Morris is a master's student in Migration Studies at the University of Oxford's Department of International Development. After graduating from university, she moved to Malaysia to work with a community center, where her role involved co-launching a livelihood program with Rohingya women. Afterward, she worked with the International Rescue Committee in a refugee community in the U.S., also engaging with the Rohingya community there. Morris' experiences revealed a gap in anthropological research on Rohingya heritage that inspired her involvement in grassroots organizations, storytelling projects, and academic initiatives focused on preserving and revitalizing Rohingya cultural and religious identity post-genocide. Find her LinkedIn profile at: https://www.linkedin.com/in/carolyn-morris-4712351b4

Endnotes

1 Nebehay, S. (2018). *U.N. calls for Myanmar generals to be tried for genocide, blames Facebook for incitement.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un-idUSKCN1LC0KN

2 Adeno, A. (2017). Genocide and belonging: Processes of imagining communities. *University of Pennsylvania Journal of International Law, 38*, 1041

3 Alsahafi, M. (2020). When homeland remains a distant dream: Language attitudes and heritage language maintenance among Rohingya refugees in Saudi Arabia. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 25*, 1292–1303

4 Neimoto, K. (2015). *The Rohingya issue in Myanmar.* Asia Peacebuilding Initiatives. http://peacebuilding.asia/the-rohingya-issue-in-myanmar/

5 Rohingya Language Preservation Project. (2022). *First they targeted our culture and language: Threats to Rohingya language, culture, and identity in Myanmar and Bangladesh.* Cultural Survival. https://static1.squarespace.com/static/60bf6286f8727b345cf75b1b/t/6371eec6f9e441173e6fb96b7/1668415615840/First-They-Targeted-Our-Culture-and-Language-RLPP-Report.pdf

6 Leider, J. (2018). Rohingya: The history of a Muslim identity in Myanmar. *Oxford research encyclopedia of Asian history.* Oxford University Press

7 Prasse-Freeman, E., & Mausert, K. (2020). Two sides of the same Arakanese coin: 'Rakhine,' 'Rohingya,' and ethnogenesis as schismogenesis. In E. Prasse-Freeman, P. Chachavalpongpun, & P. Strefford (Eds.), *Unraveling Myanmar: Critical hurdles to Myanmar's opening up process*. Kyoto University Press

8 Biswas, N. (2022). Identity, intersectionality and refugees in Cox's Bazaar: Remaking Rohingyas? In I. Hussain, *Rohingya camp narratives: Tales from the 'lesser roads' traveled* (pp. 149–171). Palgrave Macmillan

9 Eberhard, D., Simons, G., & Fennig, C. (2021). *Ethnologue: Languages of the world* (22nd edn.). SIL International. http://www.ethnologue.com/language/rhg

10 Pandey, A. (2016). *Revised proposal to encode Hanifi Rohingya in Unicode*. The Unicode Consortium. L2/16–311R. https://unicode.org/L2/L2016/16311r-hanifi-rohingya.pdf

11 Briggs, B. (2017). *100 days of horror and misery for the Rohingya refugee children.* Theirworld. https://theirworld.org/news/100-days-crisis-rohingya-refugee-children-education/

12 Translators Without Borders. (2017). *Rohingya Zuban: A Translators Without Borders rapid assessment of language barriers in the Cox's Bazar refugee response.* ArcGIS Online. https://www.arcgis.com/apps/Cascade/index.html?appid=683a58b07dba4db18929706lb4f8cd40

13 Ali, M. (2021). *A language in crisis: Rohingya.* Cultural Survival. https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/language-crisis-rohingya

14 UNESCO. (2019). *Dive into intangible cultural heritage!* UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. https://ich.unesco.org/en/dive&display=threat#tabs

15 DMG. (2022, March 6). *Arakan agricultural sector needs modern technology, financing to compete globally.* Development Media Group. https://www.dmediag.com/news-article/n-md-tcn.html

16 Davidavičiūtė, R. (2020). Cultural heritage, genocide, and normative agency. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *38*(4), 599–614. https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12473

17 Rose, D. V. (2007). Conflict and the deliberate destruction of cultural heritage. In H. Anheier & Y. Raj Isar (Eds.), *Cultures and globalization: Conflicts and tensions* (pp. 102–118). SAGE Books

18 O'Brien, M., & Hoffstaedter, G. (2020). "There we are nothing, here we are nothing!"—The enduring effects of the Rohingya genocide. *Social Sciences, 9*(11), 1-16. https://doi.org/10.3390/socsci9110209, p. 11

19 UNESCO. (n.d.). *Questions and answers: Intangible heritage.* UNESCO World Heritage Convention. https://whc.unesco.org/en/faq/40

20 Forster, A. M., Thomson, D., Richards, K., Pilcher, N., & Vettese, S. (2019). Western and Eastern building conservation philosophies: Perspectives on permanence and impermanence. *International Journal of Architectural Heritage*, *13*(6), 870–885. https://doi.org/10.1080/15583058.2018.1490827

21 Winter, T. (2013). Clarifying the critical in critical heritage studies. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *19*(6), 532–545. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2012.720997, p. 532

22 UNESCO. (2019). *Safeguarding without freezing*. UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage. https://ich.unesco.org/en/safeguarding-00012

23 Lee, G. Y. (2007). Hmong postwar identity production: Heritage maintenance and cultural reinterpretation. In N. Stanley-Price (Ed.), *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery: Papers from the ICCROM FORUM held on October 4–6, 2005* (*Vol. 6*, Ser. ICCROM Conservation Studies, pp. 51–59). P. 57

24 Davidavičiūtė, R. (2020). Cultural heritage, genocide, and normative agency. *Journal of Applied Philosophy*, *38*(4), 599–614. https://doi.org/10.1111/japp.12473, p. 609

25 Stanley-Price, N. (2005). The thread of continuity: Cultural heritage in postwar recovery, ICCROM Forum. In *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery* (*Vol. 6*, Ser. ICCROM Conservation Studies, pp. 1–16), p. 1

26 Stanley-Price, N. (2005). The thread of continuity: Cultural heritage in postwar recovery, ICCROM Forum. In *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery* (*Vol. 6*, Ser. ICCROM Conservation Studies, pp. 1–16), p. 8

27 Stanley-Price, N. (2005). The thread of continuity: Cultural heritage in postwar recovery, ICCROM Forum. In *Cultural Heritage in Postwar Recovery* (*Vol. 6*, Ser. ICCROM Conservation Studies, pp. 1–16), p. 6

28 Barakat, S. (2020). Necessary conditions for integrated approaches to the post-conflict recovery of cultural heritage in the arab world. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *27*(5), 433–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2020.1799061, p. 441

29 ICTY. (2010, February 7). International Justice Resource Center. https://ijrcenter.org/international-criminal-law/icty/

30 Rahman, S. (2023). *Rohingya crisis: The picture of fund crisis and its impacts on Bangladesh.* Modern Diplomacy. https://moderndiplomacy.eu/2023/01/12/rohingya-crisis-the-picture-of-fund-crisis-and-its-impacts-on-bangladesh/

31 Reuters. (2023). *U.N. to cut food aid for Rohingya refugees, citing fund shortfall.* Reuters. https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/un-cut-food-aid-rohingya-refugees-citing-fund-shortfall-2023-02-17/

32 Business Times. (2023). *UN seeks US$876 million for Rohingya aid package after funding cuts.* Business Times. https://www.businesstimes.com.sg/international/un-seeks-us876-million-rohingya-aid-package-after-funding-cuts#:~:text=THE%20United%20Nations%20said%20Tuesday,cut%20to%20their%20food%20rations.

33 Coyle, D., & Holt, C. (2020). *COVID-19 explained, trust.* IOM U.N. Migration

34 Barakat, S. (2020). Necessary conditions for integrated approaches to the post-conflict recovery of cultural heritage in the arab world. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *27*(5), 433–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2020.1799061, p. 444

35 Barakat, S. (2020). Necessary conditions for integrated approaches to the post-conflict recovery of cultural heritage in the arab world. *International Journal of Heritage Studies*, *27*(5), 433–448. https://doi.org/10.1080/13527258.2020.1799061, p. 444

36 Rose, D. V. (2007). Conflict and the Deliberate Destruction of Cultural Heritage. In H. Anheier & Y. Raj Isar (Eds.), *Cultures and globalization: Conflicts and tensions* (pp. 102–118). SAGE Books

37 Hickey, R. & Killean, R. (2021, November). Property loss and cultural heritage restoration in the aftermath of genocide: Understanding harm and conceptualising repair. *International Journal of Transitional Justice*, *15*(3), 468–489. https://doi.org/10.1093/ijtj/ijab023, p. 479

38 UNESCO. (2003). *UNESCO – Text of the Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*. Unesco.org. https://ich.unesco.org/en/convention

Rohingya refugees protest the pending termination of operations by the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees in Sri Lanka on Jan. 2, 2024. (Akila Jayawardena/NurPhoto via Getty Images)

An Analysis of Various International Responses to the Conflict in Myanmar Compared With That in Ukraine

Raïss Tinmaung, BE, MA, CD; Rohingya Human Rights Network

1. Introduction and Abstract

The Russian invasion of Ukraine is undoubtedly the largest ongoing conflict in the world today. The death toll stands at tens of thousands, and the mass displacement of people as a consequence of the conflict amounts to millions. More than $150 billion in bilateral aid alone has been spent on the war effort in Ukraine by its allies.[1] Without an end to the war in sight, this spending could continue for months if not years. The international responses to the conflict have been extensive from the political to the humanitarian fronts, and they continue to be so.

In addition to the Ukrainian-Russian conflict, there are several other ongoing conflicts in the world today. These include conflicts in Myanmar, Ethiopia, Yemen, Palestine, Syria, and Sudan, to name a few. This paper focuses on one of these conflicts – the conflict in Myanmar – and how the responses of the international community to the Myanmar conflict have contrasted to those for Ukraine.

Before we begin, let us define the terms "conflict" and "international response," as seen in the scope of this paper. We shed light on the historical background of the two conflicts, and their international responses thus far, before doing a comparative analysis.

2. Definitions

Conflict

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *conflict* as "an active disagreement, as between opposing opinions or needs" and as "fighting between two or more countries or groups of people."[2] Merriam-Webster defines conflict as "a competitive or opposing action of incompatibles" and as "a fight, battle or war," among other definitions.[3]

For the purpose of this paper, we utilize *conflict* in the sense of armed fighting between two or more groups of people from different countries or from within the same country.

International Response

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *international* as "involving more than one country,"[4] while Merriam-Webster's definition of international is "connected with or involving two or more countries."[5]

The Cambridge Dictionary defines *response* as "something said or done as a reaction to something that has been said or done,"[6] while Merriam-Webster's definition of response is "something constituting a reply or a reaction."[7]

In this paper, we view *international response* as what has been said and done by countries worldwide as a reaction to the conflicts being discussed.

3. The Historical Context

Ukraine

The current war in Ukraine began in 2014, when Russia annexed Crimea on the pretext that Crimea was a Russian-speaking region that had always been a part of Russia.[8] In the years after the annexation, Russia continued to support other separatist factions in the Donbass region of eastern Ukraine. Localized conflicts between pro-Russian separatists and the Ukrainian government's forces continued in eastern Ukraine until February 24, 2022, when Russian forces launched an invasion operation.[9]

The Russian invading force made significant gains within the first few days/weeks; however, it gradually withdrew from areas it had captured, mainly in the north and northeast of Ukraine. The Russian presence continues to persist in the south and southeastern parts of Ukraine, primarily in the Crimea, Donetsk, Luhansk, Zaporizhia, and Kherson regions.[10]

Russia has targeted Ukraine's ports and other economic infrastructure. Ukrainian forces have launched successful counteroffensives in major cities and urban centers, with the help of arms and munitions supplied by foreign governments.[11]

There are multiple root causes of the conflict. Russia and Ukraine share significant historical and cultural ties. As a former Soviet colony, Russia sees Ukraine as its region of socioeconomic and political influence. Ukraine, on the contrary, has shown an inclination toward the West, and has expressed interest in joining the European Union as well as NATO.[12] The latter was particularly seen by Russia as a threat to its own security, and hence was the pretext for the invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.[13]

The civilian death toll from the war is estimated at nearly 9,300 by the U.N.[14] Military casualties, according to Reuters' latest estimates, are 15,500-17,500 Ukrainians and 35,500-43,000 Russians.[15]

Myanmar

The current war in Myanmar started with the military coup on February 1, 2021. Myanmar's commander in chief, Min Aung Hlaing, ordered the coup on the pretext that the results of the 2020 fall elections were rigged. The country's reelected de facto leader, Aung San Suu Kyi, and her party members were subsequently arrested and imprisoned by the military.[16]

Nationwide protests erupted immediately after the coup. The military responded with a violent crackdown on the protesters.[17] The protesters organized

themselves into armed groups, under the umbrella of the People's Defense Forces, an armed extension of the National Unity Government, a government-in-exile that was primarily formed by leaders of Suu Kyi's party. The People's Defense Forces formed new collaborations with ethnic armed factions that were already in direct conflict with the military.[18] Consequently, Myanmar entered into a full-scale civil war.

The root causes of the war, apart from the coup d'état that followed the violent crackdown, trace back to colonial period and postcolonial rule, when the country faced serious challenges in nation-building. Military rule took over the country within a decade after independence. Tensions rose between the various minorities and the majority Bama population for land, resources, religion, and other socioeconomic reasons. There are more than 135 ethnic minorities in Myanmar, some of which are not even recognized officially by the Burmese government. Most of the major ethnic minorities have established their own jurisdictions and guerilla forces as their way of self-determination.[19]

The death toll resulting from the ongoing civil war is difficult to verify, though figures as high as 38,000 are estimated to have been killed since February 2021, according to the Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project.[20] Large-scale displacement of refugees into Thailand and other neighboring states continues. Severe human rights abuses – including extrajudicial killings, sexual violence, scorched earth, and indiscriminate attacks on civilian populations – are well documented in the case of the Myanmar civil war. In addition, the slow genocide continues against Rohingya minorities in northwestern Myanmar through severe restrictions of movement, economic activity, and access to aid.[21]

4. International Responses to the Conflict in Ukraine

The international responses to the conflict in Ukraine are manifested in a wide variety of domains, ranging from media to economic aid to political actions to military assistance. This is in addition to international humanitarian aid and responses from civil society organizations.

Media Coverage

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered a sudden surge in international media coverage on "the war in Europe." News outlets worldwide reported the invasion in real time, particularly on the wide-scale destruction and civilian casualties. The coverage highlighted the seriousness of the crisis and its implications for security in Europe and globally.[22]

It was not too long before bias in media narratives could be observed, with certain outlets emphasizing specific aspects of the conflict over others, primarily based on their country's geopolitical interests. Western media outlets emphasized Russia's aggression and violation of international law. They highlighted Ukraine's struggle for sovereignty and its freedom to choose the influence it preferred.[23]

On the contrary, the Russian media portrayed the invasion as a necessary response to protect Russian-speaking populations in Ukraine and alleged the presence of far-right elements in the Ukrainian government. They also accused Western countries of meddling in Ukraine's internal affairs and promoting an anti-Russian agenda.[24]

Social media platforms played a crucial role in disseminating information during the crisis. Platforms like Twitter (now X), Facebook, and YouTube allowed individuals on the ground to share real-time updates, videos, and images, providing a glimpse into the conflict's human cost. Both sides of the conflict used social media to push their narratives, leading to an "information war" in cyberspace. However, the sheer volume of information and the lack of verification processes also led to the spread of misinformation and propaganda.[25]

Economic Actions

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) was among the first organizations to provide bailout support to Ukraine. It has provided a $115 billion global package, which includes $15 billion in loans, $80 in concessional grants from multilateral institutions and countries, and $20 billion in debt relief.[26]

Apart from the IMF, other international financial institutions have played a vital role in providing economic aid to Ukraine. The World Bank has mobilized over $37.5 billion to assist Ukraine in fulfilling essential needs and rebuilding its economy.[27] The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) also extended financial support to Ukraine's businesses and economy, committing €3 billion over 2022 and 2023.[28]

Numerous countries have and continue to provide bilateral aid to Ukraine, signaling their solidarity and commitment to the country's struggle during the war. The top donor nations are the European Union, the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, and Australia, among other nations. The United States itself has provided nearly €25 billion in financial assistance, followed by €5.6 billion from Japan, and nearly €4 billion and €3.5 billion from the U.K. and Canada, respectively.[29]

The European Union has offered the largest amount of bilateral financial aid to Ukraine, €27.3 billion. This is not including aid from other European states – such as Norway, the Netherlands, France, and Poland – which each have provided €0.7 billion to €1 billion in financial aid.[30]

The figures given here are only for financial aid, and they exclude humanitarian and military assistance, which were provided in addition to economic assistance. The sheer amount of economic aid demonstrates the international community's unwavering solidarity with Ukraine.

Military Aid

The United States has provided $46.6 billion in military aid to Ukraine as of July 2023. This aid includes long-range rocket artillery systems, ammunition, counterfire radars, air surveillance radars and drones, antitank missiles, and coastal defense systems. The aid has enhanced Ukraine's ability to deter Russian aggression and strengthen its ground and air defense capabilities.[31]

In addition to the United States, several other countries – including the United Kingdom, Canada, Lithuania, and Poland – have also provided military equipment – such as armored vehicles, rifles, and communications systems – to support Ukraine's defense forces.[32] Alongside military equipment, international partners have offered military training and advisory support to Ukraine's armed forces. In particular, the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada have sent military advisers and trainers to Ukraine to provide expertise on tactics, intelligence, and strategic planning. These trainers have helped train tens of thousands of Ukrainian troops to enhance their capabilities and coordination.[33]

International military aid to Ukraine has not been limited to bilateral support. Multilateral military cooperation and joint exercises have played a crucial role in strengthening Ukraine's defense capabilities. NATO member states have constantly participated in military drills and exercises in Eastern Europe, reinforcing and creating new battle groups in the region. NATO's members have sent ships, aircraft, and troops to Eastern Europe to increase their deterrence posture against potential further Russian aggression in the region.[34] The provision of international military aid to Ukraine demonstrates the international community's unwavering commitment to deterring Russia's war in Ukraine.

Humanitarian Aid

Numerous international organizations have played a vital role in providing humanitarian aid to Ukraine since the onset of the conflict. The United Nations and its various agencies – including the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Program (WFP), and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) – have been actively engaged in delivering life-saving assistance to affected civilians.[35]

The UNHCR has focused on providing shelter, essential supplies, and support for displaced populations within Ukraine and those who have fled to neighboring countries. The WFP has been instrumental in distributing food aid to those facing food insecurity due to the conflict, while UNICEF has been working to ensure access to education, health care, and protection services for vulnerable children.[36]

In addition to the U.N., a multitude of humanitarian organizations have also been on the ground, providing

essential relief and support in conflict-affected areas. Médecins Sans Frontières (Doctors Without Borders) spent $50.5 million in Ukraine in 2022, and the American Red Cross alone contributed $53 million to Ukraine relief efforts through August 2022.[37] The Canadian Red Cross raised $1.25 billion (Canadian) as of July 2022.[38]

Aid from governments has also added to the immense outpouring of humanitarian assistance to Ukraine, notably:

1. €570 million from January to November 2022 by the Austrian government[39]
2. €800 million from Belgium by April 2022 (within 2 months of the start of war)[40]
3. $500 million (Canadian) from Canada by November 2022 on Ukraine Sovereignty bonds[41]
4. €190 million from Denmark by January 2023[42]
5. €420 million from Lithuania by December 2022[43]
6. €118 million from the Netherlands by July 2023[44]
7. €1.3 billion per year for five years from Norway[45]
8. $100 million from Qatar[46]
9. $400 million from Saudi Arabia[47]
10. $100 million from South Korea in 2022[48] and $130 million in 2023[49]
11. $1.3 billion from Switzerland donated by February 2023
12. $1.9 billion from Germany and $1 billion from Japan[50]
13. $3.6 billion from the U.S., and $2.1 billion by the EU[51]

These figures do not include many countries that have given less than $100 million, and they also exclude material and equipment support provided by numerous nations for the reconstruction and repair of shelters, and the distribution of essential nonfood items like blankets, hygiene kits, and cooking supplies.

This international humanitarian aid has demonstrated unparalleled global solidarity with Ukraine and conveyed a message of compassion and support to the affected population unlike anywhere else.

Other Political Actions, Including Sanctions

One of the immediate responses to the Russian invasion was a wave of international condemnation. Around the globe, countries publicly criticized Russia's actions, declaring their support for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity.[52] At the U.N. General Assembly in March 2022, 141 countries voted in favor of a resolution demanding Russia to immediately end its military operations in Ukraine.[53] In another General Assembly resolution in September 2022, 143 countries condemned Russia's annexation of four eastern regions of Ukraine.[54]

Diplomatic efforts were also undertaken to find a resolution to the crisis through dialogue and negotiations. Multiple rounds of talks were initially held between Russian and Ukrainian representatives, with the involvement of international mediators such as Turkey[55] and Belarus,[56] in an attempt to reach a cease-fire and deescalate the conflict. Later on, numerous propositions for peaceful resolution were provided by Brazil,[57] Saudi Arabia,[58] China,[59] and South Africa.[60] However, a lasting resolution could not be reached.

The U.S., U.K., EU, and their allies imposed severe economic sanctions on Russia. The sanctions came in various forms: from financial to goods and services to targeted sanctions on individuals and businesses.

Through the EU's sanctions, nearly half of foreign Russian reserves became frozen,[61] nearly 49% of EU exports to Russia (compared with 2021) became controlled,[62] and nearly 90% of Russian oil imports to Europe became restricted.[63]

Financial sanctions began with disconnecting Russian banks from the international SWIFT payment system in efforts to slow down Russian entities from receiving payments for their commerce.[64] Further financial sanctions cut off $350 billion in foreign currency reserves.[65]

Sanctions in the oil and gas sector were most prominent with the U.K. and the U.S. banning all oil and gas imports from Russia.[66] Germany stopped the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline from entering Russia, a project

worth $11 billion.[67] Russian crude oil was capped at $60 a barrel by EU nations.[68]

A ban on exporting technological goods that could potentially be used for military purposes (including items such as vehicle parts) was put into effect by the U.S., the U.K., and EU member nations.[69] Over 1,000 multinational companies have also voluntarily curtailed their operations in Russia.[70]

Thousands of targeted sanctions on Russian oligarchs, close allies of the Kremlin, and businesses in Russia were placed by the United States, the United Kingdom, the EU, and their allies (including Canada, Australia, Japan, and South Korea).[71]

The above-noted sanctions target key sectors of the Russian economy and its individuals, aiming to weaken Russia's position in the war and discourage further aggression. They demonstrate a relentless pursuit by major actors globally to halt Russia from perpetuating the war. For example, just the EU implemented 11 different waves of sanctions as of June 2023, with successive additions in each wave including additions of measures that strengthen bilateral and multilateral cooperation with third countries in efforts to impede sanctions' circumvention by Russia.[72]

Civil Society Responses

The Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022 triggered a strong global response from civil society organizations around the world. From human rights groups to humanitarian agencies, academic institutions to advocacy networks, civil society entities mobilized to condemn the aggression and support the people of Ukraine.

International civil society organizations used their platforms to advocate for peace, human rights, and justice in Ukraine. They organized awareness campaigns, public demonstrations, and petitions to raise awareness about the conflict and its humanitarian implications.[73] Through social media and public events, these organizations called on the international community to support Ukraine's sovereignty, protect civilians, and find a peaceful resolution to the crisis.[74]

Numerous human rights groups and organizations have closely monitored and continue to monitor the human rights situation in Ukraine during the invasion. They have documented alleged human rights violations, abuses, and attacks on civilians, bringing attention to potential war crimes and violations of international law.[75] Their reports and investigations will form the basis of critical evidence for holding perpetrators accountable for justice and redress.[76]

Academic institutions and civil society networks have engaged in educational and research initiatives to shed light on the complexities of the conflict. Their in-depth analysis, reports, and conferences help establish an unbiased understanding of the geopolitical, historical, and social factors exacerbating the crisis.[77] These efforts are instrumental in informing policymakers and the public about the broader context of the conflict.

Smaller, localized civil society organizations played significant roles in resettling refugees who fled the conflict in Ukraine. They provided essential services – such as shelter, food, health care, and legal aid – to those who crossed the border to take shelter in neighboring countries in Europe.[78] They worked to address the long-term needs of displaced individuals and support their integration and well-being in host communities.[79] Many church groups in the U.S., U.K., Canada, Germany, and the like helped with the resettlement of Ukrainians displaced by the war.[80]

As of August 2023, there were nearly 6.2 million Ukrainian refugees worldwide, with 5.8 million in Europe and 358,000 outside Europe.[81] The countries hosting the largest number of Ukrainian refugees include Russia, with nearly 1.3 million refugees; Germany, with nearly 1.1 million; and Poland, with nearly 1 million.[82] In each of these countries (and all others hosting the refugees), civil society organizations play a major role in helping with resettlement.

5. International Responses to the Conflict in Myanmar

The international responses to the conflict in Myanmar can now be viewed through the lenses of media coverage, economic activities, military aid, humanitarian assistance, political actions, and civil

society involvements to see how they contrast with the responses received for Ukraine.

Media Coverage

Myanmar is one of the countries with the highest amount of media censorship. According to Reporters Without Borders' world freedom of press index, Myanmar stands in the bottom 10 countries in the world.[83]

As of January 30, 2023, Reporters Without Borders recorded at least 130 journalists arrested and jailed in Myanmar, of whom 72 were still being held in prisons, with reported cases of torture. They recorded a drastic increase in crackdowns on press freedom in Myanmar since the coup.[84]

The Committee to Protect Journalists, a nonprofit organization dedicated to safeguarding journalists worldwide, says that Myanmar ranks among the worst jailers for journalists, as per the committee's prison census. It points out how Myanmar's ruling junta has jailed journalists and murdered at least three of them while they were in custody.[85]

Parts of Myanmar – like the northwestern province of Rakhine, where the Rohingya population live – have been off limits to journalists and international NGOs numerous times.[86] Despite condemnations from rights groups and the U.N.'s Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, access remains an unresolved issue.[87]

Within a month of the coup, five major independent news outlets – Mizzima, DVB, Khit Thit Media, Myanmar Now, and 7Day News – were banned from broadcasting, and had their licenses revoked. State-controlled broadcasters – like MRTV, Global New Light of Myanmar, Myawady TV, and Myanmar New Agency – continued to operate, primarily to spread government propaganda.[88]

Fast forward two years later: Mizzima has survived and has become a trusted independent source of journalism. Three other news outlets – Democratic Voice of Burma, BBC Burma, and Voice of America – have also become known as reliable independent news sources. However, sustaining their operation continues to be a challenge, given drastic declines in revenue from digital advertising.[89]

The junta also put severe restrictions on internet and satellite TV within months of the coup. Internet access in some regions was completely shut down, and in other areas it was severely reduced. Those carrying satellite dishes to connect to satellite television faced fines or prison time.[90] For journalists reporting day-to-day activities from the ground, the lack of access to the internet is a severe blow to their ability to function.[91] In conflict-affected areas, having or not having the internet could sometimes mean the difference between life and death, since the internet is used to securely communicate information and early warning on the movement of junta troops before they attack a village.[92]

For those who are able to receive some internet access, social media became their platform to disseminate information to the rest of the world. Ethnic human rights organizations, as well as prominent grassroots organizations that emerged during nationwide protests against the coup, took to Facebook and Twitter to disseminate news through their social media accounts. However, this also led to campaigns of misinformation, propaganda, and hate speech affecting the groups involved.[93]

At the start of 2023, the military began an online campaign of terrorism to debilitate democratic opposition, especially targeting female activists. The OHCHR has called for social media companies to allocate necessary resources to protect the rights of users in Myanmar.[94]

Economic Cooperation

The violent crackdown on civilian protesters by Myanmar's military and the subsequent activism backlash by Burmese and international civil society created immense pressure on international corporations to reconsider their investments in Myanmar. As a result, a large number of multinational corporations ended up divesting from Myanmar, including, but not limited to, these:[95]

- The Japanese brewery Kirin
- The South Korean steelmaker POSCO

- The Norwegian telecommunications giant Telenor
- France's Total Energy and the U.S. petroleum giant Chevron
- Malaysia's Petronas and Thailand's PTTEP
- Switzerland-based Nestlé Corporation[96]

While the worsening human rights situation was the main reason for the departure of multinationals, other factors included lawlessness and deteriorating economic conditions.[97]

As the above-noted multinational corporations made their tough decisions to exit from Myanmar, a few others made the decision to stay or begin new investments. These include:

- The Israeli software maker Cogynte, to supply spyware[98]
- India's Adani Group, to increase its investments in Yangon port development[99]
- Singapore-based firm Yoma MFS Holdings, to buy a 51% stake in Wave Money from Norway's Telenor[100]
- Russia, to supply missile systems, drones, radar systems, helicopters, and fighter jets[101]
- China, to increase border trade, investments, and cooperation on energy and electricity[102]

While Myanmar's gross domestic product (GDP) fell from $65.1 billion in 2021 to $59.3 billion in 2022, its GDP growth rate has increased, from –17.9% in 2021 to 3.0% in 2022.[103]

Myanmar's top trading partner countries for export in 2022 were[104]:

- Thailand, at $3.85 billion and 23% of Myanmar's total exports
- China, at $3.69 billion and 22% of Myanmar's total exports
- Japan, at $1.21 billion and 7.1% of Myanmar's total exports
- India, at $900 million and 5.3% of Myanmar's total exports
- The United States, at $761 million and 4.5% of Myanmar's total exports
- Germany, at $679 million and 4.0% of Myanmar's total exports
- The U.K., at $623 million and 3.7% of Myanmar's total exports

The top trading partner countries for imports in 2022 were:[105]

- China, at $5.6 billion and 32% of Myanmar's total imports
- Singapore, at $4.3 billion and 25% of Myanmar's total imports
- Thailand, at $2.1 billion and 12% of Myanmar's total imports
- Malaysia, at $1.1 million and 6.6% of Myanmar's total imports
- Indonesia, at $1.0 billion and 6.0% of Myanmar's total imports
- India, at $562 million and 3.3% of Myanmar's total imports
- Vietnam, at $394 million and 2.3% of Myanmar's total imports

Humanitarian Aid

Myanmar is one of the poorest countries in Southeast Asia, with GDP per capita among the lowest in the region.[106] According to the European Commission, nearly 17.6 million people in Myanmar are in need of aid as of 2023.[107] Many U.N. agencies – including the UNHCR, UNICEF, and the WFP – have been involved in delivering aid to vulnerable populations and displaced persons inside Myanmar. Large international NGOs – like the International Committee of the Red Cross, World Vision, Oxfam, and Save the Children – are also active on the ground delivering aid wherever they have access.[108] The U.N. humanitarian response plan at the start of 2023 forecasted $764 million for 4.5 million people prioritized for lifesaving humanitarian support.[109] Historically, only a small fraction of the amount needed is received by the donor community. In 2021, the year that saw the coup and violence that followed immediately afterward, only 18% of the $109 million requested was fulfilled by the international community.[110]

Unfortunately, aid access is a severe problem in Myanmar.[111] Access to aid is primarily restricted by the ruling military junta, which has systematically denied humanitarian aid to the millions of civilians in need of relief.[112] The junta government has imposed travel restrictions on aid workers, blocked roads and convoys, attacked aid workers,[113] and turned off the internet and telecommunications, thereby making it almost impossible to deliver aid.[114]

The largest humanitarian donor to Myanmar is the United States, which has contributed $17 million in 2023 and more than $400 million in total since the Rohingya massacre in August 2017. The U.S. is followed by the European Union, which has contributed €24 million in 2023 and a total of €340.5 million since 1994.[115] Other international donors have also contributed to humanitarian support in Myanmar. For example, Japan has contributed $47 million since the coup.[116] Canada has dedicated $288.3 million (Canadian) for Myanmar and Bangladesh (for the displaced Rohingya) between 2021 and 2024.[117]

Unfortunately, the international humanitarian aid response has been drastically short when compared with the need for an entire nation in a civil war and suffering mass displacement. For example, donor funding for Rohingya living in exile in Bangladesh fell from $12 per month in rations in 2022 to $8 per month 2023, which equates to just 27 cents per day.[118] This has resulted in severe ration cuts from the WFP amid an already-malnourished community.[119]

Military Cooperation

The international community's actions have been varied in terms of military responses. While there has been widespread condemnation of Myanmar's military for the latter's brutal crackdown on civilian protesters, some countries have continued to support Myanmar's military by supplying arms and ammunition.

Within months of the coup and subsequent violent crackdown of civilian protesters, the U.N. Security Council called for an arms embargo on Myanmar.[120] However, only a nonbinding resolution was passed in the General Assembly, where 119 member states voted for the resolution and 36 abstained from it, including Russia and China.[121]

The EU is among the few political entities that has imposed an arms embargo on Myanmar.[122] Canada has an arms embargo in effect, including sanctions on aviation jet fuel to Myanmar's military.[123] The Australian government also maintains an active arms embargo on Myanmar.[124] The U.S. and the U.K. have imposed targeted sanctions on specific entities in Myanmar, but not a total arms embargo.[125]

At the same time, Myanmar's military continues to have arms deals with China, Russia, India, Singapore, Thailand, and Israel. The U.N. Special Rapporteur to Myanmar exposed nearly $1 billion in the junta's arms trades in a May 2023 report. It highlighted $406 million in arms deals with 28 suppliers in Russia, $267 million in deals with 41 suppliers in China, $254 million in deals with 138 suppliers in Singapore, $51 million in deals with 22 suppliers in India, and $28 million in deals with 25 suppliers in Thailand.[126] In addition, precision machines manufactured in Austria, Germany, Taiwan, Japan, and the U.S. are being used by Myanmar's military to manufacture homemade weapons.[127] The Israeli arms maker CAA Industries was also found to be supplying firearm accessories.[128]

Political Actions

Immediately after the coup, the vast majority of the international community responded with strong verbal condemnation. Governments of the U.K., the U.S., the EU, Canada, Australia, Japan, and the like expressed strong disapproval of Myanmar's military actions and called for the immediate release of detained civilian leaders.[129] Later, in June of the same year, 119 countries voted for a U.N. General Assembly resolution condemning the junta.[130]

Many countries – including the U.K., Denmark, Germany, Italy, and South Korea – have downgraded or are in the process of downgrading their diplomatic representations in Myanmar. Austria, Ireland, and Spain have not applied to accredit new envoys to their nonresident, Bangkok-based ambassadors to Myanmar. Among countries that belong to the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), Brunei and Malaysia have no ambassadors in Myanmar. The U.S. and Japan have maintained their embassies, while the embassies

of India, China, and Russia have openly expressed support for the regime.[131]

Western nations have maintained or increased new sanctions on Myanmar since the coup d'état. The sanctions have come in the form of asset freezes, travel bans, trade restrictions, and financial measures targeting Burmese military officials and their businesses. As of July 2023, the EU imposed its seventh round of sanctions on Myanmar, bringing the total of its restrictive measures to 99 individuals and 19 entities.[132] Similarly, Canada's last set of sanctions in January 2023 brought its cumulative list to 95 individuals and 63 entities, listed under "Special Economic Measures (Burma)."[133] U.S. sanctions in March 2023 included prohibition of jet fuel provision to the Burmese military in addition to Business Advisory sanctions on a list of Burmese state-owned enterprises, gems and precious metals, real estate projects, and arms and military equipment categories.[134]

The ASEAN's initial response to the war in Myanmar has been that of noninterference. The ASEAN even invited the chief of Myanmar's military, Senior General Min Aung Hlain, to its April 2021 summit to discuss its five-point proposal for peace.[135] However, in the 2022 and 2023 summits, Myanmar was not invited because of its failure to implement the five-point proposal.[136]

Civil Society Responses

Civil society organizations all over the world mobilized to condemn the military coup and advocate for the restoration of civilian government. Protests were organized in major cities in the U.S.,[137] Australia,[138] Japan,[139] South Korea,[140] and the ASEAN members states.[141] People expressed their solidarity with protesters inside Myanmar, where organized groups from rival ethnicities showed unprecedented collaboration and solidarity for the first time in decades.[142] Even the officially unrecognized and "despised" ethnicities, such as the Rohingya, were apologized[143] to and made welcome in the post-2021-coup uprisings of Myanmar.[144]

Civil society actions included coordinated social media campaigns, which were instrumental in raising awareness about the coup and human rights violations in Myanmar. Hashtags such as #WhatsHappeningInMyanmar and #SaveMyanmar were widely used on Facebook and Twitter to draw global attention to the crisis and mobilize support.[145]

International civil society organizations also provided support through global advocacy by engaging with policymakers in their respective countries of residence. This support was crucial in drawing the international community's attention to divestments and targeted sanctions on Myanmar's junta.[146]

In addition to advocacy, civil society organizations in neighboring states provided humanitarian support to refugees and displaced persons fleeing Myanmar. Karen refugees, in particular, were provided with shelter and legal support as they fled to Thailand across the border from Myanmar.[147]

Human rights monitoring groups like Amnesty International,[148] Fortify Rights,[149] and Human Rights Watch[150] have played major roles in highlighting human rights violations that have taken place since (as well as before) the February 2021 coup. They produced detailed reports that documented extrajudicial killings by the junta, arbitrary arrests, and other human rights violations that could make valuable evidence for future accountability mechanisms.

Many international civil society organizations engaged with the United Nations' Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar,[151] the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar,[152] the Special Advisory Council-Myanmar,[153] the International Criminal Court,[154] and the International Court of Justice[155] to open doors for prospective investigations into grave human rights violations committed by the military junta.

Responses to the Rohingya Crisis

The case of the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar is unique because it results from a conflict that is deeply rooted in religious and ethnocultural differences between the Rohingya and the rest of Myanmar. The Rohingya, a Muslim minority in a country with a Buddhist majority, have been subjected to systemic discrimination, apartheid, and denial of fundamental freedoms for more than half a century.[156] They are the

largest minority that is not recognized by their name among the list of 135 officially recognized minorities in Myanmar.[157] In fact, they have been referred to as "*kalar,*" a derogatory term used to describe people of darker skin color, as "dogs," and as "insects" in the years preceding their massacre in 2017.[158]

The 2017 massacre received coverage in social media as well as some attention in international news. Cellphone videos of burning villages and the subsequent exodus were widely circulated on social media.[159] Survivor testimonies and interviews were shared by major news outlets worldwide.[160] However, coverage slowed down as years passed, and other "newsworthy events" captured public attention. The 2021 coup in Myanmar shifted the international focus away from the Rohingya to Myanmar's public in general. And the 2022 Russian invasion of Ukraine took away the attention from Myanmar as well.

The Rohingya have no source of economic assistance from local or foreign entities. Economic activity has become more and more restrictive for the Rohingya in Myanmar ever since their citizenship rights were revoked in 1982. They are often subjected to arbitrary confiscation of land and crops by the Myanmar government's forces. They are not allowed to move freely from one village to another. Even their access to education and health care is limited.[161] The Rohingya living in the refugee camps of Bangladesh are also not allowed to work legally. They are prohibited from obtaining formal education as well.[162]

Unlike other ethnic minorities of Myanmar – such as the Arakanese, Kachin, Karen, Chin, and Shan – the Rohingya do not have an organized self-defense force that could qualify to receive assistance from a foreign entity. The armed forces of ethnic groups in Myanmar serve as the primary force of protection from and deterrence to the aggressions by the ruling junta.[163] In the absence of such a force, the Rohingya succumbed to the massacres of 1978, 1991, 2012, 2016, and 2017;[164] and they continue to remain vulnerable to all kinds of human rights abuses and additional campaigns of massacres. Furthermore, they are unable to contribute to the current nationwide arms struggle against the junta, whereby a large number of ethnic armed groups are working collectively with the People's Defense Force of the National Unity Government in exile.[165] This serves as a major disadvantage for the Rohingya when faced with the question of "what do you bring to the table?" in the nationwide struggle against junta rule.

In the aftermath of the 2017 massacre, the international humanitarian community made a generous response to the Rohingya. NGOs from all over the world came to help survivors in the refugee camps in Bangladesh.[166] However, the situation today is very different, as aid money gets gradually reduced due to competing demands from other global crises.[167] In 2023 alone, the World Food Program's rations to the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh were reduced from $12 per person per month to $10 and then to just $8, which is less than 27 cents a day.[168] At the same time, in Myanmar, providing humanitarian aid is an impossibility because the Myanmar authorities systematically block aid from reaching the Rohingya (and other vulnerable populations). In the internally displaced person (IDP) camps, where nearly one-third of the population lives, it is common for children to die from malnutrition and treatable diseases like diarrhea.[169]

The international community took political action in the aftermath of the Rohingya massacre of 2017. The violence was immediately denounced as genocide by many prominent human rights institutions, including the U.S. Holocaust Museum.[170] Later on, many heads of state and governments also declared the situation to be genocide, including France, in 2017;[171] Canada, in 2018;[172] and the U.S., in 2022.[173] In 2019 the International Court of Justice began its preliminary proceedings on the case of a breach of the Genocide Convention brought by Gambia against Myanmar.[174] In 2021 Canada, the U.K., and the Netherlands expressed their interest to intervene in the case;[175] France expressed its decision to intervene in 2023.[176] The International Criminal Court is still investigating the prosecution of Myanmar's leadership for the crime of forced deportation into Bangladesh.[177] However, issues of funding and political will continue to remain a hindrance to progress.[178]

International civil society groups that do human rights monitoring have made considerable efforts to cover the Rohingya crisis. In 2016 and 2017, Human Rights Watch covered the extermination of villages using

satellite imagery.[179] Following that, numerous other reports were published by various other entities – including Amnesty International,[180] Fortify Rights,[181] Médecins Sans Frontières,[182] and Save the Children[183] – that described the horrors of the massacre through detailed accounts from survivors. These reports and testimonies catalyzed the international community's interest to push for accountability efforts. However, they did little to ameliorate the actual conditions of life and day-to-day realities of the Rohingya themselves.

One such reality is human trafficking, which still remains an unresolved issue.[184] With worsening conditions in Myanmar's IDP camps and little to no hope in the Bangladeshi refugee camps,[185] many Rohingya fall prey to traps of human traffickers that lure them with promises of a better life in Malaysia.[186] The traffickers take all the life savings of the victims and their families as travel fare through the Andaman Sea and the jungles of Thailand. Often, the trafficking boats never make it through Andaman Sea; the traffickers extort money from their victims[187] and desert the boats after they are denied entry by the Thai or Malaysian navy, leaving the refugees on board to die of starvation or simply by drowning.[188] If the boats ever make it to Malaysian shores, the refugees enter illegally and live without papers, thereby facing all kinds of discrimination and denial of basic services and rights in their new country.[189]

6. Analysis of the Discrepancy in International Responses for Ukraine Compared with Myanmar

The differences in the international community's responses to the war in Ukraine to that in Myanmar are quite vast and apparent. What could be the possible explanations for such a huge discrepancy?

Looking back at the international media response, a simple Google search for "Ukraine" under the News tab compared with a search for "Myanmar" would show the sheer difference in output through numbers alone. A search for "Ukraine" yields 48.1 million results (36 seconds output), while a similar search for "Myanmar" yields only 169,000 results (36 seconds output). News on Myanmar sitting on Google's search engine is nearly 300 times less than that on Ukraine.

This discrepancy in media coverage can be largely attributed to the media freedom and support for coverage of the war in Ukraine compared with the severe restriction and life/death danger of coverage of the war in Myanmar. Reporteurs Sans Frontiers ranks Ukraine as 79th out of 180 countries in their order of press freedom based on political, economic, legislative, social, and security indicators. On the contrary, Myanmar is ranked 173rd out of 180 – with a security indicator as 180 of 180 – making it not only among the worst 10 countries in the world for press freedom in general but also *the worst country* in life security for press personnel.[190]

From an economic perspective, the United States alone is responsible for nearly $26.6 billion in financial assistance only (i.e., it excludes another $50 billion in humanitarian and military aid) provided to Ukraine in the last 1.5 years since the war began.[191] On the contrary, Myanmar's anticoup government in exile, also known as the National Unity Government, requested $525 million in humanitarian and nonlethal weapons aid in July 2023, which has yet to be approved.[192] For economic aid provided to Ukraine from other nations, including the EU, there is no comparison with the situation in Myanmar. Myanmar's civilian population is not able to receive any economic aid stimulus without going through the ruling military junta.

Compared with Myanmar or any other country in a war today, Ukraine has the advantage of sharing deep economic interests with the rest of Europe and North America. Ukraine is one of the largest grain-producing countries in the world. It shares borders with Poland, the Slovak Republic, Hungary, Romania, and the like, which makes it a close contender to become the next member of the EU. Future potential trade relations between EU and Ukraine could be one of the reasons why economic assistance makes up a significant part of the EU's aid package and by extension, that of the U.S. as well.

Similarly, social interests or social ties also play an important role in nations' biases. Ukraine has social ties with neighboring European states and is socially closer to them than is Myanmar, for comparison purposes. Christopher Blattman, an economist at the University of Chicago and the author of "Why We Fight: The Roots of War and the Paths to Peace,"

expressed the same at an interview with NPR where he said that "generally speaking, it seems reasonable for any society to care more about conflicts that are geographically closer, share a social identity."[193]

For humanitarian aid, the top donors, the U.S. and the EU, can be contrasted for the cases of Myanmar and Ukraine as follows. The EU website states that €24.5 million was provided to Myanmar in 2023.[194] In contrast, €670 million plus €17 billion were provided to Ukraine as EU civil protection mechanisms and as support for refugees within the EU, respectively.[195] The U.S. itself has provided nearly $4 billion to Ukraine in humanitarian aid alone.[196] In contrast, its aid for Myanmar stands at approximately $220 million in 2022, and $141 million thus far in 2023.[197] The U.N.'s Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Activities demonstrates how Country-Based Pooled Funds have been allocated from donors to recipients worldwide. Ukraine stands as the third-largest recipient, with $82 million, while Myanmar stands as the 11th-largest recipient, with $28 million.[198]

This vast discrepancy in humanitarian aid can be attributed to the scale of mass displacement of Ukrainians versus that of Burmese. The UNHCR records 7.1 million Ukrainian refugees worldwide,[199] while for Myanmar it records 1.3 million refugees and asylum seekers, and 1.5 million IDPs.[200] Another reason for the discrepancy could be the resistance to aid in Myanmar compared with Ukraine. In Myanmar, aid is known to be systematically blocked and hijacked by the military regime,[201] which naturally discourages donor countries from committing anything significant within Myanmar. Outside Myanmar, this argument does not hold true. The international community can very well support refugees in Thailand and Bangladesh. Unfortunately, both places are severely underfunded, and that speaks volumes about the double standards of donor nations when it comes to humanitarian aid.

Military aid to Ukraine from the United States alone has surpassed aid to any other nation in recent history. For $46.6 billion in military aid, as part of $76.8 billion in total aid to date, Ukraine received nearly 20 times more assistance than Afghanistan or Israel did in 2020.[202] In Myanmar, setting aside military assistance to the oppressor – i.e., the military junta – the civilian government in exile has yet to see any form of military aid from the international community. The National Unity Government has asked for $200 million in nonlethal funding from the United States, whose outcome is yet to be seen.[203]

The prime reason for the discrepancy explained above is geopolitical interest. Ukraine's adversary is Russia – i.e., the former USSR, the archrival of the U.S. and Western Europe during the Cold War era, and the post–Cold War period. An invaded Ukraine where the rest of Europe failed would be analogous to an invaded Poland in the precursor to World War II. On the contrary, the People's Defense Forces, which is the fighting arm of the civilian government in exile (i.e., the National Unity Government), does not present the same historical precedence as an invaded Poland in Eastern Europe does, for it to provide an equivalent impetus for Western powers to intervene with arms support.

In terms of the international community's political responses through condemnation, both Myanmar and Ukraine received fairly widespread support from the rest of the world. However, putting the condemnation into action through political tools such as sanctions is where the real contrast between Ukraine and Myanmar can be seen. In Myanmar, the EU has implemented seven rounds of sanctions or restrictions since 2018. The latest set of these restrictions that came to effect in July 2023 brought the total number of sanctioned individuals and entities in Myanmar to 99 and 19, respectively.[204] The sanctions applied to seven thematic restrictions: arms exporting, asset freezing, dual-use goods exporting, restrictions on admission, restrictions on equipment for internal repression, telecom equipment, and restrictions on military training and cooperation.[205] For the war in Ukraine, the EU has imposed 11 rounds of sanctions on Russia since 2014. The last round of sanctions was passed in July 2023, bringing the total number of restricted individuals and entities to more than 1,800.[206] The sanctions applied to 21 thematic restrictions in addition to nearly 20 different financial measures.[207] The discrepancies are very obvious.

The incomparably high number of sanctions on Russia can be attributed again to geopolitics and history: it is the United States' and the EU's attempt to deter its archrival, the former USSR, from continuing a war in

Europe. Cutting off an adversary's financial sources is a decisive tactic in all wartime or proxy-war situations. With some foresight and political will, the same can be applied to the situation of Myanmar, seeing China, the primary power backing the junta, as the next archrival to the U.S.-led world order.

The international legal system is another area where discrepancies have become very apparent. In March 2023, the International Criminal Court's Pre-Trial Chamber issued arrest warrants for Vladimir Putin and Maria Lvova-Belova for the unlawful deportation and transfer of Ukrainian children from occupied areas of Ukraine to the Russian Federation.[208] These arrest warrants came just within a year of the Russian invasion operation. On the contrary, six years have passed since the last Rohingya massacre, and more than 10 years have lapsed since the extermination of entire villages surrounding Sittwe in northwestern Myanmar, where an unknown number of Rohingya, including children, were killed, burned, or sent to IDP camps.[209] The amount of evidence is overwhelming against Myanmar's authorities responsible for crime of deportation, war crimes, and crimes against humanity,[210] as highlighted in the U.N.'s Fact Finding Mission on Myanmar's report of 2018.[211] The double standards as well as the dollar-driven justice practiced at the International Criminal Court is quite crystal clear.

International civil society responses also demonstrate a stark contrast for Ukraine compared with Myanmar. For example, most countries in Europe have civil societies that have welcomed and settled 5.8 million Ukrainian refugees,[212] with Germany, Poland, and the Czech Republic taking nearly 3 million only among themselves.[213] Outside Europe, the United States has welcomed nearly 221,000 Ukrainian refugees since the outbreak of the war,[214] and Canada has welcomed nearly 175,000 thus far.[215] Compare these with the numbers for Myanmar; the vast majority of Burmese refugees in neighboring states are approximately 920,000 in Bangladesh,[216] and 90,000 in Thailand.[217] For refugees outside Myanmar, the United States welcomed 2,100 Burmese refugees in 2022.[218] The vast majority of Burmese refugees live in IDP camps inside Myanmar; in 2022 alone, 1.2 million people became refugees inside Myanmar.[219] Refugees from Myanmar take great risks to get out of the country, including embarking on dangerous human trafficking boats in hopes of finding better life elsewhere in Southeast Asia.[220] Many of them never see their hopes fulfilled as they perish in the seas.[221]

The situation described above is another example of the international community's double standards on human rights and humanitarianism. Despite all the geopolitical and socioeconomic reasoning behind the international bias for Ukraine, the justifications hold no bearing from a human rights standpoint. Geopolitics aside and socioeconomic interests aside, it would be indefensible in any human rationale to say that Ukrainian lives are more precious than Burmese lives or that Burmese are less human than Ukrainians. From both monetary and political viewpoints, the humanitarian and refugee resettlement support provided to Myanmar is miniscule compared with what is provided to Ukraine. The number of refugees in Ukraine may be larger than that in Myanmar; however, that does not imply that Myanmar's refugees need to be ignored, so much that they perish in human trafficking boats in the Indian Ocean. Or this does not imply that people in refugee camps have their World Food Program rations reduced to 27 cents a day due to funding shortages.[222]

Bringing awareness to underreported wars and crises is a major challenge that we face today, according to CARE, as detailed in the international aid group's 2021 publication "'Breaking the Silence': The Most Under-Reported Humanitarian Crises."[223] Media organizations naturally play a role in deciding whether to allocate time and resources to underreported wars and crises. However, this may not be an easy task in situations where there is a lack of financial resources or political will to cover crises in regions of the world that the audience of the broadcasting entity does not necessarily care for. This is even more true for a media that is heavily guided by advertising revenue, politics, and public perceptions.

Nevertheless, even with coverage, other factors come to play. At the 2022 Pearson Global Forum at the University of Chicago, panelists discussed the bias in coverage of the Ukraine conflict. A Reuters journalist at the forum expressed it this way: "You see a lot of journalists, whether they be from Ukraine, the U.S. or from Europe, who are extremely empathetic. They're embedded with Ukrainian troops. They're even covering

Ukrainian drone strikes on Russian positions with a lot of support and a lot of empathy. Can you imagine CNN embedding with Palestinian resistance fighters in Israel, fighting against Israeli occupation? Both of those situations are essentially the same, and I think that has raised questions."[224]

In some instances, biases have been overtly, and condescendingly, expressed. A couple of well-known examples are CBS correspondent Charlie D'Agata's remarks, where he said "this isn't a place, with all due respect, you know, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. … You know, this is a relatively civilized, relatively European, … city.[225]" In another example, ITV News correspondent Lucy Watson said the "unthinkable" had happened, adding "this is not a developing third-world nation, this is Europe." Many other examples are out there, including one that mentions "European people with blue eyes and blonde hair are being killed."[226] Such attitudes are at the core of inherent biases in the international community's responses. They do not exclusively limit themselves to the media, but they also manifest in the attitudes of the public, and their subsequent support for policymakers' decisions. Take, for example, how Europeans complained about the influx of Syrian refugees fleeing Bashar al Assad, or of migrant boats crossing the Mediterranean to seek asylum in Europe. Contrast that with the swift acceptance of Ukrainian refugees all around Europe within months if not weeks of the onset of the Russian invasion. Such behaviors are inherently racist in nature; they tarnish human rights with an idea of hierarchy, whereby some groups of individuals merit peace and safety while others do not.[227]

7. Concluding Remarks and Policy Recommendations

The international responses to the conflict in Ukraine compared with that in Myanmar speak openly of the double standards of the media, business, and politics when it comes to humanity and human rights. The vast proportion of the international responses to these two conflicts is constituted by wealthy nations that are under the influence of the U.S.-led world order. The responses to the conflicts by the U.K., EU, Canada, Australia, Japan, South Korea, the Gulf Cooperation Council nations, and all other close allies of the West have been nothing short of preferred favoritism toward Ukraine compared with responses to other nations in conflict elsewhere in the world. If you desire to win a share of the U.S.-led world order, then you had better religiously support Ukraine against Russian invasion, even on a smaller scale. The favoritism and double standard of human rights almost have "no escape."

Unfortunately, there is not a lot that one can do in the face of such favoritism and double standards. The forces of geopolitical and economic interests of the West in Ukraine are too powerful to sway things in any other direction. Money and power will always have the upper hand in human history.

These attitudes of blind favoritism, however, have the potential to change if a situation arises where there is a shift in geopolitical and economic interests toward Southeast Asia. And such a situation is not far from the near future – in only a matter of time, U.S. and EU policymakers will become aware that losing interest in Myanmar will equate to losing the second-largest country in Southeast Asia, and subsequently other countries in the region, to full Chinese influence. Providing support to Myanmar has the potential to yield vast economic benefits to the West through Myanmar's rich resources, including oil and natural gas, precious mineral reserves, human resources, and giant consumer markets. It also has the potential to yield increased access to the Bay of Bengal and Andaman Sea for trade and naval forces presence.

However, until there is a serious shift in political and economic attention to Southeast Asia, here are policy recommendations that the U.S., EU, and other players in the international community should consider to address the conflict in Myanmar, including the Rohingya crisis:

- The U.S., U.K., and their allies should impose comprehensive arms embargoes on Myanmar, as the EU has done (seeing that the same cannot be done through the U.N. Security Council).
- The U.S., U.K., EU, and their allies should sanction Myanmar Oil and Gas Enterprise, the largest source of revenue for the military junta.
- The U.S., U.K., and EU should impose secondary or extraterritorial sanctions on Thai, Singaporean,

Japanese, Indian, and other national entities that continue to do business with Myanmar.

- The U.S., U.K., EU, and their allies should restrict trading and payment system platforms that Myanmar's junta utilizes for its business dealings (which may not work for dealings in Chinese-based platforms).
- The ASEAN should play a larger role in Myanmar than simply putting forward a 5-point consensus peace proposal; it should reject the illegitimate junta government and set forth a proper effort to bring back democracy in Myanmar that is inclusive of all ethnic minorities. It should conduct a full investigation of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by the junta.
- The ASEAN should impose penalties on its member states that continue to do business with Myanmar, despite the latter's refusal to accept the ASEAN's 5-point consensus proposal.
- If the ASEAN is to ever accept the junta government and allow its member states to conduct business with the junta, then it should stipulate these conditions for Myanmar: unfettered access for aid workers, journalists, and peacekeepers; dismantling IDP camps; release of political prisoners; and guaranteed return with full rights and protections for the Rohingya and other displaced minorities.
- The U.S., the EU, and their allies, as well as the ASEAN, should invest in media organizations and reporting agencies that work on covering what is happening in Myanmar and should ensure that this coverage continues without fail.
- The IMF and World Bank should provide incentives to Bangladesh so that the latter allows the Rohingya to obtain education and subsequently find work in the Cox Bazar / Teknaf region. That way, the Rohingya can contribute to the Bangladeshi economy instead of becoming a burden.
- Canada, the U.K., and the Netherlands have expressed their intention to intervene in the International Court of of Justice's case of the Gambia versus Myanmar by becoming a party to the case; they should fulfill their intention and help the case continue.
- The International Criminal Court's case on the crime of forced deportation to Bangladesh has not yet started its proceedings, even though it has been six years since the 2017 Rohingya massacre. The Court should immediately begin its proceedings on the forced displacement of the Rohingya.
- The U.N. and its member states should ensure that the refugee camps in Bangladesh and the IDP camps in Myanmar have at least sufficient food and basic necessities to survive; no one should struggle for food in this day and age due to a lack of funding.
- The U.N. should create conditions that discourage human trafficking through the Andaman Sea: improve living conditions in the refugee camps in Bangladesh, and provide incentives to the Bangladeshi government to allow education and economic opportunities for refugees in the camps.
- The U.S. recognized the Rohingya genocide in 2022; however, it has not taken actions commensurate with this recognition. The U.S. government can and should utilize its economic, political, and military presence in the region to prevent further aggravation of the situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar and Bangladesh.
- The U.S. and its allies should collectively propose an unbiased, Rohingya community-led repatriation plan that calls for refugees to return to their homelands with full citizenship rights and international protection. Several other countries have proposed repatriation plans; the U.S. and its allies should have their own proposal.
- The U.S., U.K., EU, Canada, and Australia can bring Rohingya youths to their respective countries through scholarship programs and vocational training programs with paid contracts for them to return back to Bangladesh/Myanmar and work for international NGOs on the ground.
- The U.S., U.K., EU, Canada, and Australia can train a group of Rohingya doctors, nurses, teachers, journalists, lawyers, law enforcers, entrepreneurs, public administrators, technicians, and technologists so that they contribute to building Myanmar when they eventually return to their homelands.

- The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation and its member states can assist with the development of a Rohingya defense force that can join hands with People's Defense Forces and make a Rohingya contribution to the collective struggle for freedom from junta rule in Myanmar.
- If there is a scenario of another imminent large-scale massacre by the junta, the U.S. and its allies should push for the provision of a peacekeeping coalition force, such as the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan.

At the very least, speaking about the conflict in Myanmar, and the international favoritism toward some countries and neglect to others, will help bring attention to topics like Myanmar. And it will also help bring attention to Ethiopia, Yemen, Palestine, Syria, and other war-torn countries. Even momentary coverage of Myanmar in between endless coverage of what is happening in Ukraine is better than no coverage at all.

When we focus almost exclusively on one conflict and turn a blind eye to another one, the end result could be severely catastrophic. History has shown us examples: The focus on the Balkans with a blind eye toward Rwanda resulted in 800,000 people being massacred in 40 days, in what we now know as the Rwandan genocide. And the excessive focus on the post-9/11 war in Afghanistan and turning a blind eye toward Sudan resulted in 200,000 dead, in what we now know as the Darfur genocide.

The case of Myanmar is not far from these earlier examples of genocide. Myanmar already has seen its genocide, in 2017, when it conducted a state-led Clearance Operation in an attempt to exterminate the Rohingya. Nearly 400 of the 800 Rohingya villages were wiped from Myanmar's map, and approximately 750,000 refugees fled to refugee camps in Bangladesh, with harrowing accounts heard from survivors of gang rapes, live burning, and scorched earth practices. It will not take a lot for Myanmar's ruling junta to repeat a similar operation to exterminate the remaining Rohingya – or any of the other ethnicities – while the rest of the world remains focused almost exclusively on the Russian invasion of Ukraine.

Raïss Tinmaung is a Rohingya from Toronto. He is the founder and board chair of the Rohingya Human Rights Network and has led its campaigns, petitions, peaceful rallies, new chapter formations, and community-led writing, media, and documentation initiatives. He has led Rohingya delegations to present at the Canadian Parliament, the Museum for Human Rights, and the Montreal Holocaust Museum. Tinmaung has also led a registered charity that supports grassroots-led education and vocational training programs for the Rohingya diaspora and host communities in Burma, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Apart from volunteering for his community, Tinmaung has also volunteered in long-term development projects in Haiti, Ecuador, and South Africa. X/Twitter: @rohingyanetwork

Endnotes

1 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

2 Conflict. In Cambridge Dictionary. Cambridge University Press. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/conflict.

3 Conflict. In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Merriam-Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conflict

4 International. In Cambridge Dictionary. Cambridge University Press. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/international.

5 International. (2023). Merriam-Webster Dictionary, https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/international.

6 Response. In Cambridge Dictionary. Cambridge University Press. https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/response.

7 Response. (2023). In Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Merriam-Webster. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/response.

8 NBC News. (2014, March 18). Crimea Was 'Stolen' From Russia, Vladimir Putin Says. *NBC News.* https://www.nbcnews.com/storyline/ukraine-crisis/crimea-was-stolen-russia-vladimir-putin-says-n55366.

9 Center for Preventive Action. (2023). War in Ukraine, Global Conflict Tracker. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/global-conflict-tracker/conflict/conflict-ukraine.

10 BBC. (2023, September 8). Ukraine in maps: Tracking the war with Russia. *BBC.* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60506682.

11 Financial Times. (2023, September 13). Ukraine's counteroffensive against Russia in maps: latest updates. *Financial Times.* https://www.ft.com/content/4351d5b0-0888-4b47-9368-6bc4dfbccbf5.

12 Buchholz, K. (2023). Infographic: Ukrainians' Desire to Join NATO and the EU. Statista. https://www.statista.com/chart/26933/ukrainians-survey-nato-eu/.

13 Burdeau, C. (2022, May 9). Putin blames NATO for pushing Russia into invasion. *Courthouse News Service*. https://www.courthousenews.com/putin-blames-nato-for-pushing-russia-into-invasion/

14 Amar, F. Ukraine: Civilian casualties from 1 to 16 July 2023. OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/news/2023/07/ukraine-civilian-casualties-1-16-july-2023.

15 Faulconbridge, G. (2023, April 12). Ukraine war, already with up to 354000 casualties, likely to last past 2023: U.S. documents. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/ukraine-war-already-with-up-354000-casualties-likely-drag-us-documents-2023-04-12/.

16 Davies, E., Birsel, R., & Pullin, R. (2021, January 31). Explainer: Crisis in Myanmar after army alleges election fraud. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-politics-explainer-idUSKBN2A113H.

17 Adams, B. (2022). Myanmar: Year of Brutality in Coup's Wake. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/28/myanmar-year-brutality-coups-wake.

18 Hein, Y. M. (2022). Understanding the People's Defense Forces in Myanmar. United States Institute of Peace. https://www.usip.org/publications/2022/11/understanding-peoples-defense-forces-myanmar.

19 Maizland, L., Kurlantzick, J., & McGowan, A. (2022). Myanmar's Troubled History: Coups, Military Rule, and Ethnic Conflict. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/myanmar-history-coup-military-rule-ethnic-conflict-rohingya.

20 ACLED. *Dashboard; ACLED.* https://acleddata.com/dashboard/#/dashboard.

21 Roth, K. World Report 2022: Myanmar. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/world-report/2022/country-chapters/myanmar.

22 Fletcher, R. (2022, June 15). Perceptions of media coverage of the war in Ukraine. Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/digital-news-report/2022/perceptions-media-coverage-war-Ukraine.

23 Fisher, H. O. (2023). Media Objectivity and Bias in Western Coverage of the Russian-Ukrainian Conflict.

24 De Boer, L. (2023). Disinformation in a Time of War: A Critical Discourse Analysis of Russian Disinformation Strategies During the Russo-Ukrainian War of 2022.

25 Shen, F., Zhang, E., Zhang, H., Ren, W., Jia, Q., & He, Y. Examining the differences between human and bot social media accounts: A case study of the Russia-Ukraine War. *First Monday, 28(2).* https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v28i2.12777.

26 International Monetary Fund (2023). The IMF Board approved a new 48-month extended arrangement under the Extended Fund Facility (EFF) of SDR 11.6 billion (about US$15.6 billion) as part of a US$115 billion total support package for Ukraine. International Monetary Fund. https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2023/03/31/pr23101-ukraine-imf-executive-board-approves-usd-billion-new-eff-part-of-overall-support-package.

27 World Bank. (2023, June 29). World Bank's New $1.5 Billion Loan to Ukraine Will Provide Relief to Households, Mitigate Impacts of Russia's Invasion. World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2023/06/29/world-bank-new-1-5-billion-loan-to-ukraine-will-provide-relief-to-households-mitigate-impacts-of-russian-invasion.

28 Sconosciuto, L. (2023). EBRD and the Netherlands cooperate to support Ukraine. European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD). https://www.ebrd.com/news/2023/ebrd-and-the-netherlands-cooperate-to-support-ukraine-.html.

29 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

30 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

31 Djurica, M., & McGowan, A. (2023). How Much Aid Has the U.S. Sent Ukraine? Here Are Six Charts. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/article/how-much-aid-has-us-sent-ukraine-here-are-six-charts.

32 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

33 Matisek, J. (2023). The Good, the Bad and the Ugly: Assessing a Year of Military Aid to Ukraine. RUSI. https://www.rusi.org/explore-our-research/publications/commentary/good-bad-and-ugly-assessing-year-military-aid-ukraine.

34 NATO. (2023). NATO's military presence in the east of the Alliance. NATO. https://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/topics_136388.htm.

35 United Nations Foundation. (2023). How the U.N. Is Supporting the People of Ukraine. United Nations Foundation. https://unfoundation.org/ukraine/.

36 United Nations Foundation. (2023). How the U.N. Is Supporting the People of Ukraine. United Nations Foundation. https://unfoundation.org/ukraine/.

37 American Red Cross. (2022). In Ukraine, Red Cross Partnership Delivers Critical Food Aid. American Red Cross. https://www.redcross.org/about-us/news-and-events/news/2022/in-ukraine-red-cross-partnership-delivers-critical-food-aid.html.

38 Charity Intelligence Canada. (2022). How the Red Cross is spending money in Ukraine. Charity Intelligence. https://www.charityintelligence.ca/research-and-news/ci-views/31-disaster-response/708-an-update-on-red-cross-work-in-ukraine.

39 Swaton, C. (2023). Austrian president promises Ukraine further aid. EURACTIV.com. https://www.euractiv.com/section/politics/news/austrian-president-promises-ukraine-further-aid/

40 Willems, A., Cardoen, S. (2022). "Wereld belooft 10,1 miljard euro aan Oekraïne, België trekt 800 miljoen euro uit: waar gaat dat geld naartoe? *Vrtnws.* https://www.vrt.be/vrtnws/nl/2022/04/09/donoractie-in-warschau-voor-oekraine/.

41 "Canada completes issuance of $500 million Ukraine Sovereignty Bond." 2022. https://www.canada.ca/en/department-finance/news/2022/11/canada-completes-issuance-of-500-million-ukraine-sovereignty-bond.html

42 Department of Finance, Canada. (2023). Ministeren for udviklingssamarbejde og global klimapolitik besøger Mykolaiv i Ukraine, Udenrigsministeriet. https://via.ritzau.dk/pressemeddelelse/ministeren-for-udviklingssamarbejde-og-global-klimapolitik-besoger-mykolaiv-i-ukraine?publisherId=2012662&releaseId=13668477.

43 BNS. (2022). Lithuania's support to Ukraine totals €660m. *Lrt.lt.* https://www.lrt.lt/en/news-in-english/19/1838101/lithuania-s-support-to-ukraine-totals-eur660m.

44 Rijksoverheid. (2023). Kabinet maakt tweede steunpakket Oekraïne en nieuwe Oekraïne-gezant bekend. *Rijksoverheid.* https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/07/4/kabinet-maakt-tweede-steunpakket-oekraine-en-nieuwe-oekraine-gezant-bekend.

45 Rijksoverheid. (2023). Kabinet maakt tweede steunpakket Oekraïne en nieuwe Oekraïne-gezant bekend. *Rijksoverheid.* https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/actueel/nieuws/2023/07/4/kabinet-maakt-tweede-steunpakket-oekraine-en-nieuwe-oekraine-gezant-bekend.

46 Hussein, M. (2023). Qatar to provide Ukraine with $100m in humanitarian aid: Kyiv. *Middle East Monitor*. https://www.middleeastmonitor.com/20230728-qatar-to-provide-ukraine-with-100m-in-humanitarian-aid-kyiv/

47 Kyiv Independent. (2022). Saudi Arabia to provide $400 million in humanitarian aid to Ukraine. *Kyiv Independent*. https://kyivindependent.com/saudi-arabia-to-provide-400-million-in-humanitarian-aid-to-ukraine/.

48 Government of the Republic of Korea. (2022). Korea to Send Humanitarian Aid to Ukraine: Ukraine. *Reliefweb.* https://reliefweb.int/report/ukraine/korea-send-humanitarian-aid-ukraine.

49 Ministry of Foreign Affairs, South Korea. (2023). MOFA Spokesperson's Statement on 1-Year Mark of Ukrainian War View. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, South Korea. https://www.mofa.go.kr/eng/brd/m_5676/view.do?seq=322155

50 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

51 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

52 European Council. (2023). EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-response-ukraine-invasion/.

53 Schneider, E., & Guterres, A. (2022, March 2). *General Assembly resolution demands end to Russian offensive in Ukraine.* UN News. https://news.un.org/en/story/2022/03/1113152.

54 United Nations. (2022, October 12). With 143 Votes in Favour, 5 Against, General Assembly Adopts Resolution Condemning Russian Federation's Annexation of Four Eastern Ukraine Regions. October 12, 2022. https://press.un.org/en/2022/ga12458.doc.htm

55 Hürriyet Daily News. (2022). Türkiye hopeful for truce between Ukraine-Russia, Erdoğan says. *Hürriyet Daily News*. https://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/erdogan-to-discuss-nato-bid-with-swedish-pm-in-turkiye-177883.

56 ABC News. (2022, February 28). Ukraine and Russia complete first round of peace talks at Belarusian border. *ABC News.* https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-02-28/ukraine-russia-peace-talks-belarus-border/100869782.

57 Euronews. (2023, April 8). Ukraine urged to give up Crimea by Brazil's Lula. *Euronews.* https://www.euronews.com/2023/04/07/the-world-needs-tranquillity-ukraine-urged-to-give-up-crimea-by-brazils-lula.

58 Turak, N. (2023, August 1). Saudi Arabia and Turkey are emerging as the new peace brokers of the Russia-Ukraine war. *CNBC.* https://www.cnbc.com/2023/08/02/saudi-arabia-and-turkey-the-new-peace-brokers-of-russia-ukraine-war.html.

59 Lau, S., von der Burchard, H., & Bayer, L. (2023). China talks 'peace,' woos Europe and trashes Biden in Munich. *Politico*. https://www.politico.eu/article/china-wang-yi-peace-europe-joe-biden-munich-security-conference/.

60 Connolly, N. (2023, June 18). African delegation in Eastern Europe: More than a photo op?. *Deutsche Welle.* https://www.dw.com/en/african-delegation-in-eastern-europe-more-than-a-photo-op/a-65954255.

61 European Council. (2023). EU sanctions against Russia explained. European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/sanctions-against-russia-explained/.

62 European Commission. Sanctions adopted following Russia's military aggression against Ukraine. European Commission. https://finance.ec.europa.eu/eu-and-world/sanctions-restrictive-measures/sanctions-adopted-following-russias-military-aggression-against-ukraine_en.

63 European Council. (2023). EU sanctions against Russia explained. European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/sanctions-against-russia-explained/.

64 Hotten, R. (2022, May 4). Ukraine conflict: What is Swift and why is banning Russia so significant?. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.com/news/business-60521822.

65 BBC. (2022, April 5). Ukraine war: More than 60% of Putin's war chest frozen, Truss says. *BBC.* https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-60997622.

66 BBC. (2022, March 8). War in Ukraine: West hits Russia with oil bans and gas curbs. *BBC.* https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-60666251.

67 Marsh, S., & Chambers, M. (2022). Germany freezes Nord Stream 2 gas project as Ukraine crisis deepens. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/business/energy/germanys-scholz-halts-nord-stream-2-certification-2022-02-22/.

68 Amaro, S. (2022). Russia oil price cap: G-7 outline how it is going to work. *CNBC*. https://www.cnbc.com/2022/12/02/russia-oil-price-cap-g-7-outline-how-it-is-going-to-work.html.

69 BBC. (2023). What are the sanctions on Russia and are they hurting its economy?. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-60125659.

70 Sonnenfeld, J., & Yale Research Team. Over 1000 Companies Have Curtailed Operations in Russia – But Some Remain. Yale School of Management. https://som.yale.edu/story/2022/over-1000-companies-have-curtailed-operations-russia-some-remain.

71 Martin, R. Sanctions against Russia: a timeline. S&P Global. https://www.spglobal.com/marketintelligence/en/news-insights/latest-news-headlines/sanctions-against-russia-8211-a-timeline-69602559.

72 European Council. (2023). EU response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine. European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-response-ukraine-invasion/.

73 Al Jazeera. (2023). Thousands rally in Berlin, Paris to call for peace in Ukraine. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/25/thousands-rally-in-berlin-paris-to-call-for-peace-in-ukraine.

74 Suciu, P. (2022). Ukraine Is Winning on the Battlefield and on Social Media. *Forbes*. https://www.forbes.com/sites/petersuciu/2022/10/13/ukraine-is-winning-on-the-battlefield-and-on-social-media/.

75 Amnesty International. (2023). Human rights in Ukraine. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/europe-and-central-asia/ukraine/report-ukraine/.

76 Wareham, M. Russia-Ukraine War. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/tag/russia-ukraine-war.

77 Gregory, T. (2023). Bias in Media Coverage of Conflict. The University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy. 2023. https://harris.uchicago.edu/news-events/news/bias-media-coverage-conflict.

78 McMahon, P. (2023). Poland's hospitality is helping many Ukrainian refugees thrive – 5 takeaways. *The Conversation*. https://theconversation.com/polands-hospitality-is-helping-many-ukrainian-refugees-thrive-5-takeaways-200406.

79 HIAS. Poland: Support for Refugees in Poland. https://hias.org/where/poland/.

80 Froese, I. (2023). Ukrainians fleeing war find comfort in Steinbach church. *CBC*, 2023. https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/ukrainians-church-home-church-basement-steinbach-1.6757632.

81 UNHCR. Situation Ukraine Refugee Situation. UNHCR data portal. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine.

82 Statista. (2023). Ukrainian refugees by country 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/.

83 Reporters Without Borders. (2023). Index. https://rsf.org/en/index.

84 Reporters Sans Frontières. (2023). Anti-journalist terror has grown in every way in two years of military rule in Myanmar." Reporters Sans Frontières. https://rsf.org/en/anti-journalist-terror-has-grown-every-way-two-years-military-rule-myanmar

85 Dunham, J. (2022). Killing with impunity: Vast majority of journalists' murderers go free." Committee to Protect Journalists. https://cpj.org/reports/2022/11/killing-with-impunity-vast-majority-of-journalists-murderers-go-free/.

86 Eckert, P. (2018). Myanmar Keeps Media Away from Rakhine Conflict Zone. *Radio Free Asia*. https://www.rfa.org/english/news/myanmar/media-restrictions-11052018155613.html.

87 OHCHR. (2021). Bachelet deplores persecution of journalists in Myanmar. OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2022/01/bachelet-deplores-persecution-journalists-myanmar.

88 Kurtenbach, E. (2021). Explainer: How Myanmar is cracking down on journalists. *AP News*. https://apnews.com/article/myanmar-media-coverage-explained-5769db55af07afa090a4022a8b8013fe.

89 Falk, S. (2022). In Myanmar, journalists raise media voices against the bloody coup. International Press Institute. https://ipi.media/myanmar-journalists-raise-voices/.

90 VOA Burmese Service. (2022). In Myanmar's Restive Regions, Internet Blocks Disrupt Rural Life. *VOA News*. https://www.voanews.com/a/in-myanmar-s-restive-regions-internet-blocks-disrupt-rural-life/6651655.html.

91 Nagarajan, A. (2023). How internet shutdowns in Myanmar have been endangering lives and affecting humanitarian work since the coup. Global Voices. https://globalvoices.org/2023/04/11/how-internet-shutdowns-in-myanmar-have-been-endangering-lives-and-affecting-humanitarian-work-since-the-coup/.

92 Nachemson, A. (2022). In Myanmar, internet can mean life or death. *Bangkok Post*. https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/2403331/in-myanmar-internet-can-mean-life-or-death.

93 Klark, A. (2023). Misinformation, Hate Speech and Ethno-Religious Tensions in Myanmar. United States Institute of Peace. https://www.usip.org/publications/2023/04/misinformation-hate-speech-and-ethno-religious-tensions-myanmar.

94 OHCHR. (2023). Myanmar: Social media companies must stand up to junta's online terror campaign, say U.N. experts. OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/myanmar-social-media-companies-must-stand-juntas-online-terror-campaign-say.

95 Morland, S., & Merriman, J. (2022). Timeline: Foreign companies withdrawing from Myanmar after coup. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-politics-foreign-companies-idUSL8N2U12AI.

96 Chen, H. (2023). Nestlé to close factory, office in Myanmar. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2023/03/01/business/nestle-myanmar-closure-military-coup-intl-hnk/index.html.

97 Tun, D., & Naing, S. (2022). Foreign energy giants leave Myanmar, Chinese companies to likely replace them. *Thai PBS World*. https://www.thaipbsworld.com/foreign-energy-giants-leave-myanmar-chinese-companies-to-likely-replace-them/.

98 Potkin, F., & Mcpherson, P. (2023). Israel's Cognyte won tender to sell intercept spyware to Myanmar before coup -documents. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/technology/israels-cognyte-won-tender-sell-intercept-spyware-myanmar-before-coup-documents-2023-01-15/.

99 Yadanar. (2023). Adani's deepening complicity with the Myanmar junta. Justice for Myanmar. https://www.justiceformyanmar.org/stories/adanis-deepening-complicity-with-the-myanmar-junta.

100 Pengrattana, K. (2022). Yoma firm to acquire more stake in Myanmar Wave Money from Telenor. *Scandasia*. https://scandasia.com/yoma-firm-to-acquire-more-stake-in-myanmar-wave-money-from-telenor/.

101 Zhabina, A. (2023). Will Russian aid for Myanmar give Moscow an Asian foothold?. *Deutsche Welle.* https://www.dw.com/en/will-russian-support-for-myanmar-give-moscow-an-asian-foothold/a-64644348.

102 Le Monde with AFP. (2023). Chinese foreign minister renews 'friendship' with Myanmar in official visit to junta leader. *Le Monde*. https://www.lemonde.fr/en/international/article/2023/05/03/chinese-foreign-minister-renews-friendship-with-myanmar-in-official-visit-to-junta-leader_6025209_4.html.

103 World Bank. (2022). GDP Growth: Myanmar. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG?end=2022&locations=MM&start=2019.

104 United Nations COMTRADE. Myanmar Exports by Country. Trading Economics. https://tradingeconomics.com/myanmar/exports-by-country.

105 United Nations COMTRADE. Myanmar Exports by Country. Trading Economics. https://tradingeconomics.com/myanmar/exports-by-country.

106 Asim, H. (2023). 20 Poorest Countries in Asia. *Yahoo Finance*. https://finance.yahoo.com/news/20-poorest-countries-asia-103119866.html.

107 European Commission. (2023). Myanmar/Burma. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations, European Commission. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/asia-and-pacific/myanmarburma_en.

108 AAM Nation Care. (2022). Charity Organizations in Myanmar. AAM Nation Care. https://aamnationcare.org/charity-organizations-in-myanmar/.

109 United Nations in Myanmar. (2023, January 25). Myanmar Humanitarian Response Plan 2023 (January 2023). United Nations in Myanmar. https://myanmar.un.org/en/216732-myanmar-humanitarian-response-plan-2023-january-2023.

110 Al Jazeera. (2023). Myanmar military in 'systematic denial' of humanitarian aid: U.N. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/7/myanmar-military-in-systematic-denial-of-humanitarian-aid-un.

111 OHCHR. (2023). Myanmar: Dire humanitarian and human rights situation compounded by military's restrictions on aid. OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-briefing-notes/2023/06/myanmar-dire-humanitarian-and-human-rights-situation-compounded.

112 Al Jazeera. (2023). Myanmar military in 'systematic denial' of humanitarian aid: UN. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/7/7/myanmar-military-in-systematic-denial-of-humanitarian-aid-un.

113 MC, A. (2023). Myanmar aid convoy attack raises stakes for under-fire ASEAN. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/9/myanmar-convoy-attack-raises-stakes-for-asean.

114 Human Rights Watch. (2021). Myanmar: Junta Blocks Lifesaving Aid. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/12/13/myanmar-junta-blocks-lifesaving-aid.

115 European Commission. (2023). Myanmar/Burma. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/asia-and-pacific/myanmarburma_en.

116 ul Khaliq, R. (2023). Japan to provide additional $60M in humanitarian aid to Myanmar. *Anadolu Ajansı*. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/japan-to-provide-additional-60m-in-humanitarian-aid-to-myanmar/2833170.

117 Government of Canada. (2022). Canada's strategy to respond to the Rohingya and Myanmar crises (2021 to 2024). Global Affairs Canada. https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/issues_development-enjeux_developpement/response_conflict-reponse_conflits/crisis-crises/myanmar-phase2.aspx?lang=eng.

118 Frelick, B. (2023). U.N. Slashes Food Rations for Rohingya in Bangladesh Camps. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/06/02/un-slashes-food-rations-rohingya-bangladesh-camps.

119 Pirovolakis, C. (2023). Rohingya refugees face hunger and loss of hope after latest ration cuts. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/rohingya-refugees-face-hunger-and-loss-hope-after-latest-ration-cuts.

120 Human Rights Watch. (2021). UN Security Council: Adopt Global Arms Embargo on Myanmar. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2021/05/05/un-security-council-adopt-global-arms-embargo-myanmar.

121 Abramson, J. (2021). UN Adopts Nonbinding Arms Embargo on Myanmar. Arms Control Association. https://www.armscontrol.org/act/2021-07/news-briefs/un-adopts-nonbinding-arms-embargo-myanmar.

122 SIPRI. (2022). EU arms embargo on Myanmar (Burma). SIPRI. https://www.sipri.org/databases/embargoes/eu_arms_embargoes/myanmar

123 Global Affairs Canada. (2023). Canada imposes sanctions in relation to the 2021 coup d'état in Myanmar. https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2023/01/canada-imposes-sanctions-in-relation-to-the-2021-coup-detat-in-myanmar.html.

124 Australian Government. (2023). Myanmar sanctions regime. Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. https://www.dfat.gov.au/international-relations/security/sanctions/sanctions-regimes/myanmar-sanctions-regime.

125 Al Jazeera. (2022). U.S., U.K., Canada sanctions target Myanmar air force, 'arms dealers.' *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/3/26/us-uk-canada-target-myanmar-airforce-arms-dealers.

126 Lee, Y. (2023). UN expert exposes $1 billion 'death trade' to Myanmar military. OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/05/un-expert-exposes-1-billion-death-trade-myanmar-military.

127 Al Jazeera. (2023). Firms in Europe, U.S. helping Myanmar manufacture arms, report says. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/16/firms-in-europe-us-helping-myanmar-manufacture-arms-report.

128 Yaron, O. (2023). Israeli Arms Maker Sent Equipment to Myanmar, Despite U.S. Embargo: National Security & Cyber. *Haaretz*. https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2023-06-08/ty-article/.premium/despite-u-s-embargo-israeli-arms-maker-sent-equipment-to-myanmar/00000188-9a17-deaa-ab9d-9eb71c9b0000.

129 Reuters. (2021). West condemns Myanmar coup, China's response is more muted. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/myanmar-politics-reaction-int-idUSKBN2A11XO.

130 Peters, C. (2021). Myanmar's military coup drew a rare condemnation from the UN. *Vox*. https://www.vox.com/2021/6/20/22542370/myanmar-coup-united-nations-un.

131 ' Robinson, G. (2022). Diplomatic snubs isolate Myanmar's military regime. *Nikkei Asia*. https://asia.nikkei.com/Spotlight/Myanmar-Crisis/Diplomatic-snubs-isolate-Myanmar-s-military-regime.

132 European Council. (2023). Myanmar/Burma: EU imposes seventh round of sanctions against six individuals and one entity. EEAS. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/07/20/myanmar-burma-eu-imposes-seventh-round-of-sanctions-against-six-individuals-and-one-entity/.

133 Global Affairs Canada. (2023). Canada imposes sanctions in relation to the 2021 coup d'état in Myanmar. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2023/01/canada-imposes-sanctions-in-relation-to-the-2021-coup-detat-in-myanmar.html.

134 United States Government. (2022). Risks and Considerations for Businesses and Individuals with Exposure to Entities Responsible for Undermining Democratic Processes, Facilitating Corruption, and Committing Human Rights Abuses in Burma (Myanmar). U.S. Office of Foreign Assets Control. https://ofac.treasury.gov/media/918026/download?inline.

135 ASEAN. (2022). ASEAN Leaders' Review and Decision on the Implementation of the Five-Point Consensus. ASEAN. https://asean.org/asean-leaders-review-and-decision-on-the-implementation-of-the-five-point-consensus/.

136 ABC News. (2021). ASEAN members elect not to invite Myanmar's military leader Min Aung Hlaing to summit. *ABC News*. https://www.abc.net.au/news/2021-10-16/myanmar-military-leader-to-be-left-out-of-asean-summit/100545446.

137 Michael, O. (2021). Local Burmese-Americans calling upon U.S. leaders for help. *News Channel 5*. https://www.newschannel5.com/news/burmese-americans-hold-peaceful-protest-outside-tennessee-state-capitol-building.

138 Pilat, L. (2021). 'Demanding justice': Hundreds protest in Perth against Myanmar military coup. *WAtoday*. https://www.watoday.com.au/national/western-australia/demanding-justice-hundreds-protest-in-perth-against-myanmar-military-coup-20210301-p576vi.html.

139 Sato, T., & Hirayama, A. (2021). 3,000 Myanmar protesters rally in Tokyo for Suu Kyi's release. *The Asahi Shimbun*, Breaking News, Japan News and Analysis. https://www.asahi.com/ajw/articles/14162323.

140 Da-min, J. (2021). Myanmar community in South Korea stages protest against military coup. *Korea Times*. https://www.koreatimes.co.kr/www/nation/2021/05/177_303872.html.

141 UCA News. (2021). Police clash with protesters at Myanmar embassy in Thai capital. *UCA News*. https://www.ucanews.com/news/police-clash-with-protesters-at-myanmar-embassy-in-thai-capital/91242#.

142 Ratcliffe, R. (2021). Ousted Myanmar politicians call for Rohingya to join fight against junta. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/jun/04/ousted-myanmar-politicians-call-for-rohingya-to-join-fight-against-junta.

143 Fishbein, E. (2021). Myanmar's ethnic Bamar majority seeks amends with Rohingya after they, too, face military violence. *The Globe and Mail*. https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-myanmars-ethnic-bamar-majority-seeks-amends-with-rohingya-after-they/.

144 Hölzl, V. (2021). Myanmar Coup Protesters Regret Silence Over Rohingya Genocide. *VICE*. https://www.vice.com/en/article/v7m898/myanmar-coup-protesters-regret-silence-over-rohingya-genocide.

145 Barrow, A., & Fuller, S. (Eds.). (2022). *Activism and Authoritarian Governance in Asia*. Routledge.

146 GM4MD.org. (2022). Global Movement for Myanmar Democracy. GM4MD.org. https://www.gm4md.org/campaigns/action.

147 Peter, Z. (2023). Refugees in Thai Border Camps Get New Shot at Resettlement. *VOA News*. https://www.voanews.com/a/refugees-in-thai-border-camps-get-new-shot-at-resettlement-/7141560.html.

148 Amnesty International. Human rights in Myanmar Amnesty International. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/location/asia-and-the-pacific/south-east-asia-and-the-pacific/myanmar/report-myanmar/.

149 Fortify Rights. (2022). Myanmar: New Evidence and Findings of Post-Coup d'État Crimes Against Humanity. Fortify Rights. https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2022-03-24/.

150 Human Rights Watch. (2023). "Our Numbers Are Dwindling": Myanmar's Post-Coup Crackdown on Lawyers. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/06/08/our-numbers-are-dwindling/myanmars-post-coup-crackdown-lawyers.

151 United Nations. (2019). What is the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar?. Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar. https://iimm.un.org/what-is-the-independent-investigative-mechanism-for-myanmar/.

152 Lee, Y. (2019). Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar. OHCHR. https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/hrc/myanmar-ffm/index.

153 Special Advisory Council for Myanmar. (2022). New SAC-M Briefing Paper: The ICC Can End the Myanmar Military's Impunity. Special Advisory Council for Myanmar. https://specialadvisorycouncil.org/2022/12/new-sac-m-briefing-paper-icc/

154 Fortify Rights. (2021). Myanmar: Engage the International Criminal Court to Hold Military Perpetrators of Mass Atrocity Crimes Accountable. Fortify Rights. https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2021-08-19/.

155 Fortify Rights. (2023). Myanmar Junta: End Attacks on Civilians, Comply with World Court Rulings. Fortify Rights. https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2023-04-15/.

156 Amnesty International. (2017). "Caged without a roof": Apartheid in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2017/11/myanmar-apartheid-in-rakhine-state/.

157 Blakemore, E. (2019). The Rohingya people: facts and information. *National Geographic*. https://www.nationalgeographic.com/culture/article/rohingya-people.

158 Stecklow, S. (2018). Why Facebook is losing the war on hate speech in Myanmar. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/myanmar-facebook-hate/.

159 Sobhan, T. (2018). Broken cell phones could be the key to justice for the Rohingya. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2018/08/29/asia/rohingya-myanmar-cell-phones-evidence-intl/index.html.

160 "USC Shoah Foundation. (2018). Rohingya survivor: Myanmar government "wanted to punish me for telling the truth." USC Shoah Foundation. https://sfi.usc.edu/news/2018/04/21681-rohingya-survivor-myanmar-government-%E2%80%9Cwanted-punish-me-telling-truth%E2%80%9D.

161 Bauchner, S. (2022). "Nothing Called Freedom": A Decade of Detention for Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/content/382193.

162 Noorunnabi, T., Hossain, I., Shohag, M., Haque, F., Ehsan, I., Falcone, J. P., & Rob, U. (2022). Assessment of Economic Opportunities for Young Rohingyas in Bangladesh. Rohingya Response. https://rohingyaresponse.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/LSDS-Study-Report_Assessment-of-economic-opportunities-for-young-Rohingyas_November-2022.pdf.

163 Oo, K. (2023). Around 31% of Ethnic Fighters in Myanmar Actively Supporting Resistance. *The Irrawaddy*. https://www.irrawaddy.com/opinion/analysis/around-31-of-ethnic-fighters-in-myanmar-actively-supporting-resistance.html.

164 USHMM. (2020). A Timeline of Rohingya History: Burma's Path to Genocide. https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/burmas-path-to-genocide/timeline.

165 Thiha, A. (2023). It's Time to Rethink Myanmar's Ethnic Armed Organizations. *The Diplomat*. https://thediplomat.com/2023/03/its-time-to-rethink-myanmars-ethnic-armed-organizations/.

166 Humanitarian Response. (2022). NGO Support. Humanitarian Response. https://www.humanitarianresponse.info/en/operations/bangladesh/ngo-support.

167 CARE, DRC, HI, NRC, IRC, & SC. (2020). Leading NGOs call on the International Community to Stand in Solidarity with Bangladesh and fully fund the 2020 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis - Bangladesh. ReliefWeb. https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/leading-ngos-call-international-community-stand-solidarity-bangladesh-and-fully.

168 Save the Children. (2023). Living on 27 US Cents a Day. Save the Children US. https://www.savethechildren.org/us/about-us/media-and-news/2023-press-releases/six-years-rohingya-survival.

169 Bauchner, S. (2022). *Nothing Called Freedom: A Decade of Detention for Rohingya in Myanmar's Rakhine State*. Human Rights Watch.

170 USHMM. (2020). Burma's Path to Genocide. USHMM. https://exhibitions.ushmm.org/burmas-path-to-genocide.

171 Mehmet, F. H., Alam, S., & Unlu, M. (2017). France calls for U.N. action on Rohingya 'genocide.' *Anadolu Ajansı*. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/france-calls-for-un-action-on-rohingya-genocide/915558.

172 Connolly, A. (2018). House of Commons unanimously votes to call Myanmar Rohingya killings a genocide. *Global News*. https://globalnews.ca/news/4470455/canada-declares-myanmar-rohingya-genocide/.

173 BBC. (2022, March 21). Myanmar Rohingya violence is genocide, U.S. says. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-60820215.

174 BBC. (2019). Rohingya crisis: The Gambia accuses Myanmar of genocide at top UN court. *BBC*. https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-50375739.

175 Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands. (2022, July 22). Joint statement of Canada and the Kingdom of the Netherlands regarding today's decision of the International Court of Justice in the Rohingya genocide case between The Gambia and Myanmar. Government of the Netherlands. https://www.government.nl/documents/diplomatic-statements/2022/07/22/joint-statement-canada-netherlands-rohingya-genocide-case-between-gambia-and-myanmar.

176 Sakib, S. N. (2023). France to 'intervene in' Rohingya genocide case at U.N. court. *Anadolu Ajansı*. https://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/france-to-intervene-in-rohingya-genocide-case-at-un-court/2989341.

177 International Criminal Court. (2023, July 10). ICC Prosecutor Karim A. A. Khan KC concludes second visit to Bangladesh: "The Rohingya must not be forgotten. Together, we can deliver on their legitimate expectations of justice." International Criminal Court. https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/icc-prosecutor-karim-khan-kc-concludes-second-visit-bangladesh-rohingya-must-not-be-forgotten.

178 Ford, S. (2023). Funding the ICC for Its Third Decade. In Carsten Stahn (Ed.), *The International Criminal Court in its Third Decade: Reflecting on Law and Practice*. Brill.

179 Adams, B. (2022). Myanmar: Year of Brutality in Coup's Wake. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/01/28/myanmar-year-brutality-coups-wake.

180 Amnesty International. (2023). "Rohingya" search results. Amnesty International. https://www.amnesty.org/en/search/rohingya/.

181 Fortify Rights. (2018). *They Gave Them Long Swords*. Fortify Rights. https://www.fortifyrights.org/mly-inv-rep-2018-07-19/.

182 MSF. (2021). Rohingya refugee crisis in depth. MSF. https://www.msf.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis-depth.

183 Save the Children. (2017). *"Horrors I Will Never Forget."* Save the Children Deutschland. https://www.savethechildren.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads_Dokumente/Berichte_Studien/2017/Horrors_I_Will_Never_Forget.pdf.

184 UNHCR. (2023). UNHCR seeks comprehensive regional response to address rise in deadly South-East Asia sea journeys. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/news/unhcr-seeks-comprehensive-regional-response-address-rise-deadly-south-east-asia-sea-journeys.

185 Barua, J. (2021). Young Power in Social Action: Factors behind Human Trafficking in Host and Rohingya Communities in Cox's Bazar.

186 Al Jazeera. (2023). Malaysia charges four Thais over mass graves, trafficking camps. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/6/23/malaysia-charges-four-thais-over-2015-mass-graves-refugee-camps.

187 Karim, N. (2020). Traffickers demand ransoms for Rohingyas held at sea in SE Asia. *Reuters*. https://www.reuters.com/article/us-bangladesh-malaysia-rohingya-traffick-idUSKBN23M1AC.

188 Charlton, L. (2020). Rohingya Refugees Rescued by Indonesian Fishermen After Months at Sea. *The New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2020/09/07/world/asia/rohingya-refugees-boat-indonesia.html.

189 Mahaseth, H., & Banusekar, S. (2022). Living in the Shadows: Rohingya Refugees in Malaysia. *Asian Journal of International Law*, 12(2), 259–66.

190 RSF. (2023). Index. Reporters Without Borders. https://rsf.org/en/index.

191 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

192 Peter, Z. (2023). Myanmar Resistance Asks US for Over $500 Million in Nonlethal and Humanitarian Aid. *VOA News*. https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-resistance-asks-us-for-over-500-million-in-nonlethal-humanitarian-aid/7182891.html.

193 Gharib, M. (2022). Not every war gets the same coverage as Russia's invasion – and that has consequences. *NPR*. https://www.npr.org/sections/goatsandsoda/2022/03/04/1084230259/not-every-war-gets-the-same-coverage-as-russias-invasion-and-that-has-consequenc.

194 European Commission. (2023). Myanmar/Burma. European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations. https://civil-protection-humanitarian-aid.ec.europa.eu/where/asia-and-pacific/myanmarburma_en.

195 European Council. (2023). EU solidarity with Ukraine. European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/eu-response-ukraine-invasion/eu-solidarity-ukraine/.

196 Statista. (2023). Total bilateral aid to Ukraine by country & type 2023. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1303432/total-bilateral-aid-to-ukraine/.

197 USAID. (2023). Press Releases: Burma. USAID. https://www.usaid.gov/burma/press-releases.

198 OCHA. (2023). Country-Based Pooled Funds. United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). https://www.unocha.org/country-based-pooled-funds?gclid=Cj0KCQjwuNemBhCBARIsADp74QSlbIr_Smn_aFHrGCNAZJaYDtTSE1mTptnfWHP_pnoTeb4vrcA7pDMaAgclEALw_wcB.

199 UNHCR. (2023). Ukraine situation. UNHCR Global Focus. https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/ukraine-situation.

200 UNHCR. (2023). Myanmar situation. UNHCR Global Focus. https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/myanmar-situation.

201 MC, A. (2023). Myanmar aid convoy attack raises stakes for under-fire ASEAN. *Al Jazeera*. https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/9/myanmar-convoy-attack-raises-stakes-for-asean.

202 Djurica, M., & McGowan, A. (2023). How Much Aid Has the U.S. Sent Ukraine? Here Are Six Charts. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/article/how-much-aid-has-us-sent-ukraine-here-are-six-charts.

203 Peter, Z. (2023). Myanmar Resistance Asks US for Over $500 Million in Nonlethal and Humanitarian Aid. *VOA News*. https://www.voanews.com/a/myanmar-resistance-asks-us-for-over-500-million-in-nonlethal-humanitarian-aid/7182891.html.

204 European Council. (2023). Myanmar/Burma: EU imposes seventh round of sanctions against six individuals and one entity. European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2023/07/20/myanmar-burma-eu-imposes-seventh-round-of-sanctions-against-six-individuals-and-one-entity/.

205 European Commission. (2023). Myanmar. EU Sanctions Map. https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main/details/8/?search=%7B%22value%22:%22%22,%22searchType%22:%7B%7D%7D.

206 European Council. (2023). EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine (since 2014). European Council. https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/policies/sanctions/restrictive-measures-against-russia-over-ukraine/.

207 European Commission. (2023). Russia. EU Sanctions Map. https://www.sanctionsmap.eu/#/main/details/26/?search=%7B%22value%22:%22%22,%22searchType%22:%7B%7D%7D.

208 International Criminal Court. (2023). Statement by Prosecutor Karim A. A. Khan KC on the issuance of arrest warrants against President Vladimir Putin and Ms Maria Lvova-Belova. International Criminal Court. https://www.icc-cpi.int/news/statement-prosecutor-karim-khan-kc-issuance-arrest-warrants-against-president-vladimir-putin.

209 HRW. (2013). "*All you can do is pray*." Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/report/2013/04/22/all-you-can-do-pray/crimes-against-humanity-and-ethnic-cleansing-rohingya-muslims.

210 Chandran, A., Keene-McCain, J., & Palmer, E. (2023). What of the Rohingya? The ICC, Ukraine, and limits of "international" justice. Lowy Institute. https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2018/08/myanmar-fact-finding-mission-accounting-gravest-international-crimes.

211 OHCHR. (2018). Fact Finding Missions: Accounting for the gravest international crimes. United Nations Human Rights. https://www.ohchr.org/en/stories/2018/08/myanmar-fact-finding-mission-accounting-gravest-international-crimes.

212 UNHCR. (2023). Ukraine Refugee Situation. UNHCR Operational Data Portal. https://data2.unhcr.org/en/situations/ukraine.

213 Statista. (2023). Ukrainian refugees by country. Statista. https://www.statista.com/statistics/1312584/ukrainian-refugees-by-country/.

214 White House. (2022). Remarks by President Biden and President Zelenskyy of Ukraine in Joint Press Conference. White House. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2022/12/21/remarks-by-president-biden-and-president-zelenskyy-of-ukraine-in-joint-press-conference/.

215 Government of Canada. (2023). Canada-Ukraine authorization for emergency travel: Key figures. Government of Canada. https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/services/immigrate-canada/ukraine-measures/key-figures.html.

216 UN Refugees. (2023). Rohingya Refugee Crisis Explained. USA for UNHCR. https://www.unrefugees.org/news/rohingya-refugee-crisis-explained/.

217 Naing, I. (2023). Stranded Myanmar Refugees Seek Answers in Thailand. *VOA News*. https://www.voanews.com/a/stranded-myanmar-refugees-seek-answers-in-thailand-/6914924.html.

218 Roy, D., & McGowan, A. (2023). *How Does the U.S. Refugee System Work*?. Council on Foreign Relations. https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/how-does-us-refugee-system-work-trump-biden-afghanistan.

219 UNHCR. (2023). Myanmar situation. UNHCR Global Focus. https://reporting.unhcr.org/operational/situations/myanmar-situation.

220 Eagan, K., & Archambault, C. (2023). Steep increase in deadly boat journeys reflects Rohingyas' desperation: UNHCR. UN News. https://news.un.org/en/story/2023/01/1132517.

221 Bauchner, S. (2023). Bali Process Needs to End Rohingya Deaths at Sea. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/02/09/bali-process-needs-end-rohingya-deaths-sea.

222 United Nations Office at Geneva. (2023). Funding 'simply not enough' for Rohingya refugees, UN agencies report. United Nations Office at Geneva. https://www.ungeneva.org/en/news-media/news/2023/07/83177/funding-simply-not-enough-rohingya-refugees-un-agencies-report.

223 CARE. (2023). 'Breaking the Silence': The 10 most under-reported humanitarian crises of 2022. CARE International UK. https://www.careinternational.org.uk/press-office/press-releases/breaking-the-silence-the-10-most-under-reported-humanitarian-crises-of-2022/.

224 Gregory, T. (2023). Bias in Media Coverage of Conflict. The University of Chicago, Harris School of Public Policy. 2023. https://harris.uchicago.edu/news-events/news/bias-media-coverage-conflict.

225 Al Lawati, A., & Ebrahim, N. (2022). How the Ukraine war exposed Western media bias. *CNN*. https://www.cnn.com/2022/03/04/media/mideast-summary-04-03-2022-intl/index.html.

226 Ellison, S., & Andrews, T. M. (2022). 'They seem so like us': In depicting Ukraine's plight, some in media use offensive comparisons. *The Washington Post*. https://www.washingtonpost.com/media/2022/02/27/media-ukraine-offensive-comparisons/.

227 Tariq, T., & Sablan, J. (2022). Mainstream Media's Coverage of the Ukraine Crisis Shows How Overlooked and Misrepresented Other Wars Are. *Spheres of Influence*. https://spheresofinfluence.ca/mainstream-media-ukraine-europe-racism-hypocrisy/.

Rohingya refugees survey the Thankhali camp in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar region. The aid available to the displaced people has not met the demand as the number of Rohingya fleeing Myanmar has swollen amid increasing refugee numbers in general globally that put more pressure on available resources. (Ed Jones/ AFP via Getty Images)

An Analysis of the Patterns and Limits of Humanitarian Responses to the Rohingyas in Bangladesh

Nahian Reza Sabriet and Amena Mohsin

Abstract

Every day, people in different parts of the world are facing different forms of violence, repression, and ethnic cleansing, often giving rise to genocide. This has led to a growth in the global refugee population. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the number of refugees worldwide has increased by 12.7 million in the last 32 years (from 19.8 million in 1990 to 32.5 million in 2022).[1] On the other hand, a total of 103 million people are currently spending their lives as forcibly displaced in different parts of the world.[2] Women and children constitute the majority of these people and become the worst victims of persecution.[3] Despite these striking statistical evidences, global funding for refugee protection has significantly decreased.[4] The shifting dynamics of displacement and the plight of refugees demand critical insights into the concept of refugeehood that look beyond the political connotations and include socioeconomic aspects, i.e., stigma, discrimination, and racialization. Similarly, the humanitarian responses to refugees need to be critically evaluated.

Against this backdrop, this paper considers the case of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and examines the responses of national, regional, and global actors through qualitative research. For the purpose of this research, the paper takes into account the period since responses to the Rohingya crisis have become institutionalized, from the 1990s until today. It examines the nature of the responses; the changes, if any, that have occurred over the time; and, more critically, the limits of humanitarian responses. The research looks at the intersectional

and intergenerational dimensions of refugee camps' populations, which include women, children including orphan children, the elderly, and people with special needs. The inclusivity and specificity of the interventions, therefore, are important. The study considers the responses from state/government organizations (GOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), which have roles to play in providing humanitarian responses to the Rohingya refugees.

1. Introduction

Human mobility and displacement have been occurring since the dawn of civilization. Unfortunately, two world wars and the subsequent development of institutional norms could not reduce the plight of people as consequences of persecution, genocide, mass violence, and both interstate and intrastate conflicts. Between the 1990s and 2020s, the number of refugees almost doubled, reaching 35.3 million in 2023.[5] It is to be noted that some groups among the refugees are more vulnerable than others due to their socioeconomic positions. These include women, children, people of color, and disabled populations. Women and children constitute the highest portion of refugees worldwide. There are also different communities whose members are not considered refugees but are either stateless or asylum seekers. Currently, there are 5.2 million asylum seekers, 4.4 million stateless people, and 5.2 million people in need of international protection.[6]

The Rohingyas are one of those groups of stateless people who have been persecuted for generations in their own country. Their history of persecution has largely been overlooked by the international community. The 2017 genocide was one of the most vicious incidents in recent history, and it produced the highest number of refugees in Asia after the Vietnam War.[7] According to UNHCR, an estimated 1.1 million Rohingyas have taken shelter in the southeastern border area of Bangladesh. And this number is even increasing within the area's limited space as more and more refugee children are born every month. These people are not only being stripped of their basic rights of citizenship by the Myanmar state authorities but are also dependent on funding and assistance from the Government of Bangladesh and international donor organizations. Nevertheless, the declining trend of donations and of funding for refugees worldwide, including the Rohingyas, has engendered a new form of uncertainty that needs cautious analysis.

With this backdrop, this paper aims to examine the trends of humanitarian responses to the Rohingya crisis. For this study, the primary focus has been on the developments during and after the Rohingya influx in the 1990s, although significant incidents from the past have also been recorded and referred to where they are deemed to be required to put things in perspective. The paper argues that geopolitics and geoeconomics are increasingly becoming crucial drivers for humanitarian aid, refugees, and refugee-like situations. The paper is mainly based on secondary literature, including books and journal articles. Additionally, reports and statistics from different international and national organizations – i.e., the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) – have been used as primary documents. The paper is divided into five sections. After this brief introductory section, the second section discusses the evolution of international refugee protection programs and their patterns of responses to refugee crises over time. The third section gives an overview of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. The fourth section evaluates and critiques the humanitarian responses to the Rohingya refugee crisis from 1992 to 2023. In this regard, it considers both intergenerational and intersectional responses, including those of transnational donor agencies, national protection measures, and initiatives undertaken by regional or subregional bodies. The paper ends with concluding remarks.

2. The Evolution of Humanitarian Responses to Refugee Crises

The concepts of refugeehood and humanitarian aid are politically and historically embedded. Although the term "refugee" was institutionally established in 1951 through the Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, people were refugees and humanitarian aid was given long before that. The English anthropologist Jonathan Benthall made a distinction between the modern and old period of humanitarian responses, namely, "before Dunant" and "after Dunant." The latter signifies the establishment of the International

Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in 1864[8], through the work of Henry Durant, about whom the ICRC has said: "[He was] the man whose vision led to the creation of the worldwide Red Cross and Red Crescent movement; he went from riches to rags but became joint recipient of the first Nobel Peace Prize." However, it was Fridtjof Nansen whose appointment as the first high commissioner for Russian refugees after World War I led to significant developments in bringing together the issues of humanitarian assistance and refugee crises.[9] Despite not having any specific agency dedicated to the protection and assistance for global refugees, Nansen expanded the existing protection mandate to Armenian (1924), Assyrian (1928), and Turkish refugees (1928).[10]

During this period, the League of Nations also took a groundbreaking step by ensuring *de jure* protection of people without a nationality through its general policies. The League's Advisory Commission for Refugees pointed out in 1929 that the critical aspect of protection is to extend "no regular nationality and … deprived of the normal protection accorded to the regular citizens of a State."[11] The academic debates regarding the concept and status of refugees between 1920 and 1935 also helped U.N. bodies develop the first legal document on this issue in the 1950s.[12]

Throughout these years, displacement-related assistance programs have been undertaken by organizations anchored in particular nation-states. Since 1863, the ICRC has primarily operated from Switzerland, and Save the Children began operating in 1919 from England. However, large-scale international and intergovernmental developments in this area did not begin until World War II. The war led to approximately 40 million to 60 million refugees,[13] which is the highest number until today, and this huge number required immediate legal, institutional, and humanitarian actions. Organizations like Oxfam (founded in 1942) and CARE (1945) had been working on these issues. After the creation of the U.N. in 1945, the existing humanitarian organizations expanded internationally and extensively. At the same time, newer organizations dedicated to humanitarian relief and protection were established. These included the U.N. Disaster Relief Office, the U.N. International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the U.N. Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO), and the World Health Organization (WHO), all of which were established in the 1970s.[14]

In the 1970s, refugee repatriation became a prominent issue. Feller called it the "decade of repatriation," since a number of countries – Angola, Bangladesh, Guinea-Bissau, and Mozambique – demonstrated successful examples of repatriation of millions of refugees.[15] During the late 1960s and 1970s, refugee protection programs also expanded regionally. Two of the notable examples are the 1969 Convention on the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, or the Organization of African Unity Refugee Convention, and the 1979 International Conference on Refugees and Displaced Persons in Southeast Asia.

In the 1980s, the number of refugees started to increase, and support from local communities waned. Conversely, during this period the Cold War's geopolitics found its way into the refugee crisis. Therefore, aid to refugees became an expansionist tool of the two superpowers, the U.S. and the USSR.[16] Scholars have also identified "policy convergence" between the U.S. and UNHCR through refugee aid, which helped the U.S. expand its bloc across the African region while influencing these colonies' liberation movements.[17] In general, it turned into an effective instrument for Western countries to plunge into the Global South through legal and humanitarian activities, endorsed by U.N. resolutions and UNHCR's mandates.[18]

One must take into account that the creation of international aid policy for refugees was not exclusively for refugees. Rather, it started as part of relief and development programs. It was the 1980s when refugee aid and development began to be adopted as a separate policy and was explicitly mentioned in policy papers.[19] However, the trend of integrated resettlement programs to incorporate both refugee and host communities did start with the initiatives of the League of Nations, which eventually provided options for multistakeholder approaches. Notably, the International Labor Organization was largely involved in public projects and reconstruction/resettlement programs.[20] The incorporation of refugees into development programs was also targeted as a makeshift policy for seeing refugees as moving from

"masses of humanitarian need" to capable humans with specific skills.[21]

Post-Cold War civil wars resulted in an unmanageable number of refugees and stateless people all over the world. While the number of refugees in the late 1970s was only a few million, it went up to 10 million within a decade; and by the mid-1990s, the number escalated to about 25 million.[22] In 1978, Bangladesh also faced the first expulsion of Rohingya refugees from Burma (now Myanmar). The second influx took place in 1992. At the same time, the Iraq-Iran war, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, and civil conflicts in Yugoslavia, Rwanda, and Bosnia led to enormous refugee inflows and outflows with almost no to little chance of repatriation. The sheer number and expanse of this refugee crisis compelled UNHCR to undertake prolonged programs. The traditional purpose of "temporary protection"[23] of refugees hence became obsolete and required comprehensive engagement and financial aid. Czaika and Mayer have shown an interesting trend in donor countries' refugee aid policies through their research that posits an idea that these countries are more interested in providing aid and assistance to cross-border refugees who might pose a direct or indirect risk to those states by their physical movements.[24] In other words, these states, mainly Western, perceive a policy contradiction between "humanitarianism" and "national protection interest" that influences their decision-making process and volume of aid disbursement.[25] Gradually, in the 2000s, the broad umbrella of aid policy also changed from refugee aid and development to development assistance for refugees.

In the 2000s and 2010s, refugee problems became more sporadic, covering wide ranges of regions and more diverse issues than ever. Europe's concerns with the refugee influx from the Middle East, particularly Syria, became one global highlight. Newfound concerns – including rape, sexual assault, human trafficking, climate-induced displacement, and women's and children's needs – became integral parts of refugee problems and needed specific attention from global protection programs. At the same time, UNHCR remained the core coordinating institution for resolving these issues, while depending on countries' voluntary funding mechanisms. "Assistance" and "protection," in this period, were complementary, as the U.N. agencies took into cognizance the basic needs of refugees (i.e., food, shelter, and health care), along with the protection mandate[26], which required further allocation of funds and the willingness of host countries to disburse and manage them properly.

Globally, there is a shortage of funding compared with the number of people being made refugees every day or at the brink of displacement. Refugees' "degree of unwantedness," therefore, may determine to what extent they are receiving support from a particular state. Investigating the trends in refugee protection and assistance in the 200os, Strang and Ager have noticed that there are subtle distinctions in funding allocations for refugees and asylum seekers.[27] These distinctions primarily work based on black-and-white policy agendas, where citizens of the host countries are deemed "deserving" while the refugee population mainly comprises the "undeserving" group. The dwindling nature of funding from international actors and donors also helped states change their own policies negatively toward the refugees. Showing an example of Tanzania's refugee situation, Whitaker has stated,

> Funding cuts for the refugee operation in Tanzania provided government officials with an excuse for changing their policies. … Tanzanian officials had legitimate concerns with respect to regional security and the impact of the refugee presence on their own population. Given that the international community failed to adequately fund the refugee operation, and that many donor countries themselves were developing more restrictive immigration policies, the Tanzanian government was effectively shielded from international criticism for its new approach.[28]

Strang and Ager maintain that Western countries' "assimilation" or "integration" approach also shrunk due to economic, political, and security considerations. With reference to their arguments, one can easily discern that the priority group in this case was not the refugees, who would belong to "undeserving" groups. Thus, the post–World War II ethos of "international responsibility," "burden-sharing," and "responsibility of states"[29] gradually became more parochial and susceptible to national and regional security frameworks, and this trend still continues.

3. The Rohingya Crisis: Background and Development

Possibly one of the highly overlooked refugee situations in the 21st century is the Rohingya crisis, which has been going on for about five decades. The Myanmar junta's atrocities and genocidal acts against the Rohingya people due to their ethnic and religious status resulted in three major refugee influxes, in the 1970s, 1990s, and 2010s. Although a number of South Asian and Southeast Asian countries have been affected by these influxes, Bangladesh has been the primary receiving end, with millions of Rohingya refugees living in the country's Cox's Bazar and Bhasan Char regions. The country is also struggling due to the limited response from the international community – in diplomatic, political, and legal actions – coupled with the diminishing amount of funding from international donors.

Myanmar's problems with the Rohingyas are not a standalone issue; rather, they are a consequence of the state's failure to incorporate its highly heterogeneous and diverse ethnic groups into its administrative process over half a century. The "nationalist element" of Buddhism in Myanmar emerged during the country's anticolonial movements against the British. However, it took a fascist turn when the military organized a revolution against the British and labeled the Rohingyas a hostile group because of their history of loyalty to the colonial power.[30] However, whether consciously or subconsciously, the new regime in Myanmar ignored that the Rohingyas also organized a revolt against the colonizers after they retracted their promise to provide partial independence to the ethnic group, despite fighting against the Japanese in 1942.[31] After Burma achieved independence, the Rohingyas were stripped of their citizenship rights in the 1948 Constitution, and the manifestation of this discrimination continued to be visible in the 1974 Constitution and in the 1982 Citizenship Law, while the latter declared that the Rohingyas explicitly are "foreigners."[32] On one hand, the Rohingyas were systematically deprived of their basic rights to education, food, shelter, and health; on the other hand, several operations (i.e., Operation Sapay in 1974 and Operation Naga Min in 1977) were carried out as a means of ethnoracial profiling of these groups and to forcefully drive them out of the country.[33]

For Bangladesh, Operation Naga Min had specific implications, since it was the first time the country faced a mass exodus of 200,000 Rohingya refugees from Myanmar. Reports from the UNHCR suboffice in Cox's Bazar showed that almost 250 villages had been destroyed during the operations in Myebon and Maungdaw townships alone.[34] During that time, the Government of Bangladesh (GoB) and the International Committee of the Red Cross provided the Rohingyas with immediate protection and relief. As a newly emerged state, Bangladesh was unable to deal with the overwhelming number of refugees. Eventually, it had to call for international support, and the U.N. established 13 camps in Cox's Bazar.[35] Treatment and protection of the refugees at this stage ended with the repatriation of 187,250 Rohingyas to Myanmar after an agreement was reached between the two countries.[36]

Bangladesh faced the second mass exodus of 250,000 Rohingya people in 1992. During this time, UNHCR was directly involved from the very first stage, and 13 camps were set up in Cox's Bazar.[37] The GoB and UNHCR started to work in tandem to resolve the crisis; and by October 1992, they had started working together to facilitate voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas. However, by 1994, UNHCR's emphasis on "voluntariness" and the GoB's emphasis on fast repatriation led to contradictions between them.[38] Eventually, UNHCR gained access to the Arakan townships and approximately 230,000 Rohingya people were repatriated to Myanmar.[39]

After the repatriation, the uneasy relationship between the Rohingyas and the Myanmar state continued to worsen over the year. Not to mention, neither the discrimination against the Rohingyas stop; nor did the strings of incidents that included persecution, rape of women and girls, torture, and extortion. In 2013, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), initially named Harakah al-Yaqin (Faith Movement), emerged as the frontline revolutionary and insurgent organization advocating for the plight of the Rohingyas. The presence of ARSA was first felt through the 2016 attacks on Myanmar's Border Guard Police bases in Northern Rakhine State.[40] The ultranationalist Buddhist organization called Ma Ba Tha was also established in 2014. Together with Ma Ba Tha's anti-Islamic and prejudicial political campaign, the military junta organized a brutal crackdown on the

Rohingyas in 2017 that resulted in the largest refugee crisis in Asia in the 21st century. Approximately 700,000 Rohingya people fled Myanmar and took shelter in Bangladesh, adding to the number of refugees living in the camps.[41]

Primarily emphasizing the "repatriation" agenda, the GoB started diplomatic talks with Myanmar while providing assistance to the camps with the help of international agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Even though Bangladesh and Myanmar reached an agreement in 2018 regarding repatriation, stagnating developments regarding verification slowed the process down. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic and the 2021 coup d'état in Myanmar exacerbated the downward trend. The initial idea of repatriation talks started off with China's proposed "three-stage plan" – which incorporated an immediate cease-fire, intermediary bilateral talks, and a final stage that necessitated international support for a long-term solution – in the background.[42] The two countries also set up an Ad-Hoc Task Force for Verification of the Displaced Persons from Rakhine and, in 2022, the first meeting of the committee took place (Rohingya Repatriation, 2022). Even though the first two stages were successful to some extent, it is important to examine how the third stage is developing. Going back to Whitaker's point about the convergence of "protection" and "assistance" for refugees,[43] one needs to take into account whether global support from international and regional communities is addressing both these areas or if they are adequate to address the needs of refugees.

4. Nature and Critique of Responses to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis

The responses to the Rohingya refugee crisis have primarily depended on host countries' policies and assistance from international agencies and NGOs. Although the Rohingya community has been facing physical, psychological, and gender-based violence from its own country for more than half a century, any instrument of responsibility to protect has never been adopted by the international community based on the U.N. Charter.

The primary struggle with the nature of responses, however, stems from two pertinent issues: the organizational structure of the refugee protection program, and the nature of legally binding frameworks or the lack thereof. Even 73 years since its establishment, UNHCR still operates as the only coordinating body when it comes to refugeehood and forced migration, and it is still dependent on voluntary contributions from donor states. As Whitaker has noted,

> UNHCR depends entirely on voluntary contributions for its field operations. The agency receives just 2 percent of its funds from the U.N. general budget for headquarters staff. The remaining 98 percent of an annual budget must be raised through appeals to U.N. member states and other donors. The vast majority of the agency's funding comes from industrialized countries, with the United States, the European Union, and Japan together accounting for 94 percent of government contributions. … As a result of this funding structure, UNHCR is highly vulnerable to fluctuations in the level of donor contributions.[44]

Conversely, the 1951 Refugee Convention is the only convention serving as a core legal document for the status and protection of refugees. Not only has the convention become outdated,[45] it is also unable to address newly emerging challenges and needs. Moreover, neither Myanmar nor Bangladesh is a signatory of the convention. Nevertheless, it must be mentioned that, in a 2017 verdict regarding the imprisonment of a Rohingya person, the High Court of Bangladesh used the clauses of the Refugee Convention and mentioned it as a "customary international law," despite that country not being a signatory (discussed further below in 4.1). To quote from the verdict,

> "[The Refugee] Convention by now has become a part of customary international law which is binding upon all the countries of the world, irrespective of whether a particular country has formally signed, acceded to or ratified the convention or not."[46]

Bangladesh has also shown compliance with the convention by providing shelter and assistance to refugees for decades. However, in this case, ensuring Bangladesh's compliance alone cannot bring any

positive outcome, unless Myanmar also does so. While it is highly unlikely, intervention by the international community and protection programs can put pressure on Myanmar.

To understand the nature and trends of responses, this subsection divides the discussion into two phases.

4.1 Pre-2017 Influx Trends

After the exodus in the 1990s, institutional arrangements between Bangladesh and UNHCR were established. In 1993, a memorandum of understanding was signed, which mentioned "technical assistance and financial support." However, UNHCR's Policy Development and Evaluation Service pointed out in its evaluation report that no tangible attempts were seen until 2006. At the same time, geopolitical stakes and concerns dominated regional and extra regional countries' responses to the Rohingya crisis. For example, during the 1990s, China was a major trading partner of Myanmar, and due to its economic interests, it did not want to become involved in the crisis, despite having a major influence on Myanmar's State Law and Order Restoration Council.[47]

During this period, however, multiple IGOs and NGOs extended their humanitarian aid and development programs to address the plight of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh. The European Commission launched its Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (ECHO) program to Bangladesh in 1994 to provide relief to the Rohingya refugees. Between 2007 and 2017, until the new phase of the refugee crisis started, ECHO provided about 30 million euros for health care, shelter, water, sanitation, and education for the Rohingyas.[48] Subsequently, it started closely working with the International Organization for Migration.

The UNHCR Policy Development and Evaluation Service's report provides a list of collaborative measures taken during that phase, including a $33 million pledge from the European Union, Australia, and the Dhaka Steering Group, which wanted to collaborate with the U.N. Joint Initiative for programs targeting the U.N. Millennium Development Goals in Cox's Bazar. Nevertheless, the government turned down the project under the accusation of unauthorized rehabilitation in the name of poverty reduction in the host communities. In 2012, the GoB denied shelter to the refugees for the first time, mentioning the erstwhile situation and the presence of 400,000 Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, which was already overwhelming the country.[49]

During this period, the protection of Rohingyas' social and civil rights was taken up by organizations like Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST), Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU), and Ain o Salish Kendra (ASK). One example was RMMRU's involvement against the conviction of a Rohingya man in 2011 for unlawful entry under Section 3 of the Foreigners Act 1946 after his arrest in 2007. The verdict established that no person, whether a citizen or noncitizen, "should be kept in detention after the completion of a sentence or term of imprisonment for any criminal offence."[50] BLAST also built awareness regarding the laws "beyond refugees" that would subsequently be applicable to noncitizens. These included constitutional law, fair trial rights, protections for victims and witnesses of crimes, and the like. Among other NGOs, Brac contributed to reconstruction, building shelters, and providing education as part of its work in the Cox's Bazar region.[51]

The initiatives undertaken by regional organizations in Asia were barely visible. It was also the NGOs that wanted to push the Rohingya protection agenda through the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), given that ASEAN member states like Malaysia and Thailand were also recipients of Rohingya refugees. The ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights included the plight of the Rohingyas as a discussion point. The issue was supported by only two representatives, while the rest refused to consider it as a regional or global concern.[52]

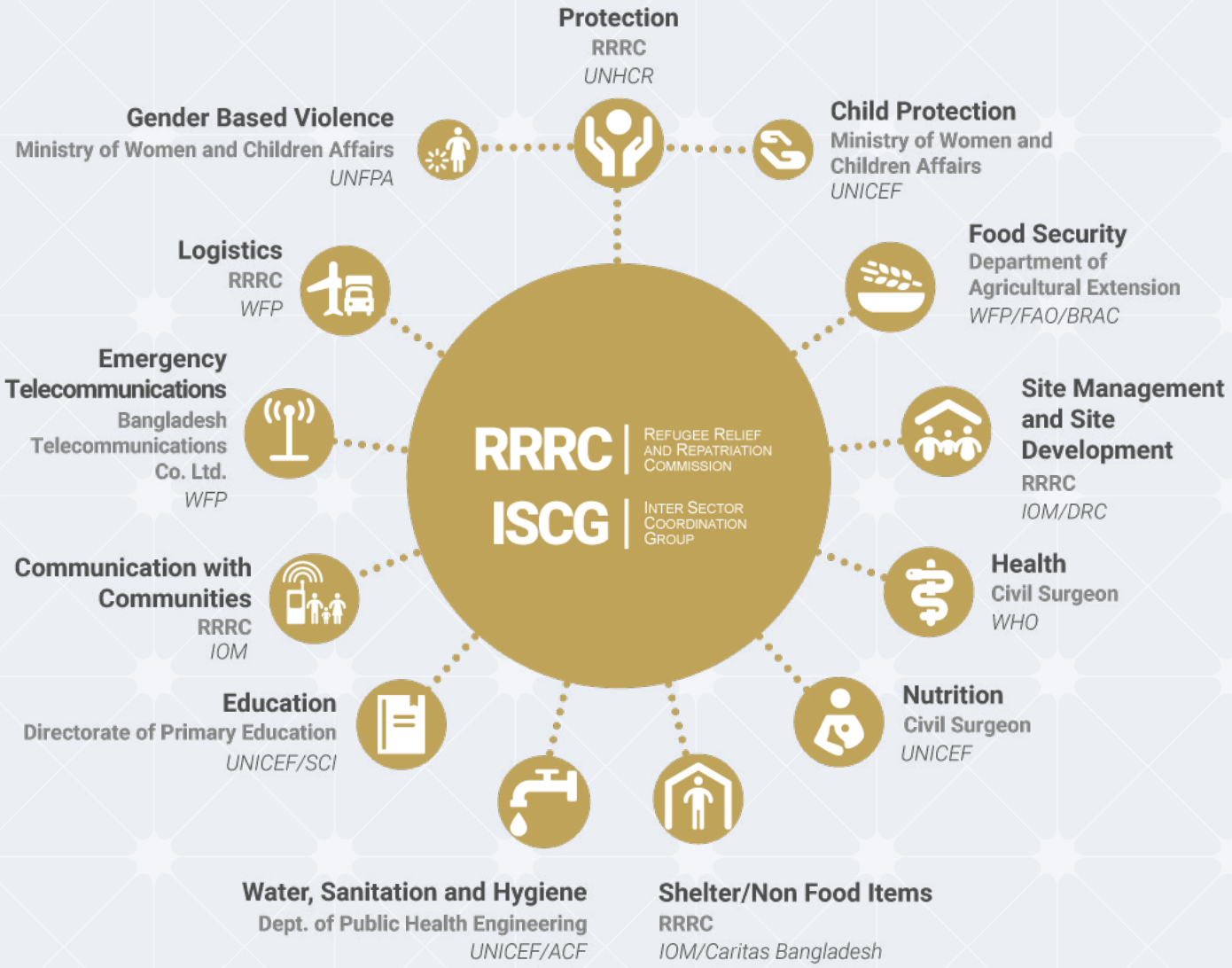
4.2. Post-2017 Influx Trends

More coordinated efforts for the Rohingya refugees were seen after the 2017 influx. Establishment of the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) and the National Task Force (NTF), in coordination with the Ministry of Disaster Management & Relief, contributed positively to the immediate response. A strategic executive group was also formed, with the

International Organization for Migration's chief, the U.N. Resident Coordinator, and a UNHCR representative as co-chairs. The Inter-Sector Coordination Group (ISCG) was formed for information management, external relations management, and thematic management. More importantly, the ISCG incorporated myriad dimensions under the protection framework and designated different organizations as focal points (figure 1). As the framework suggests, RRRC itself is directly involved in protection, site management, logistics, communications, and shelter. Relevant ministries, U.N. agencies – like the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) (gender-based violence), UNICEF (nutrition, education, child protection), the World Food Program (food security, logistics, telecommunications), and the WHO (Health) –and NGOs like Brac (food security) are directly included in the coordination framework.

Figure 1. Humanitarian Stakeholders in the Rohingya Crisis

Bangladesh's Rohingya Refugee Response Coordination Mechanism and the UN organizations assisting



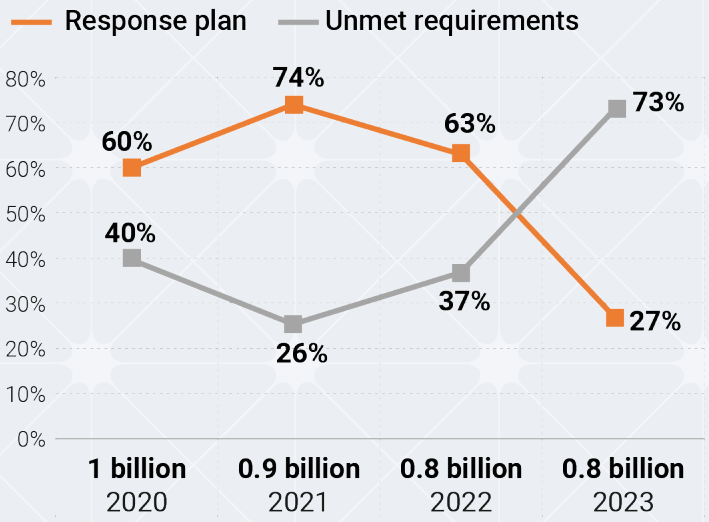
Source: ISCG, UN OCHA (ReliefWeb)

Other organizations have also been working in different capacities. Between 2017 and 2023, Action Aid supported 657,000 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, particularly by creating and operating in women-friendly spaces and providing medical referrals, hygiene kits, and psychosocial support.[53] Brac started to work as part of water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) in September 2017 and ensured WASH facilities (e.g., functioning tube-wells, latrines, gas, and wastebins) for 365,697 people.[54]

Another salient trend at this stage pertained to research and awareness-building. Hence, research organizations like Research Initiatives, Bangladesh (RIB), and the Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS) at the University of Dhaka have left their vivid footprints. RIB has developed a "childhood learning model" called the Kajoli Model and applied it to educating Rohingya children in the camps. It has also established mass research teams, called Participatory Action Groups (Gonogobeshona Dol), to utilize participatory action research as an instrument against gender-based violence in the camps.[55] CGS's peace observatory, funded by the Partnerships for a Tolerant and Inclusive Bangladesh project of the United Nations Development Program, organized multiple gatherings of the International Conference on Genocide and Mass Violence, which included the "Dhaka Declaration" to resolve the crisis with the help of international partners, global humanitarian networks, and the Rohingya diaspora.[56]

Among global institutions, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) and the EU came forward with notable contributions. OIC backed the *Gambia v. Myanmar* case filed before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in 2019. The organizations also called for repeated actions against the genocidal acts of Myanmar. The OIC chief has also recently visited the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar in May 2023 and shared concerns about the funding shortage. Conversely, the EU has been a significant partner in the Joint Response Plan (JRP). It has committed financing through three source organizations: the European Commission (EC), the EC Directorate-General for International Partnerships (formerly EuropeAid DEVCO), and the European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection Department. Under the JRP for 2023, the EU's funding covers 3.5%. Among other donor organizations, UNHCR covers 1.9% ($30,630,700), the International Labor Organization covers 0.1% ($530,295), and Save the Children covers 0.1% ($1,274,600). Among individual countries, the U.S. covers 10.4% ($90,700,000), Japan covers 1.8% ($15,918,550), Australia covers 3.3% ($28,706,327), and Canada covers 0.9% ($7,897,197). Interestingly, despite the Rohingya issue being branded globally as an ethnoreligious issue targeting the Muslim community, Qatar ($205,353) and the United Arab Emirates ($1,000,000) are the only two Arab countries that are committed to contribute via the JRP for 2023. Although Turkey provided financial support to the camps directly in fiscal years (FYs) 2021 and 2022, FY 2023 has seen a sharp decline. Yet one must note the fact that it has donated $200,000 for the genocide trial in the ICJ.[57]

Figure 2. Trends in the Rohingya Response Plan / Appeal Requirements (in billions of dollars)



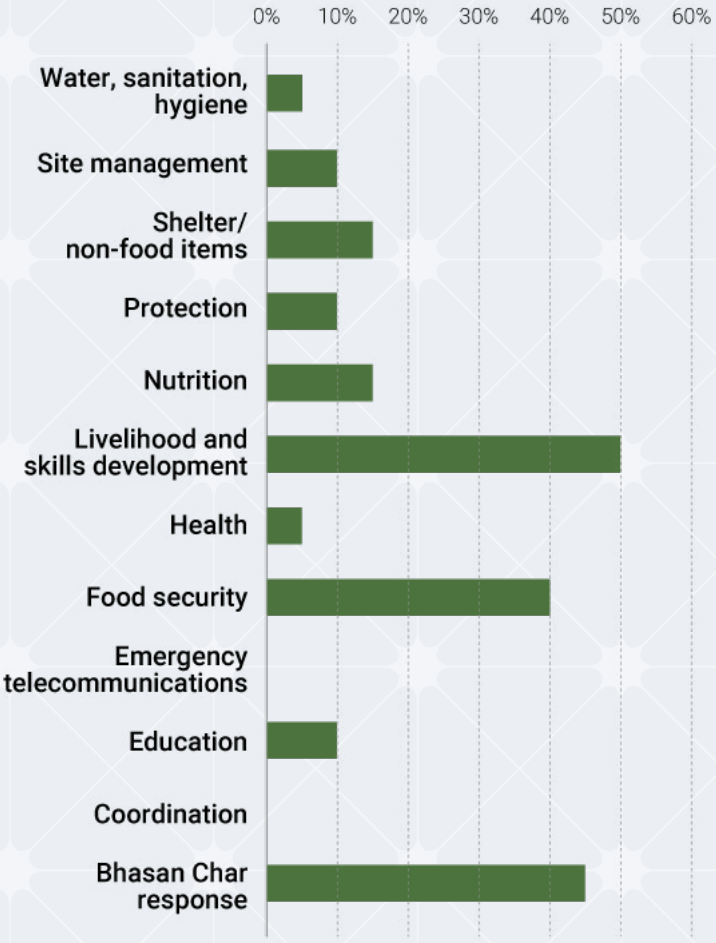
Source: UNOCHA

Perhaps, an issue of more concern than the percentage of allocation is the increasing trend of unmet funding. Figure 2 shows the percentage of total funding and unmet requirements between 2020 and 2023. Almost all the years had to face unmet requirements, and the 2023 situation is not satisfactory at all. Moreover, these funds are not enough to address the plight of the 1.1 million refugees comprehensively. According to a 2022 statement by UNHCR,

> The support from the international community has been and is crucial in delivering lifesaving

protection and assistance services for Rohingya refugees but funding is well short of needs.

Figure 3. Progress in Funding the Bhasan Char Camps, by Cluster



Source: UNOCHA © 2024 The New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy

The U.N. resident coordinator in Bangladesh, Gwyn Lewis, in her interview with Prothom Alo (Bengali Daily) on March 11, 2023, also echoed such concerns.[58] She significantly highlighted the funding cuts from the WFP, which fails to address the marginal food requirement of 2,100 kilocalories per day for refugees. She also mentioned the demand of additional funding for the newly established Bhasan Char camps, which can be seen in the cluster-based distribution in Figure 3. The funding clusters also show the lesser allocations for health and education, which requires further attention. The number of donor organizations involved has also been reduced, from 477 in 2021 to 280 in 2022 to 131 in 2023.[59]

Table 1. U.S. Funding for the Rohingya Refugees Over the Years

Year	U.S. Funding (millions of dollars)	Percentage of Total Fund Received
2017	89.31	27.11
2018	241.46	34.11
2019	247.38	35.8
2020	331.22	49.8
2021	298.59	43.9
2022	336.69	60.6

Sources: Compiled by Abu Salah Md Yousuf from U.N. Factsheets, OCHA documents, and HRW reports, 2023.

When it comes to respective country-based funding, there is a gap that is a cause of concern in terms of what is committed and what is provided. Although the U.S. is the largest donor of refugee funds, except in 2022, the unmet requirements of funds remained more than 50% (Table 1).

Unfortunately, regional initiatives and responses from individual states have not advanced at a similar pace. The ASEAN has continued its distant position from the previous phase and kept its agenda of "noninterference" at the fore. However, it included the repatriation issue of the Rohingyas in its 2019 ASEAN foreign ministers' forum, and it opted for further developments through the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management.[60] The geoeconomic issues here also cannot be ignored. ASEAN member states – like Singapore, Thailand, Malaysia, and Brunei – are among the top 10 investors in Myanmar, while Singapore is holding the peak position, with $275 million.[61] Similar to the ASEAN, the Bay of Bengal Initiative for Multi-Sectoral Technical and Economic Cooperation (BIMSTEC) has also failed to address the concerns of the refugees and their protection. Not to mention, BIMSTEC is the only subregional group for South and Southeast Asia that includes both Bangladesh and Myanmar. In this case, BIMSTEC overemphasizes on its "technical" and "economic" agenda, ignoring how the security dynamics of the region are also closely related to both. Banerjee here has pointed out that the silence of BIMSTEC shows the limits of the subregion in dealing with forced displacement of people from one member state to another.[62] Bangladesh's high

commissioner to India, Syed Muazzem Ali, in his interview with Press Trust of India (PTI), rightly mentioned how it may also affect the connectivity projects of BIMSTEC:

> On the BIMSTEC, unless and until we resolve the refugee problem, we will not be able to make significant progress on the connectivity question. It is a common desire to build connectivity between India, Bangladesh with southeast Asian region and that would first require passing through Myanmar.[63]

4.3 Geopolitics, Geoeconomics and Humanitarian Aid

When it comes to individual countries, the combination of geopolitics and geoeconomics has had a major influence on the pattern of responses. These countries have direct diplomatic and economic ties with Myanmar. At the same time, a number of international companies have ongoing projects in the Rakhine region. Maintaining strong diplomatic ties with (and not imposing any sanction on) Myanmar is important for them to continue these projects. The business companies' roles in international politics are also larger than the business itself, i.e., as lobbyists. It explains why most actions of the international community are either verbal and rhetorical and why they hardly reach the point of sanctions or any direct maneuver.

Apart from the ASEAN states, among Myanmar's top investors are China ($133 billion), Thailand ($24 billion), Hong Kong ($5.1 billion), South Korea ($5 billion), the United Kingdom ($2 billion), Malaysia ($2.1 billion), and India ($1.1 billion).[64] These investments help Myanmar in two ways: as an element of resource diplomacy for oil and natural gas, and by enhancing trade and connectivity projects.

Myanmar is a part of China's Belt and Road Initiative. China has invested in the China-Myanmar Economic Corridor connecting Ruili (Yunnan Province) and Khyaukphyu (Rakhine state). The corridor also includes a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in Khyaukphyu (KPSEZ). The country is also financially involved in Myanmar's connectivity projects, like the $9 billion Muse-Mandalay Railway construction.[65] There are additional projects in the area, including the $180 million Kyaukphyu Power Plant, the $1.3 billion Kyaukphyu deep sea port, and a $2.5 billion oil and natural gas pipeline.

Conversely, India also has similar stakes in Myanmar. In 2019, India signed an agreement with Myanmar's state-owned oil and gas enterprise worth $722 million.[66] In Rakhine state, India has the $484 million Kaladan road project, the Thathay Chaung Hydropower Project, the $120 million Sittwe SEZ, and the $3 billion Sittwe–Gaya gas pipeline project. Not to forget that this SEZ is a rival project to China's KPSEZ and that Sino-Indian geopolitics has a role to play here.

As part of Japan's official development assistance, in 2016 Myanmar sanctioned a $240 million loan from the Japan International Cooperation Agency for the Bago River Bridge Construction Project. In 2019, Yokogawa Bridge Corporation of Japan signed a contract to build the bridge.[67] Again, Russia is known to be one of the top arms suppliers in the Myanmar military.

Table 2. International Companies That Have Ongoing Projects in Rakhine State

Country	Company	Project Type
Australia	Woodside Energy (Myanmar) Company Limited	Oil & Gas
China	Kyauk Phyu Electric Power Company Limited	Power
	PetroChina	Oil & Gas
	China National Petroleum Corporation (CNPC)	Oil & Gas
Finland	Ha Nam CMC Co., Ltd	Tourism
France	Total	Oil & Gas
Italy	Eni	Oil & Gas
Norway	Statoil	Oil & Gas
Sweden	DnA Hotels and Resorts Co.	Tourism
	Ziba Hotels and Resorts Co., Ltd	Tourism
Thailand (Joint)	Myanmar CP Livestock Company Limited	Agriculture
U.K.	BG Group	Oil & Gas
	Ophir	Oil & Gas
	Shell	Oil & Gas
U.S.	Chevron	Oil & Gas
	Conoco Phillips	Oil & Gas

Source: Compiled by the authors from various sources.

A number of international companies are also carrying out projects in Rakhine. Table 2 shows a list of companies that have ongoing projects in Rakhine state. It is easily visible from the table that most of these companies are involved in projects related to oil and gas. This shows how important it is for Myanmar as well as the international companies to have dominance over Rakhine for natural resources. Among these companies, only Total (France) and Chevron (U.K.) announced departures in 2022, mentioning "gross human rights violations."[68]

The positions of business companies are critical in the current age. For example, after the beginning of the Ukraine war, top policy schools and media tracked the positions of different companies and their projects in Russia. The Yale School of Management listed 1,000 companies that curtailed their operations in Russia and also named those (including Chevron) that did not.[69] Global media, from Reuters to The New York Times, covered the issue. The conventional wisdom regarding the issue here was that "there should not be business engagement with a country that is waging war or causing humanitarian concerns." If it applies to Russia, it should also apply to Myanmar, which has conducted genocide within its own territory. The Woodrow Wilson Center, moreover, provided a strong argument that these companies and their revenues helped Russia "underwrite" the war[70] and gave indirect logistical support. As one can expect, scholars here advocated for curtailing the businesses to stop the war. There has been no such focus from the global media or academia when it comes to the investments in Myanmar or Rakhine state.

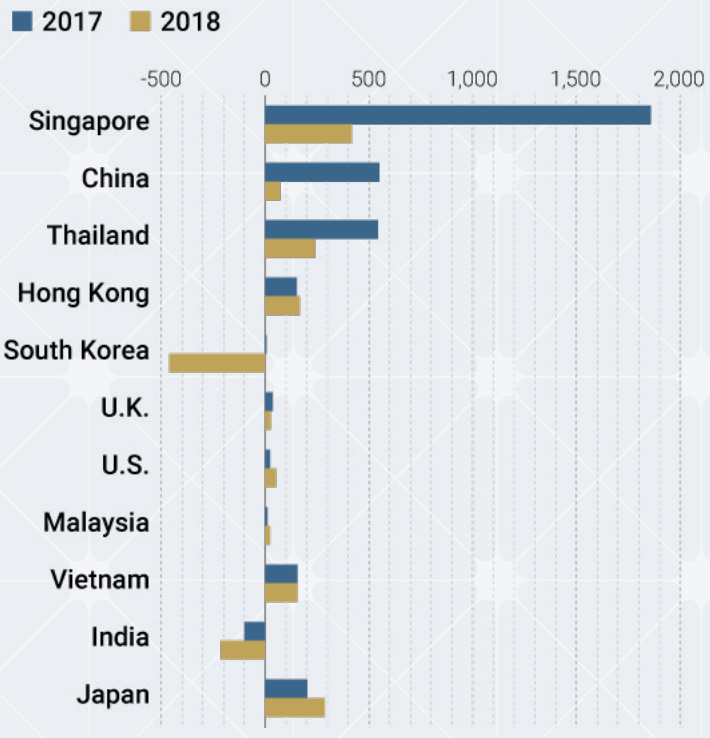
Again, business actors can influence foreign policies of a country. To quote Kirshner,

> If war unnerves finance, and if international financial markets reflect the cumulative sentiments of uncoordinated market actors, then finance (figuratively) will withdraw from, or at least be especially wary of, those states that seem to be approaching the precipice of armed conflict. … By raising the opportunity costs that states face when considering a resort to arms, financial globalization can serve, *ceteris paribus*, to inhibit war.[71]

Practically, there is not enough evidence of business lobbies having successfully stopped a conflict; rather, scholars have shown cases where they have lobbied to continue a conflict, i.e., the Iraq war/ and the war on terrorism.[72] Nevertheless, given their degree of influence, it is theoretically possible for business groups and lobbies to shift the discourse to a certain pathway, or at least resort to temporary withholding.

However, it cannot be stated that the Rohingya crisis has had no impact at all on investment flows. Many of these countries have also foreseen the risk, and foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows declined to some extent after the 2017 massacre. The trends of actual FDI inflows to Myanmar in FY 2017 and 2018 separately show the distinction (Figure 4). U Aung Naing Oo, the director general of Myanmar's Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA), openly acknowledged in 2018 that he had "underestimated" the effect of the Rohingya issue on the nation's economy.[73]

Figure 4. FDI Inflows (Actual) to Myanmar; Investment Transactions, 2017 and 2018
(in millions of dollars)



Source: Authors' compilation from actual FDI inflows, DICA.

> “ ... this is a worrisome issue, as the number of refugees and displaced persons is on the increase. In light of the narration above, the paper makes the following multipronged recommendations involving multiple actors; the epistemic society, political leaders, policymakers, civil society groups, citizens’ organizations, NGOs, and INGOs have major roles to play in this regard ”

Although the FDI in Myanmar increased in subsequent years, it again started to decline after the 2021 coup and human rights violations. These pieces of information have not been presented here since that would dilute the issues evolving vis-à-vis the Rohingya crisis exclusively, to which this paper limits its scope. However, it is to notice that the global purview of “Myanmar’s violation of human rights” has starkly shifted to its authoritarianism and the civil rights movement from the Rohingya crisis. While it is also an important factor to take into account, the international community must not ignore the plight of the Rohingyas or overlook its propensity.

5. Concluding Remarks

This paper has made an attempt to demonstrate the politics of humanitarian aid in refugee and refugee-like situations. Tracing from the beginning of the Rohingya crisis and the humanitarian responses – both national and international – the paper has attempted to posit the decline of humanitarian aid. Increasingly, hardcore traditional geopolitical issues have taken priority in state calculations while responding to humanitarian issues. The above-noted points, indeed, show that this is a worrisome issue, as the number of refugees and displaced persons is on the increase. In light of the narration above, the paper makes the following multipronged recommendations involving multiple actors; the epistemic society, political leaders, policymakers, civil society groups, citizens’ organizations, NGOs, and INGOs have major roles to play in this regard. In each of the recommendations made here, the actors noted are critical factors in the intervention:

a) At the epistemic as well policy level, the humanitarian aspect of refugees and people in refugee-like situations needs to be highlighted.

b) It is critical that the statist narrative of border and geopolitics should be delinked from humanitarianism; critical research, civil society groups, and human rights bodies have major roles to play here.

c) The securitization of the refugee narrative needs to be deconstructed by highlighting the differentiated nature of the refugee population, the majority of whom are women and children.

d) Donors and aid agencies need to understand that “refugees” are not a monolithic group; rather, refugees, like any other human population, are a differentiated group; and thereby they must address the needs and concerns of the differentiated nature of the refugee population, for, e.g., women, children, women-headed households, orphan children, elderly people, and people with special needs. The aid must be need-specific, for this necessary ground work as well research might be required by the donors as well the host country.

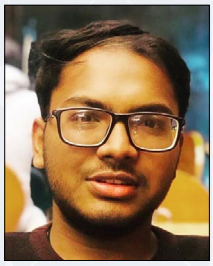
e) The refugee community must be given life-survival skills and training, and it needs to be remembered that no community wants a life of aid dependence; the host country, the donors, and the NGOs active in the refugee camps need to prioritize this principle.

f) It is necessary to incorporate the voices of the refugee population at the policy level by the donors, aid agencies, and the host country.

g) At the global level, the Rohingya diaspora can play an active role in bringing together the voices of the Rohingya people.

h) Media (electronic, print, social) plays an important role in this digitalized world; these tools may be used by academia and by state and human rights activists, as well the refugee community itself, to highlight their plight.

We conclude with the hope that the narration above and recommendations will contribute in some limited form to a better understanding of the politics associated with humanitarian assistance and aid and will be a small step toward delinking the "statist" from the "humanitarian."



Nahian Reza Sabriet works as a research officer at the Bangladesh Institute of International and Strategic Studies. He has bachelor's and master's degrees in International Relations from the University of Dhaka, Bangladesh, and is currently pursuing his second master's at Syracuse University's Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs. Sabriet has worked as a data analyst for the Bangladesh Peace Observatory, Centre for Genocide Studies, hosted by University of Dhaka and the United Nations Development Programme. He has been part of projects by several organizations in the field of international relations, including the International Labour Organization; the South Asian Network on Economic Modeling; the World Bank; Konrad Adenauer Stiftung's Regional Programme Political Dialogue - Asia, Singapore; Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung; and the United States Agency for International Development. His areas of interest are human security, homeland security, and cybersecurity, on which he has authored or co-authored several national and international publications. X/Twitter: @nahiansays

Amena Mohsin is a former professor at the Department of International Relations, University of Dhaka, and currently an adjunct faculty at the Department of History and Philosophy, North South University. She graduated from the same department and later received her MA and PhD from the University of Hawaii and Cambridge University. She writes on rights, gender and minority, state, democracy, civil-military relations, borders, and human security issues. She is the author of "The Politics of Nationalism: The Case of Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh" (UPL, 1997), "The Chittagong Hill Tracts, Bangladesh: On The Difficult Road To Peace" (Lynn Rienner Publishers, 2002), "Ethnic Minorities of Bangladesh: Some Reflections the Saontals and Rakhaines" (Programme for Research on Poverty Alleviation, 2002), "Women and Militancy: South Asian Complexities," edited (with Imtiaz Ahmed) (Dhaka, University Press Limited. 2011), "Conflict and Partition," CHT, Bangladesh, with Delwar Hossain (SAGE, 2015), "Of the Nation Born," edited with Hameeda Hossain, Zubaan, Delhi, 2016, Women and Work in South Asia: Rights and Innovations, edited with ASM Ali Ashraf, Niloy Ranjan Biswas and Mohammad Atique Rahman (Dhaka, UPL, 2020).

Endnotes

1 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Refugee Data and Key Indicators. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.

2 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Refugee Data and Key Indicators. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.

3 Women and children constitute, respectively, about 50% and 40% of the refugee population. For more, see UNHCR, "Women," https://www.unhcr.org/women.html; and United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), "Child Displacement," https://data.unicef.org/topic/child-migration-and-displacement/displacement/.

4 UNHCR. *Consequences of Underfunding*. UNCHR. https://www.unhcr.org/underfunding-2020/.

5 UNHCR. (2023). Refugee Statistics. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.

6 UNHCR. (2023). Refugee Statistics. UNHCR. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/.

7 Sengupta, S. (2018). Stateless, floating people: The Rohingya at sea. In Chaudhury, S. B. R., & Samaddar, R. (Eds), *The Rohingya in South Asia* (pp. 20-42). Routledge India.

8 Keshgegian, F. A. (2009). 'Starving Armenians': The Politics and Ideology of Humanitarian Aid in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century. In Wilson, R. A., & Brown, R. D. (Eds.), *Humanitarianism and Suffering* (pp. 148-52). Cambridge University Press; Paulmann, J. (2013). Conjunctures in the history of international humanitarian aid during the twentieth century. *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 4 (2): 215-238.

9 Feller, E. (2001). The evolution of the international refugee protection regime. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy, 5*, 129.

10 Feller, E. (2001). The evolution of the international refugee protection regime. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy, 5*, 129.

11 Hathaway, J. C. (1984). The Evolution of Refugee Status in International Law: 1920 – 1950. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly, 33 (2),* 358.

12 Vernant, J. (1953). *The refugee in the post-war world.* George Allen & Unwin

13 Tomsic, as cited in Harris, C. D., & Wülker, G. (1953). The refugee problem of Germany. *Economic Geography*, *29(1),* 10-25.

14 Paulmann, J. (2013). Conjunctures in the history of international humanitarian aid during the twentieth century. *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 4(2), 215-238.

15 Feller, E. (2001). The evolution of the international refugee protection regime. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy, 5*, 129.

16 Loescher, G. (2017). UNHCR's origins and early history: agency, influence, and power in global refugee policy. *Refuge*, *33*, 77.

17 Ngolle, E. O. N. (1985). *The African Refugee Problem and the Distribution of International Refugee Assistance in Comparative Perspective: An Empirical Analysis of the Policies of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1960-1980*. [Dissertation, University of Denver].

18 Loescher, G. (2017). UNHCR's origins and early history: agency, influence, and power in global refugee policy. *Refuge*, *33*, 77.

19 Skran, C. M. (1985). *The Refugee Problem in Interwar Europe, 1919-1939*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford].

20 Easton-Calabria, E. E. (2015). From bottom-up to top-down: The "pre-history"of refugee livelihoods assistance from 1919 to 1979. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 28(3)*, 412-436.

21 Easton-Calabria, E. E. (2015). From bottom-up to top-down: The "pre-history"of refugee livelihoods assistance from 1919 to 1979. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 28(3)*, 412-436.

22 Feller, E. (2001). The evolution of the international refugee protection regime. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy, 5*, 134.

23 Gatrell, P. (2017). Refugees – What's wrong with history? *Journal of Refugee Studies, 30(2),* 170-189.

24 Czaika, M., & Mayer, A. (2011). Refugee movements and aid responsiveness of bilateral donors. *Journal of Development Studies, 47(3),* 455-474.

25 Czaika, M., & Mayer, A. (2011). Refugee movements and aid responsiveness of bilateral donors. *Journal of Development Studies, 47(3),* 257.

26 Whitaker, B. E. (2008). Funding the international refugee regime: Implications for protection. *Global Governance*, *14(2),* 241-258.

27 Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee integration: Emerging trends and remaining agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies, 23(4)*: 589-607.

28 Whitaker, B. E. (2008). Funding the international refugee regime: Implications for protection. *Global Governance*, *14(2),* 241-258.

29 Barnett, L. (2002). Global governance and the evolution of the international refugee regime. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, *14(2 & 3),* 238-262.

30 Mohajan, H. (2018). History of Rakhine State and the origin of the Rohingya Muslims. *Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies, 2(1),* 19-46.

31 Ibrahim, A. (2018). *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide*. Hurst & Co.

32 Haque, M. M. (2017). Rohingya ethnic Muslim minority and the 1982 citizenship law in Burma. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 37(4):* 454-469.

33 Miah, M.R. & Khan, M.N.S. (2022). Introduction. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

34 Smith, M. (2019). *Arakan (Rakhine State): A Land in Conflict on Myanmar's Western Frontier*. Transnational Institute.

35 Human Rights Watch. (2000). Historical Background – Rohingya Crisis. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm.

36 Abrar, C. R. (1995). *Repatriation of Rohingya refugees.* UNHCR's Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movements, Colombo.

37 Smith, M. (2019). *Arakan (Rakhine State): A Land in Conflict on Myanmar's Western Frontier*. Amsterdam: Transnational Institute; Abrar, C. R. (1995). *Repatriation of Rohingya refugees.* UNHCR's Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movements, Colombo.

38 Abrar, C. R. (1995). *Repatriation of Rohingya refugees.* UNHCR's Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movements, Colombo.

39 Human Rights Watch. (2000). Historical Background – Rohingya Crisis. Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm.

40 International Crisis Group (ICG). (2016, Dec. 15). *Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State*. International Crisis Group. https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/283-myanmar-new-muslim-insurgency-rakhine-state.

41 World Vision (2023). From the Field: Rohingya refugee crisis. World Vision. https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/rohingya-refugees-bangladesh-facts.

42 Kipgen, N. (2019). The Rohingya crisis: The centrality of identity and citizenship. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs, 39(1):* 61-74.

43 Whitaker, B. E. (2008). Funding the international refugee regime: Implications for protection. *Global Governance*, *14(2),* 241-258.

44 Whitaker, B. E. (2008). Funding the international refugee regime: Implications for protection. *Global Governance*, *14(2),* 241-258.

45 Fitzpatrick, J. (1996). Revitalizing the 1951 refugee convention. *Harvard Human Rights Journal*, *9*: 229; Feller, E. (2001). The evolution of the international refugee protection regime. *Washington University Journal of Law & Policy, 5*, 129; Millbank, A. (2016). *Moral confusion and the 1951 Refugee Convention in Europe and Australia.* The Australian Population Research Institute; Edwards, A. (2012). Temporary protection, derogation and the 1951 Refugee Convention. *Melbourne Journal of International Law, 13(2):* 595-635.

46 Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST). (2023) Beyond Refuge: Advancing Legal Protections for Rohingya Communities in Bangladesh. Dhaka, BLAST and Refugee Solidarity Network.

47 Grundy-Warr, C., & Wong, E. (1997). Sanctuary under a plastic sheet – the unresolved problem of Rohingya refugees. *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin, 5(3):* 79-91.

48 European Commission. (2016). *The Rohingya Crisis – ECHO Factsheet.* European Commission.

49 Al Imran, H. F., & Mian, N. (2014). The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: A vulnerable group in law and policy. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, *8(2),* 226-253.

50 Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST). (2023) Beyond Refuge: Advancing Legal Protections for Rohingya Communities in Bangladesh. Dhaka, BLAST and Refugee Solidarity Network.

51 BRAC. (2023). *Sustainable WASH for Rohingya Crisis: Cox's Bazar | Bangladesh*. BRAC.

52 Petcharamesree, S. (2016). ASEAN and its approach to forced migration issues. *International Journal of Human Rights, 20(2):* 173-190.

53 Action Aid. (2023). "What is ActionAid doing in Bangladesh to help Rohingya refugees?" In Rohingya refugee crisis. Action Aid. https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/emergencies-disasters-humanitarian-response/rohingya-refugee-crisis-explained.

54 BRAC. (2023). *Sustainable WASH for Rohingya Crisis: Cox's Bazar | Bangladesh*. BRAC.

55 Research Initiatives Bangladesh (RIB). (2023). RIB's work in Kutopulong and Nayapara Camps for Rohingya Refugees. https://www.rib-bangladesh.org/index.php?option=com content&view=article&id=220:research-initiatives-bangladesh-ribs-work-in-kutopulong-and-nayapara-camps-for-rohingya-refugees&catid=37:latest-activities&Itemid=55.

56 Chandan, S. K. (2020, August 27). 2nd Dhaka Declaration: Ensure safe, dignified, informed and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya people. *The Daily Star*. https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/2nd-dhaka-declaration-ensure-safe-dignified-informed-and-voluntary-repatriation-the-rohingya-people-1951581.

57 The Daily Star. (2022, March 23). Turkey donates $2 lakh for trial of Rohingya genocide case filed by Gambia. *The Daily Star.* https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-influx/news/turkey-donates-2-lakh-trial-rohingya-genocide-case-filed-gambia-2988801.

58 Ejaz, R., & Kabir, A. (2023). Interview: Gyan Lewis – Cut in funding for Rohingyas is devastating. *Daily Prothom Alo (English Version).* https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/interview/8bismj9jxa.

59 United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). (2023). Coordinated Plan Data. UNOCHA. https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1143/flows.

60 Khanom, S. & Shoieb, M. J. (2022). Sustainable Repatriation Options. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

61 Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) (2017-23). Myanmar Investment Directory. DICA. https://www.dica.gov.mm/en/myindy/private-enterprises.

62 Banerjee, S. (2021). Can Rohingya issue block the development of BIMSTEC? ORF Raisina Debates. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/can-rohingya-issue-block-development-bimstec/.

63 PTI. (2018, May 31). Difficult to move ahead on connectivity under BIMSTEC unless Rohingya issue resolved: Bangladesh. *The Indian Express*. https://indianexpress.com/article/india/difficult-to-move-ahead-on-connectivity-under-bimstec-unless-rohingya-issue-resolved-bangladesh-5199214/.

64 Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) (2017-23). Myanmar Investment Directory. DICA. https://www.dica.gov.mm/en/myindy/private-enterprises.

65 Yousuf, A. S. M. & Sabriet, N.R. (2022). The Urge for International Response to the Rohingya Crisis. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

66 Yousuf, A. S. M. & Sabriet, N.R. (2022). The Urge for International Response to the Rohingya Crisis. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

67 Nikkei Asia. (2023 January 25). Myanmar military receives Japan aid for bridge construction. *Nikkei Asia.* https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/

International-relations/Myanmar-military-receives-Japan-aid-for-bridge-construction; Human Rights Watch. Myanmar: Japan's Construction Aid Benefits Junta. (2023, January 23). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/23/myanmar-japans-construction-aid-benefits-junta.

68 Al Jazeera. (2022). Oil giants Total, Chevron to leave Myanmar, citing human rights. *Al Jazeera.* https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/1/21/oil-giants-total-chevron-exit-myanmar-due-to-human-rights-abuses.

69 Yale School of Management. (2023, Octover 10). Chief Executive Leadership Institute. Over 1,000 Companies Have Curtailed Operations in Russia – but Some Remain. Yale School of Management. https://som.yale.edu/story/2022/over-1000-companies-have-curtailed-operations-russia-some-remain.

70 Temnycky, M. (2023, March, 22). The Western Companies Helping Underwrite Russia's War. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. Wilson Center. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/western-companies-helping-underwrite-russias-war.

71 Kirshner, J. (2007). *Appeasing bankers: Financial caution on the road to war* (Vol. 104). Princeton University Press. 10.

72 Scott, P. D. (2004). *Drugs, oil, and war: the United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina*. Rowman & Littlefield; Ahmad, M. I. (2014). *Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War*. Edinburgh University Press.

73 Yousuf, A. S. M. & Sabriet, N.R. (2022). The Urge for International Response to the Rohingya Crisis. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

References

Abrar, C. R. (1995). Repatriation of Rohingya refugees. UNHCR's Regional Consultation on Refugee and Migratory Movements, Colombo.

Ahmad, M. I. (2014). "Road to Iraq: The Making of a Neoconservative War." Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.
Action Aid. (2023). Rohingya refugee crisis. "What is ActionAid doing in Bangladesh to help Rohingya refugees?" https://www.actionaid.org.uk/our-work/emergencies-disasters-humanitarian-response/rohingya-refugee-crisis-explained

Al Imran, H. F., & Mian, N. (2014). The Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh: A vulnerable group in law and policy. *Journal of Studies in Social Sciences*, 8(2).

Al Jazeera. (2022). Oil giants Total, Chevron to leave Myanmar, citing human rights. https://www.aljazeera.com/economy/2022/1/21/oil-giants-total-chevron-exit-myanmar-due-to-human-rights-abuses

Ansar, A., & Md Khaled, A. F. (2021). From solidarity to resistance: host communities' evolving response to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *Journal of International Humanitarian Action*, 6 (1): 1-14.

Atlani, L., & Rousseau, C. C. (2000). The politics of culture in humanitarian aid to women refugees who have experienced sexual violence. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, 37 (3): 435-449.

Azad, A., & Jasmin, F. (2013). Durable solutions to the protracted refugee situation: The case of Rohingyas in Bangladesh. *Journal of Indian Research*, 1 (4): 25-35.

Barnett, L. (2002). Global governance and the evolution of the international refugee regime. *International Journal of Refugee Law*, *14* (2 & 3), 238-262.

Banerjee, S. (2021). Can Rohingya issue block the development of BIMSTEC? ORF Raisina Debates. https://www.orfonline.org/expert-speak/can-rohingya-issue-block-development-bimstec/

Bangladesh Legal Aid and Services Trust (BLAST). (2023) Beyond Refuge: Advancing Legal Protections for Rohingya Communities in Bangladesh. Dhaka, BLAST and Refugee Solidarity Network.

Brac. (2023). "Sustainable WASH for Rohingya Crisis." Profile: Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. Dhaka: Brac.

Chandan, S. K. (2020, August 27). 2nd Dhaka Declaration: Ensure safe, dignified, informed and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingya people. Daily Star. https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/2nd-dhaka-declaration-ensure-safe-dignified-informed-and-voluntary-repatriation-the-rohingya-people-1951581

Czaika, M., & Mayer, A. (2011). Refugee movements and aid responsiveness of bilateral donors. *Journal of Development Studies*, 47 (3): 455-474.

Daily Star. (2022). Turkey donates $2 lakh for trial of Rohingya genocide case filed by Gambia. (March 23). https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-influx/news/turkey-donates-2-lakh-trial-rohingya-genocide-case-filed-gambia-2988801

Difficult to move ahead on connectivity under BIMSTEC unless Rohingya issue resolved: Bangladesh. (2018, May 31). The Indian Express. https://indianexpress.com/article/india/difficult-to-move-ahead-on-connectivity-under-bimstec-unless-rohingya-issue-resolved-bangladesh-5199214/

Dreher, A., Fuchs, A., & Langlotz, S. (2019). The effects of foreign aid on refugee flows. *European Economic Review*, 112: 127-147.

Easton-Calabria, E. E. (2015). From bottom-up to top-down: The "pre-history"of refugee livelihoods assistance from 1919 to 1979. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 28 (3): 412-436.

ECHO. (2016). "Factsheet: The Rohingya crisis." Brussels: EC, 2016.

Edwards, A. (2012). Temporary protection, derogation and the 1951 Refugee Convention. *Melbourne Journal of International Law*, 13 (2): 595-635.

Feller, E. (2001). The evolution of the international refugee protection regime. *Wash. UJL & Pol'y*, 5: 129.

Fitzpatrick, J. (1996). Revitalizing the 1951 refugee convention. *Harv. Hum. Rts. J.*, 9: 229.

Gatrell, P. (2017). Refugees – What's wrong with history? *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 30 (2): 170-189.

Grundy-Warr, C., & Wong, E. (1997). Sanctuary under a plastic sheet – the unresolved problem of Rohingya refugees. *IBRU Boundary and Security Bulletin*, 5 (3): 79-91.

Haque, M. M. (2017). Rohingya ethnic Muslim minority and the 1982 citizenship law in Burma. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 37 (4): 454-469.

Harris, C. D., & Wülker, G. (1953). The refugee problem of Germany. *Economic Geography*, 29 (1): 10–25.

Hathaway, J. C. (1984). The Evolution of Refugee Status in International Law: 1920 – 1950. *International & Comparative Law Quarterly*, 33 (2): 348–380.

Human Rights Watch. (2000). Historical Background – Rohingya Crisis. https://www.hrw.org/reports/2000/burma/burm005-01.htm

Ibrahim, A. (2018). "The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Genocide." London: C. Hurst & Co.

International Crisis Group (ICG). (2016, Dec. 15). Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State. https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/283-myanmar-new-muslim-insurgency-rakhine-state

Jati, I. (2017). Comparative Study of the Roles of ASEAN and the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in Responding to the Rohingya Crisis.

Karo, B., Haskew, C., Khan, A. S., Polonsky, J. A., Mazhar, M. K. A., & Buddha, N. (2018). World health organization early warning, alert and response system in the Rohingya crisis, Bangladesh, 2017–2018. *Emerging infectious diseases*, 24 (11): 2074.

Keshgegian, F. A. (2009). 'Starving Armenians": The Politics and Ideology of Humanitarian Aid in the First Decades of the Twentieth Century. In Wilson and Brown, eds., *Humanitarianism and Suffering*, 148–52.

Khanom, S. & Shoieb, M. J. (2022). Sustainable Repatriation Options. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

Kipgen, N. (2019). The Rohingya crisis: The centrality of identity and citizenship. *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 39 (1): 61–74.

Kiragu, E., Rosi, A. L., & Morris, T. (2011). States of denial: A review of UNHCR's response to the protracted situation of stateless Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. *Policy Development and Evaluation Service, UNHCR*.

Kirshner, J. (2007). *Appeasing bankers: Financial caution on the road to war* (Vol. 104). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Leider, J. P. (2018). History and victimhood: Engaging with rohingya issues. *Insight Turkey*, 20 (1): 99–118.

Lewis, D. (2019). Humanitarianism, civil society and the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. *Third World Quarterly*, 40 (10): 1884–1902.

Loescher, G. (2001). "The UNHCR and world politics: A perilous path." Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Loescher, G. (2017). UNHCR's origins and early history: agency, influence, and power in global refugee policy. *Refuge*, 33: 77.

Miah, M.R. & Khan, M.N.S. (2022). Introduction. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." *BIISS Papers*, 31.

Millbank, A. (2016). "Moral confusion and the 1951 Refugee Convention in Europe and Australia." Victoria: Australian Population Research Institute.

Mohajan, H. (2018). History of Rakhine State and the origin of the Rohingya Muslims. *Indonesian Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*.

Mutaqin, Z. Z. (2018). The Rohingya refugee crisis and human rights: What should ASEAN do? *Asia-Pacific Journal on Human Rights and the Law*, 19 (1): 1–26.

Myanmar: Japan's Construction Aid Benefits Junta. (2023, Jan. 23). Human Rights Watch. https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/01/23/myanmar-japans-construction-aid-benefits-junta

Ngolle, E. O. N. (1985). "The African Refugee Problem and the Distribution of International Refugee Assistance in Comparative Perspective: An Empirical Analysis of the Policies of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), 1960-1980." University of Denver.

Nikkei Asia. (2023). Myanmar military receives Japan aid for bridge construction. (January 25). https://asia.nikkei.com/Politics/International-relations/Myanmar-military-receives-Japan-aid-for-bridge-construction

Paulmann, J. (2013). Conjunctures in the history of international humanitarian aid during the twentieth century. *Humanity: An International Journal of Human Rights, Humanitarianism, and Development*, 4 (2): 215–238.

Petcharamesree, S. (2016). ASEAN and its approach to forced migration issues. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 20 (2): 173–190.

Daily Prothom Alo (English Version). (2023). Interview: Gyan Lewis. By Raheed Ejaz & Ayesha Kabir. https://en.prothomalo.com/opinion/interview/8bismj9jxa

Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MIFER). Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (DICA) (2017-23). Myanmar Investment Directory. https://www.dica.gov.mm/en/myindy/private-enterprises

Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Ministry of Investment and Foreign Economic Relations (MIFER). Directorate of Investment and Company Administration (2023). Data and Statistics. Foreign Investment Data by Sector and Country. https://www.dica.gov.mm/en/topic/foreign-investment-country

Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh, Myanmar agree to accelerate verification process. (2022, Jan. 29). Financial Express. https://thefinancialexpress.com.bd/national/rohingya-repatriation-bangladesh-myanmar-agree-to-accelerate-verification-process-1643371571

Roper, S. D., & Barria, L. A. (2010). Burden sharing in the funding of the UNHCR: refugee protection as an impure public good. *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 54(4): 616–637.

Scott, P. D. (2004). "Drugs, oil, and war: the United States in Afghanistan, Colombia, and Indochina." New York: Rowman & Littlefield.

Sengupta, S. (2018). Stateless, floating people: The Rohingya at sea. In "The Rohingya in South Asia," pp. 20–42. New Delhi: Routledge India.

Skran, C. M. (1985). "The Refugee Problem in Interwar Europe, 1919–1939" (doctoral dissertation, University of Oxford).

Smith, M. (2019). "Arakan (Rakhine State): A Land in Conflict on Myanmar's Western Frontier." Amsterdam: Transnational Institute.

Strang, A., & Ager, A. (2010). Refugee integration: Emerging trends and remaining agendas. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23 (4): 589–607.

Temnycky, M. (2023, March, 22). The Western Companies Helping Underwrite Russia's War. Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars. https://www.wilsoncenter.org/blog-post/western-companies-helping-underwrite-russias-war

Tobing, D. H. (2018). The limits and possibilities of the ASEAN way: The case of Rohingya as humanitarian issue in Southeast Asia. *KnE Social Sciences*, 148–174.

UNHCR (United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees). (2023). Refugee Statistics. https://www.unhcr.org/refugee-statistics/

United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA). (2023). Coordinated Plan Data. https://fts.unocha.org/plans/1143/flows

Vernant, J. (1953). The refugee in the post-war world.

Whitaker, B. E. (2008). Funding the international refugee regime: Implications for protection. *Global Governance*, 241-258.

World Vision (2023). From the Field: Rohingya refugee crisis. https://www.worldvision.org/refugees-news-stories/rohingya-refugees-bangladesh-facts

Yousuf, A. S. M. & Sabriet, N.R. (2022). The Urge for International Response to the Rohingya Crisis. In "Repatriation of Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals: Political Security and Humanitarian Assistance." BIISS Papers, 31.

Yale School of Management. (2023, Oct. 10). Chief Executive Leadership Institute. Over 1,000 Companies Have Curtailed Operations in Russia – but Some Remain. https://som.yale.edu/story/2022/over-1000-companies-have-curtailed-operations-russia-some-remain

Zarni, M. (2013). Fascist roots, rewritten histories. Asian Times Online.

On May 5, 2023, a delegation of Rohingya visits the Maungdow district along the Bangladesh–Myanmar border where villages were being built by Myanmar's government in a pilot project aimed at repatriating the Rohingya. (AFP via Getty Images)

The Rohingya Crisis: Eight Potential Pathways to Repatriation

Imtiaz Ahmed, Professor of International Relations, University of Dhaka

More than five years have passed since the atrocities committed against the Rohingyas in the Rakhine State of Myanmar in August 2017 forced nearly a million of them to take refuge in Bangladesh. With the prolongation of the Rohingya crisis, newer challenges are emerging for Bangladesh. The Rohingyas living in the camps in Bangladesh are willing to return to their homeland. The International Court of Justice's verdict on July 22, 2022, rejecting all four Preliminary Objections of Myanmar, has paved the way to ensure accountability, an essential mechanism for finding a solution to the Rohingya crisis. At the same time, there have been public statements from government officials in Bangladesh, China, and Myanmar that repatriation will start soon. However, critics, both within the country and outside, point out that such repatriation should not compromise the principle of nonrefoulment. In this context, in the last few years, several pathways to the repatriation of the Rohingya have been envisaged and brought to the attention of policymakers and other national and international stakeholders. Eight potential pathways can easily be identified.

1. The Bilateral Approach

Bangladesh engaged with Myanmar bilaterally from the beginning of the crisis. One could list at least eight meetings when the Memorandum of Arrangement (MoA) on the Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State was signed, on November 23, 2017. The last bilateral meeting took place virtually on June 14, 2022. But nothing concrete has materialized so far, although there have been developments between the two countries, with China's participation – to which I will return below. However, from the beginning, there were specific weaknesses in the bilateral approach. Three could be flagged. One is the signing of an "Arrangement" between Bangladesh and Myanmar, in place of an "Understanding" or "Agreement." One cannot help but point out that in signing a "Memorandum," the weakest type is an "Arrangement." This is because neither "Understanding" nor "Arrangement" has any legally binding force; they only indicate the "willingness" of the parties. Only an "Agreement" is legally binding on the parties. Moreover, there have been few examples of signing an "Arrangement" between two countries globally.

The MoA signed in Naypyidaw stipulated that the return "will commence at the earliest and shall be completed in a time-bound manner agreed [to] by both parties."[1] It is easy to see that not only did the Rohingya did not return, but also, no period of time was mentioned in the "Arrangement." The parties only agreed to the "process of return." Such, "process of return shall commence within two months of the signing of this Arrangement."[2] However, there is a vagueness in how this "process" is to be completed. The signed document only mentions that the "process" shall be "completed within a reasonable time from the date the first batch of returnees is received." This flexibility allowed Myanmar to flout and delay the process and the period. Second, a Joint Working Group will be established "within three weeks of signing this arrangement."[3] This has occurred – but, so far, without progress on repatriating the Rohingyas residing in Bangladesh. Third, "a specific instrument on the physical arrangement for the repatriation of returnees will be drawn up upon agreement in a speedy manner following the conclusion of this Arrangement."[4] No such "agreement" has been reached in the last five years, or since the signing of the "Arrangement" in 2017, which only shows the limitation of the wording "speedy manner!"

In the bilateral meeting, however, one crucial issue seems to have been ignored. This relates to Myanmar committing "genocide" or "crimes against humanity." On the contrary, the foreign minister of Bangladesh handed over three ambulances for their use in Rakhine State as a gift from Bangladesh to Myanmar on the day of the signing the MoA. A gesture of this kind does not show that Bangladesh was dealing with a "genocidal regime" or a regime that has committed violent atrocities against its residents, the evidence for which was abundant from the day the Rohingyas were driven out in August 2017. Moreover, the body language of the Bangladesh delegation remained subdued, although Bangladesh could have engaged with Myanmar on a high moral ground, particularly given the fact that the latter had committed mass atrocities against the Rohingyas.

What were the reasons for this? Three factors seem to have played out. The first was Foreign Minister Mahmud Ali's earlier experience dealing with Myanmar on the Rohingya exodus. Mahmud Ali negotiated the Burmese Refugees Repatriation Agreement in 1992, when he was the country's additional foreign secretary. This probably gave him the confidence that this time, too, he could pull it off and have the Rohingyas return to Arakan without delay, without realizing that this time the context was markedly different. Not only was there evidence that the Myanmar military had committed mass atrocities, even genocide, but also that Myanmar had entered the global world with key Asian countries – including China, India, and Japan – on its side, with the Western countries having withdrawn sanctions after Aung San Suu Kyi's release and her assuming governmental power. Second, Bangladesh could have been advised by "friendly countries" to have the MoA signed, with Bangladesh believing that such countries would be able to impress upon or pressure Myanmar for a quick repatriation of the Rohingyas. And third, Bangladesh also wanted a quick solution as part of its civilizational quest of not having conflicts with its neighbors and focusing more on its robust developmental trajectory. This point may sound odd, but it should not be minimized, particularly considering the fact that Bangladesh never saw Myanmar as an "enemy." Instead, Bangladesh, despite hosting over 1.1

million Rohingya refugees, a population larger than Bhutan's, continues to have regular trading and other relations with Myanmar. However, whatever the merit of this approach, nothing productive has resulted from Bangladesh engaging with Myanmar bilaterally on the Rohingya issue.

2. The Multilateral Approach

The involvement of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on the Rohingya issue has been critical, with its role mentioned as early as November 2017 in the Memorandum of Arrangement: "UNHCR and other mandated U.N. agencies as well as interested international partners would be invited to take part, as appropriate, in various stages of return and resettlement, and to assist returnees in carrying on life and livelihood as members of Myanmar society."[5] It took another six months, until May 2018, for Myanmar to sign a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNHCR, which categorically stated that "after the necessary verification, those who have left Myanmar are to return voluntarily and safely to their households and original places of residence or a safe and secure place nearest to it of their choice.[6] However, there has not been much headway in the repatriation of the Rohingya. On the contrary, the multilateral approach, particularly as undertaken by UNHCR and other mandated U.N. agencies, has focused more on Bangladesh than Myanmar. Flagging one area – education, for instance – would suffice to provide credence to the contention.

The U.N. agencies have impressed upon Bangladesh that it needs to provide education to the Rohingya refugees, but what kind of education is meant? According to the Office of the U.N. High Commissioner for Refugees, "refugee children need to be included in the national education systems of their host countries."[7] This would suggest that the Rohingya refugees get an education in a "formal curriculum" and in the local language. Understandably, the Rohingyas must be able to communicate with the host community's members. But given the context that the Rohingyas are not only "refugees" but are also "stateless," not knowing Burmese and English would add to their plight, as it would further marginalize them from the majority Burman population and jeopardize their future when they return to Myanmar.

However, a balance could be struck on the issue of language. This could be done by pursuing a twofold policy. First, it would entail implementing 100% literacy – indeed, not only for the 73 percent illiterate Rohingya refugees but also for the 60.7% illiterate members of the host community in the Cox's Bazar district.[8] Second, it would mean rendering knowledge of English to Rohingya refugees and children of the host community. At the regional level, knowing English would help the members of both communities communicate and gain employment both within and beyond borders. The protection area, or safety net, needs to be broadened to include the Rohingya refugees and the vulnerable local population residing in the vicinity.

Employment opportunities of this precise kind should also be explored, in fact, of the type that would make the Rohingyas equally, if not more, helpful once they are repatriated to Myanmar. Becoming skilled in as many languages as possible would only add to the opportunities of the job seeker. Indeed, only at their peril could Bangladesh and the international community ignore the education of the refugees and the host community members. But then, when Bangladesh decided to relocate 100,000 Rohingya refugees out of the total 1.1 million to Bhasan Char Island in the Bay of Bengal, 60 kilometers from the mainland, mainly to provide skills development training for agricultural work,[9] the international community, including nongovernmental humanitarian agencies, objected to the relocation on the ground that the island is not safe for habitation.

Only in May 2021, after over a year of procrastinating and when some 13,000 Rohingyas had already been moved to the island at Bangladesh's expense, did the U.N. agencies agree to support the relocated Rohingyas. Still, only 30,000 Rohingyas have been relocated out of the proposed 100,000.[10] Funds for relocation were flagged repeatedly, more so because the funding for the Rohingyas has been gradually declining since the COVID-19 pandemic hit the economy of donor countries in 2020, followed by the ongoing Russia-Ukraine war since February 2022. One estimate shows that in 2019, Bangladesh and

the U.N. agencies raised $636.7 million out of the $920.5 million required for the refugee program. But in 2022, the donors delivered only half the budget of $881 million.[11] In the meantime, the entire gaze of the international humanitarian agencies, despite the May 2018 MoU cited above, shifted from Myanmar to Bangladesh, which must have made Myanmar even less interested in pursuing the repatriation of the Rohingyas and resettling them. Yet the multilateral approach, including the involvement of the U.N. and other agencies, remains critical for resolving the plight of the stateless Rohingyas.

3. The Tripartite Pathway

Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China agreed to form a "tripartite joint working mechanism" for Rohingya repatriation in New York on September 24, 2019. Subsequently, several trilateral meetings were held. The most recent meeting took place in Kunming in April 2023, amid news that a pilot project on repatriation would commence before the rainy season. But before assessing the pros and cons of the tripartite meeting in Kunming, it is worth pointing out China's interests in resolving the Rohingya crisis. Three reasons could be flagged.

The first reason is Chinese investments and the quest for stability. China has been Bangladesh's largest source of foreign direct investment since 2022. In fiscal year (FY) 2021-22, China invested approximately $940 million in Bangladesh.[12] Moreover, China remains Bangladesh's most influential trading partner. The bilateral trade between the two countries showed robust growth of 58% in FY 2022.[13] However, China's investment in Myanmar has been more significant than Bangladesh's. One estimate shows China invested over $25 billion from 1988 to June 2019.[14] Even since the military coup in February 2021, China's investment in Myanmar has remained as steady as ever. Economic investments in both countries also compel China to seek stability, lest the investments become too risky and costly.

Second, China wants to offset Western influences in Myanmar. This has made China remain at Myanmar's side, despite Myanmar's serious human rights violations over the years – including in the postcoup period since February 2021, which saw more than 3,000 civilians killed, nearly 17,000 detained, and more than 1.5 million displaced.[15] This has become all the more important since the United States' declaration of the Burma Act 2023, which allows the Biden administration to interpret the act more liberally, mainly when providing military aid to ethnic armed organizations.[16] The act also gives the Biden administration the discretionary authority to make significant changes.[17] This has undoubtedly compelled China to put pressure on Myanmar for an early resolution of the Rohingya crisis, including initiating a process for their repatriation to the Arakan, lest the region become ripe for conflicts, with the United States getting involved near the Chinese border.

Third, any breakthrough in the tripartite pathway, particularly in making the Rohingyas return to their ancestral lands in the Arakan and making them legal residents of Myanmar, would boost Chinese status in the region and the world. Besides Rohingya refugees returning to Myanmar, the Chinese three-phase plan of November 2017 sought a long-term solution based on poverty alleviation.[18]

However, the tripartite approach has yet to make much headway. In 2018 and 2019, the trilateral initiative failed to repatriate a single Rohingya from Bangladesh. This time, the three countries met in Kunming in April 2023 and planned to initiate a pilot project to repatriate over 1,000 Rohingya refugees. The initiative saw a 20-member Rohingya delegation visiting Arakan on May 5, 2023, to see the two model villages erected for the pilot project.[19] Although it is too early to say whether the pilot project will materialize before the onslaught of the rainy season, as envisaged, the complexity cannot be underestimated. One is the mixed reaction among the members of the Rohingya delegation after the visit.[20] The extent to which the Rohingyas are eager to compromise on their four-point demands – seeking national identification and citizenship rights, return of their original land or properties, rights to livelihood and movement, and security assurance – remains a core issue.[21]

Moreover, the UNHCR, although aware of the visit, is not involved in the tripartite initiative, which could dampen the enthusiasm among the Rohingyas for the pilot project. But given the international isolation of Myanmar, coupled with the factor of civil unrest at

home and various judicial processes being undertaken against Myanmar on the issue of genocide, it is not difficult to see that Myanmar would want to initiate the repatriation in order to make a difference in its dismal position, both at home and abroad. At the same time, Rohingya repatriation, even in a pilot form, would provide an electoral dividend to the ruling party in Bangladesh, with the national election scheduled in two or three months. Initiating a pilot project on the Rohingya repatriation in the remaining months of 2023, possibly discreetly, cannot be ruled out.

However, this project is currently on hold, for three reasons. First, there are disputes between Bangladesh and Myanmar on the list provided by Bangladesh and the identity of the Rohingyas. These disputes have arisen more from the Rohingyas' demand to resettle their original land, which the Myanmar military is not eager to do. Moreover, the Myanmar military has transformed some Rohingya lands beyond recognition. Second, the MoU reached between Myanmar and the UNDP and UNHCR in May 2018 has lapsed and needs renewal, which has yet to be done. Bangladesh and the international agencies require firm guarantees from the Myanmar military that the repatriated Rohingyas would feel safe and can engage in livelihood-related activities without fear and discrimination, something to which the Myanmar military has yet to commit and provide in writing. Finally, since only a few months are left before the Myanmar military would like to go slowly and wait for the outcome.

4. Accountability

The issue of accountability has seen significant developments in the last five years. The two provisional rulings at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) were the most promising ones, particularly for pursuing the crime of genocide committed by the Myanmar military against the Rohingyas and providing legal recognition of the Rohingya identity. This was achieved unanimously with the consent of judges from Myanmar, China, India, Russia, and many more countries. Let me elaborate on this.

The ICJ hearing on the Rohingya genocide was held in The Hague on December 10-12, 2019. This is a unique case. An African country, Gambia, brought charges against an Asian country, Myanmar, for committing genocide against the Rohingyas in the Arakan. This is something that no one expected. Indeed, if it surprised the world, it surprised Myanmar the most. In less than two months after the hearing on January 23, 2020, the ICJ granted the provisional measures requested by Gambia.[22] Two things from the provisional measures stand out clearly.

First, the order of the ICJ was *unanimous*. This Myanmar had never expected. In all probability, Myanmar was looking for a split decision at the ICJ, which would have allowed it to rally at home that not all members had agreed to the provisional measures and, therefore, the order could be ignored. Fortunately for the Rohingyas and those supporting their cause, this did not happen. Second, the ICJ identified the group at the center of the case as "Rohingyas." This statement by the ICJ is worth noting:

> The Court's references in this Order to the "Rohingya" should be understood as references to the group that self-identifies as the Rohingya group and that claims a longstanding connection to Rakhine State, which forms part of the Union of Myanmar.[23]

Indeed, this was a significant victory for the Rohingyas, with implications far beyond the provisional measures. In many ways, it was a direct slap on the face of Myanmar for keeping a taboo on the word "Rohingya." There is no denying the fact that the recognition of the "Rohingya identity" remains critical. If anything, it is the most significant stumbling block and, conversely, a way to resolve the crisis.

The disruptive policy of Myanmar, which has gradually disenfranchised and dehumanized the Rohingyas, comes from an "unspoken racial feeling" of the military and civilian elite of the country. This, unfortunately, found a "legal" expression in the 2008 National Constitution of Myanmar. As Thant Myint-U points out:

> The Constitution ... included an arcane formula tied to race. Any *taing-yintha* (or multinational races) "whose population constitutes at least 0.1% of the national populace" (around 50,000 people in 2010) was entitled to representation in local legislative assemblies and ministerial portfolios in local administrations. If a *taing-yintha*

constituted more than half of two contiguous townships, it was entitled to an "autonomous zone." So, in addition to ethnically-based states for the Shan, Kachin, and five others, there would now be "self-administered zones" for the Nagas, Danus, and a few smaller ethnic groups.

I've heard many Burmese warn that giving Muslims in northern Arakan *taing-yintha* status, as "Rohingya," would lead automatically to their being entitled to a zone of their own. "A part of Burma would fall under Sharia law," a university lecturer whispered. To consider the Muslims of northern Arakan as one of the "National Races" fused anxieties around both race and religion. The ethnonym "Rohingya" was particularly toxic for this reason, as it means literally "of Arakan" and therefore implied that those to whom it referred were indigenous. On the other hand, if they were called "Bengalis," they could be seen ... as immigrants and not natives deserving special protection and special rights (Myint-U, 2020:108-109).[24]

Good sense prevailed during the hearing at the ICJ, where Aung San Suu Kyi and her team refrained from using the words "Bengalis" or "illegal migrants" for the Rohingyas. Given the proliferation of research on the Rohingyas in recent times, Myanmar is well aware that labeling the Rohingyas as "Bengalis" or "illegal migrants" would take them nowhere. Instead, this would make them closer to being accused of committing genocide against the Rohingyas. Myanmar also knows that the International Criminal Court has opened an investigation into crimes committed against the Rohingyas in Arakan. Also, there is a lawsuit pending in the Argentinian Supreme Court on the issue of the Myanmar military committing genocide against the Rohingya population. Furthermore, now that the United States has officially declared that the Myanmar military has committed genocide against the Rohingya, the issue of accountability will get an additional boost and pressure the Myanmar military to resolve the issue.

5. Reimposing Sanctions

Economic pressure in the form of sanctions on Myanmar is required. Although sanctions often economically harm the disempowered more than the empowered, the West has utilized sanctions, not always from the standpoint of economic merit but also on moral grounds, which certainly brings pressure on the sanctioned regime to reform and rectify *within*. The United States withdrew sanctions from Myanmar in 2016, followed by other countries. This is where the Myanmar military cleverly used Suu Kyi. Her acceptance by the military created space for sanctions to be withdrawn and allowed Myanmar to begin globalization. Many would argue that the Myanmar military created a semblance of democracy and allowed Suu Kyi to come to power precisely because sanctions made it difficult for the military to govern the population and cleverly assessed that the West would fall for the bait and withdraw the sanctions if space were provided to Suu Kyi, even if it was on the military's terms. However, now, with Suu Kyi's internment, the time has come to reimpose sanctions, which will make a difference not only to the lives of the Rohingyas but also to the Myanmar people who have been suffering since February of last year.

Sanction politics has come back since the start of Russia's war with Ukraine. However, it must be quickly pointed out that the international community, particularly the Western countries, did not shy away from imposing sanctions on Iran, North Korea, and even China on various items. There is no reason, therefore, not to reimpose sanctions on Myanmar because of its perceived noneffectiveness. Anything less at this stage will only empower the Myanmar military. In December 2016, U.S. President Barack Obama lifted sanctions against Myanmar, saying "it had made strides in improving human rights."[25] But a year later, under President Donald Trump, new sanctions were imposed on Myanmar military commanders in 2018 and 2019, as evidence of atrocities by the military came to light.[26]

Western countries have thus far imposed sanctions only on military personnel and companies in Myanmar. The United States has placed visa and financial sanctions on nine Myanmar military officers, including Senior Gen. Min Aung Hlaing, and on two military units for their involvement in attacks on Rohingya and Burmese civilians.[27] The European Union also sanctioned 22 Myanmar military officials and some gas companies,[28] which has hardly impacted the

Myanmar military. Sanctions on a larger scale to put pressure on the military are still absent. Moreover, the current sanctions were imposed in response to Myanmar's recent military coup and are unrelated to the Rohingya issue.

A beginning on reimposing sanctions could be made by exposing and shaming the companies that have invested in Myanmar, by telling them that since they are profiting from a country that is killing its people and has forcibly displaced 1.1 million of its population and is now under investigation for committing genocide and crimes against humanity, these companies will also be held responsible for their "complicity in crime" if they continue to profit from their investments. It is worth pointing out that foreign direct investment (FDI) flows into Myanmar increased by $259.6 million in the quarter ending in September 2022, compared with an increase of $392.5 million in the previous quarter.[29] Moreover, Myanmar approved $1.45 billion in FDI during the first seven months of 2022-23, mainly from Singapore, a conduit for foreign money into Myanmar and China.[30] In this context, investigative information would be required because the Myanmar military has stopped disclosing the projects it has approved since the coup.

But the sad aspect here is that Myanmar is still eligible for trade benefits from the United States under the General System of Preferences. Even the Burma Act makes an exception for U.S. imports from Myanmar.[31] This sends the wrong signals to Myanmar and U.S. allies that maintain trade preference programs with Myanmar. At the same time, international financial institutions provide significant development funding to Myanmar. For instance, the World Bank announced $460 million in credits to upgrade electricity power generation and improve health services.[32] There ought to be sanctions on such projects until the discriminatory laws, policies, and practices are addressed. The international community, particularly the Western countries that campaign for a rule-based international order, must use its collective influence to ensure that sanctions are reimposed, so that the Myanmar military will feel pressure to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

6. A Policy of Decoupling

"Decoupling" refers to a policy, widely practiced by various countries, that means to separate a particular activity from others. The former policy is pursued while contradicting the latter policy, in order to attain critical objectives. This is mainly because countries have varied interests and priorities, which are not always all equally important but are carried out to meet urgent national goals. This creates space for separating one policy from the other without jeopardizing the country's relationships and core national interests. Some countries, for instance, have strategic and economic interests in Myanmar, and thus policy changes cannot be brought about instantly. This is understandable, but such countries also have the power to impress upon Myanmar the need to change its policy in a different area by taking action related to that area. In situations like this, what is required from such countries is to decouple the Rohingya issue from their strategic and financial interests.

This is where Japan made a difference when it cosponsored a resolution in the United Nations in November 2021 favoring the Rohingya community.[33] Although this was done in the context of changes in Myanmar in February 2021, which saw the removal of Suu Kyi and the military takeover of the government, with the U.N. Myanmar seat held by the forces favorable to the former, it is still a good sign that a longtime strategic partner of Myanmar decided to put pressure on the latter by decoupling the Rohingya issue from its strategic interests. Japan formerly used to abstain from such resolutions, but by cosponsoring the resolution, Japan for the first time decoupled the Rohingya issue from its strategic interests in Myanmar. And since Japan cosponsored the resolution, it is bound to put pressure on Myanmar.

Even by recognizing the "Rohingya identity," pressure is being put on Myanmar to change its decision of not recognizing the Rohingya community as one of the ethnic groups of Myanmar. Myanmar so far recognizes 135 ethnic groups clustered in eight "national races."[34] It may be pointed out that several countries, including Myanmar, refer to the Rohingyas as "Arakanese Muslims" without realizing that there are also Rohingya Hindus,[35] and even Rohingya Christians.[36] More importantly, one should use the word "Rohingya"

mainly because the ICJ, to which all U.N. members are legally bound, has recognized the community as Rohingya. Therefore, there is no reason why "Rohingya" should not be used while discussing the latter's plight vis-à-vis Myanmar. That itself would contribute to decoupling and putting pressure on Myanmar. Similarly, inviting a Rohingya delegation to India or Japan, for instance, would decouple the Rohingya issue from these countries' core strategic or economic interests and make Myanmar realize that the Rohingya issue will not go away. Instead, the more quickly it is resolved, the more stable and comprehensive these countries' relationships will be.

But unfortunately, one also sees other kinds of decoupling, which only go on to empower the Myanmar military, to the detriment of the Rohingyas' lives and of the dissenting forces supportive of the National Unity Government in exile. This relates mainly to the sale and manufacturing of weapons. The following report is noteworthy:

> Companies in the United States, Europe and Asia have been helping Myanmar's military manufacture weapons used in human rights abuses, according to three former United Nations experts. Companies from 13 countries – including France, Germany, China, India, Russia, Singapore and the United States – have been providing supplies that are "critical" to the production of weapons in Myanmar. … It found that high precision machines manufactured by companies based in Austria, Germany, Japan, Taiwan and the U.S. are currently being used by the Myanmar military at its weapons factories. … Software to operate these machines is being provided by companies based in France, Israel and Germany. … Singapore, meanwhile, functions as a strategic transit point for potentially significant volumes of items, including certain raw materials, that feed the Myanmar military's weapons production, and Taiwan is believed to serve as an important route for the military's purchase of the high precision machines. … The military also regularly sends these machines from KaPaSa factories to Taiwan, where they are serviced by technicians associated with the European manufacturers of the machines, after which they are shipped back to Myanmar.[37]

The countries mentioned in the report often emphasize a rule-based international order and the need for democratic principles and human rights to thrive in Myanmar. But at the same time, they have no qualms in decoupling such principles, selling weapons to Myanmar, and profiting from this. The time has come to expose and shame such deals while impressing on their practitioners the need to decouple their arms sales and pressure Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya crisis.

7. Economic Incentives

The idea of offering economic incentives may sound odd, particularly with the backdrop of Myanmar committing genocide against the Rohingyas. But let us take a dispassionate or "realist" look at this approach. It is already known that the Myanmar military is either directly or indirectly involved in the drug trade, particularly for Yaba, a synthetic drug composed of a methamphetamine substance. Historically, Myanmar has always been a significant producer of opium, which has contributed to the country's gross domestic product. UNODC recently provided data on the opium cultivation in Myanmar, which has seen a declining trend.[38] However, the decline in opium cultivation has resulted in a situation where drug lords, albeit with the connivance of the Myanmar military, have shifted their illicit narcotics production from natural to synthetic drugs.

The bulk of the production takes place in Myanmar's Shan state. Looking at the output, one can easily see its enormity. One recent report revealed that the authorities in Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar seized 90 million methamphetamine tablets and 4.4 tons of crystal methamphetamine in January 2022 alone,[39] which gives us a sense of the size of the trade. More than 70% of seizures of Yaba occurred in the Cox's Bazar district,[40] mainly because of its geographical location, as it shares a critical border with Myanmar. Not surprisingly, there are indications that the Myanmar military profits from Yaba production and its distribution worldwide, including in Bangladesh.

The seizure of Yaba went up sharply after the Rohingya exodus in 2017 and peaked in 2020. The Rohingyas, however, are not consumers of Yaba; one hardly finds a severe addict among the Rohingyas. However, the

Rohingyas became involved in the narcotics trade because of the opportunity to earn quick money, which caused a steep rise in drug-related incidents in Bangladesh, particularly in the Cox's Bazar area.[41] But since 2021, mainly due to the efforts of the Bangladesh Border Guards and other security agencies, there has been a steady decline in the seizure of Yaba.[42] This gives the impression that the flow of Yaba is on the decline. But this is very deceptive, because there has been a steep rise in the seizure of crystal meth ice, which is nothing but concentrated Yaba and is more profitable when drug dealers successfully transport it. It is worth pointing out that Myanmar has long been a leading producer and trafficker of illicit drugs, with drug exports generating $1 billion to $2 billion annually.[43] The trafficking and selling of illegally mined jade and gemstones also bring benefits of up to $31 billion annually.[44] During the 1990s, the Myanmar military increased its cooperation with several insurgent groups in the region. In exchange for a cease-fire, the government placed the insurgent groups' territory beyond the reach of Burmese law. This agreement allowed insurgents and the military junta to create partnerships to increase trade in illegal goods, including drugs, gems, and timber.

The Myanmar military has no qualms about getting involved in the lucrative illicit drug trade. From wildlife and human trafficking to smuggling illegal drugs, jade, and gemstones, Myanmar's informal economy is expansive and is often facilitated by its military. In fact, over the years, the Myanmar military has transformed itself into a "military-business complex" (MBC), which thrives on the illicit narco-trade, instability, and conflicts. Not surprisingly, as an MBC, the Myanmar military would need economic incentives that are more significant than the illegal drug trade to see benefits from the repatriation of the Rohingyas.

This could come in two ways. The first one is by initiating a mini–Marshall Plan with international support. Many have forgotten that the Marshall Plan made a difference in post–World War II Europe.[45] Europe's number of refugees after World War II was in the millions. But the Marshall Plan helped reorganize and develop Europe in many ways. The time has come to think of a mini–Marshall Plan in the Arakan, which would be attractive to the Myanmar military, and thus would enable it to shun the illicit drug trade and repatriate the Rohingya refugees residing in Bangladesh and elsewhere.

The second way is an offshoot of the first one. A concerted effort is required to establish special economic zones, employing many marginalized people in the bordering states, including Rohingyas. Public-private partnerships between Bangladesh and Myanmar in the Arakan could also benefit the Rohingyas. Such economic engagements are bound to make the Rohingyas' repatriation more saleable to Myanmar. The international community must work together to create space for legal business to flourish and make the MBC more formal and legal. A mini–Marshall Plan tied to the Rohingyas in the Arakan is otherwise required to interest Myanmar in resolving the Rohingya crisis.

8. Militancy

There is still a mystery regarding the events that exacerbated the Rohingyas' exodus to Bangladesh in August 2017. Four dates in 2017 are critical. On August 23, the Advisory Commission on the Rakhine State (i.e., the Kofi Annan Commission) submitted its final report to the Myanmar national authorities. On August 24, the media, both at home and abroad, published the report in detail. On August 25, the so-called Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked the Myanmar military forces. The very next day, August 26, the Myanmar military resorted to what came to be referred to as "a textbook case of ethnic cleansing,"[46] which in the next three months saw more than 750,000 Rohingyas, mostly women and children, flee Myanmar to take refuge in Bangladesh. The mystery lies in the militancy of ARSA: why would it resort to violence and attack the Myanmar military forces when the Annan Commission's report remains favorable to the cause of the Rohingyas, including the need to provide them with citizenship in Myanmar? As the report stated:

> The Commission … notes the need to revisit the [1982 citizenship] law itself and calls on the government to set in motion a process to review the law. Such a review should consider – amongst other issues – aligning the law with international standards, re-examining the current linkage between citizenship and ethnicity, and considering provisions to allow for the possibility of acquiring

> citizenship by naturalisation, particularly for those who are stateless. The Commission calls for the rights of non-citizens who live in Myanmar to be regulated, and for the clarification of residency rights.[47]

Does this mean that the Myanmar military created a pretext in the name of ARSA? Or could it be that the Myanmar military, as part of its counterinsurgency strategy, floated an "armed group" called ARSA? Whatever the case, it confirms the intricate relationship between militancy and the Rohingya crisis – one feeds into the other, which is even more the case for the stateless Rohingya refugees. Historically, youth have been the first to rebel against oppressive conditions. Most Rohingyas residing in Bangladesh refugee camps are between 15 and 24 years of age, and they constitute approximately 22.41% (199,431 youth) of the Rohingya population in Cox's Bazar (899,704).[48] Naturally, the nonresolution of the Rohingya issue would make youth restless; some of them would not shy away from joining the militant forces and taking up arms against the Myanmar military in order to forcibly impress upon them the need to recognize the Rohingya identity and enable the displaced Rohingyas to return to their native land in the Arakan.

Moreover, suppose the Myanmar military does not settle the Rohingya repatriation issue, even under international pressure? In that case, it will create space for armed militant groups among the Rohingyas and the disaffected youth of Myanmar to rise up against the Myanmar military. Insurgent groups favorable to the Rohingyas' cause can create alliances with other insurgent groups in the region. The Myanmar government's inaction on the Rohingya repatriation issue could give it more public support in the future. Fringe militant groups have also emerged among the Rohingyas on both sides of the border. They can become more organized in the future and join the insurgency in Myanmar to ensure Rohingya repatriation.

There is an additional, more sinister, problem. The Bangladeshis who wholeheartedly welcomed the Rohingyas in the early days of the exodus could aid them with arms and ammunition, given their historical record of empathizing with victims, apart from their constitutional obligation to support "oppressed peoples throughout the world" (Article 25, para. C, of the Constitution of the People's Republic of Bangladesh). There have been historical instances of militancy paving the way for refugee repatriation. The most remarkable example is the 1971 Liberation War of Bangladesh, when 10 million Bengali refugees went to India to flee the genocide committed by the Pakistan military. The armed struggle of the Mukti Bahini of Bangladesh, which was supported by India and other external actors, set the path for the country's independence and the refugees' subsequent repatriation. The militant approach might be the least desirable but probable one, if the international community fails to reason with the Myanmar military regarding restrictions on repatriating the Rohingyas. However, the militant pathway is bound to destabilize the region, which would only see international and regional actors getting involved in either supporting or quelling the militancy, from the standpoint of their respective national and strategic interests. And therein lies the fear!

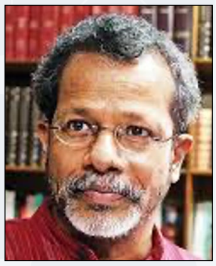
In Lieu of a Conclusion

All these eight potential pathways are significant. Collectively, they are like an octopus, and one should be cognizant of all the paths to see how one can resolve the Rohingya crisis. If someone thinks the Rohingya issue will disappear because of other pressing global problems, they are only looking at one or two pathways. Each pathway has its momentum, and once it unrolls, despite limitations and difficulties, there is no way it can be stopped unless and until the crisis, which has given birth to the pathways, is resolved. No ideas and practices that are grounded in reality can be erased. They can sometimes become challenging, but when found relevant to people for determining the course of the crisis, they return and make their presence all the more urgent. Interventions on the part of Bangladesh and the international community, again at three interrelated levels, can make the eight pathways effective.

At the first, national level, Bangladesh's policymakers need to spend more time resolving the Rohingya crisis. The Government of Bangladesh (GoB) could fall back on one of its success stories, the resolution of maritime boundaries with India and Myanmar, where the GoB had a dedicated expert with the rank

of additional secretary and later secretary working full time on the issue. The additional secretary worked in consultation with the foreign minister and foreign secretary, but having a dedicated expert made a difference to this case. Likewise, it is high time to appoint a dedicated expert on the Rohingya issue, with the rank of additional secretary or secretary, who will have a dedicated team with members from all relevant sectors to work on the various options and provide workable suggestions to the government. At the same time, the GoB should activate its foreign missions and members of civil society, including the media, to highlight the plight of the Rohingya refugees nationally, regionally, and internationally. Second, the stakeholders should give more effort to regional initiatives, including engaging countries that are friendly to Myanmar. Tripartite meetings on the Rohingya crisis involving Myanmar, Bangladesh, and a supportive third country, both at Track 1 and 2 levels, should be initiated to put pressure on Myanmar and let the other countries know of the crisis's urgency. Third and finally, a more significant effort ought to be started at the international level, including supporting the Rohingya diaspora community in forming a Rohingya civil entity, which would then take the responsibility to flag its cause internationally, including at the United Nations, European Union, and other international bodies. The proposed Rohingya civil entity also needs to work on the kind of economic, educational, and even health policies it plans to pursue once the Rohingyas return to their motherland, with the full dignity of the person.

Looking back at the eight pathways, one can easily see that some are more promising. Still, it is too early to say which one or two will have a lasting impact on the outcome of the Rohingya crisis. At this stage, impatience will not help. The Rohingya crisis is a human issue; therefore, one should have faith in humans if one is looking for a resolution to the plight of the Rohingyas in Myanmar.



Dr. Imtiaz Ahmed is a professor of International Relations at the University of Dhaka. He is also a visiting professor at Taylor's University, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. He has authored, co-authored, and edited 55 books and 20 monographs and published more than 125 research papers and scholarly articles in leading journals and edited volumes. Ahmed heads several national and international projects on mass violence, violent extremism, and the Rohingya crisis. His recent publications are the following books: "Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh: The Violence-Protection Dialectic and the Narratives of Certain Unsafety/ Uncertain Safety," co-authored with Niloy Ranjan Biswas (Dhaka: 2022); "Imagining Post-Covid Education Futures," edited (Dhaka: 2023); and "Celebrating 100 Years of the University of Dhaka: Reflections from Alumni – National and International, in 7 Volumes," edited (Dhaka: 2023).

Endnotes

1 Taw, N.P. (2017, November 23). Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

2 Taw, N.P. (2017, November 23). Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

3 Taw, N.P. (2017, November 23). Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

4 Taw, N.P. (2017, November 23). Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

5 Taw, N.P. (2017, November 23). Arrangement on Return of Displaced Persons from Rakhine State Between the Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh and the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar.

6 Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (GoM), United Nations Development Programme, Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. (2018, May 30). Memorandum of Understanding Between the Ministry of Labour, Immigration and Population of the Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar (GoM) and the United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.

7 United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). (2017). *Turn the Tide: Refugee Education in Crisis. UNHCR.*

8 The literacy rate of the Cox's Bazar district stood at 39.3% in 2011. See Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, Government of Bangladesh. (2013). *District Statistics 2011: Cox's Bazar*.

9 UNB. (2023, March 2). Dhaka wants foreign funds to relocate 70,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char. *Dhaka Tribune.* https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/305975/dhaka-wants-foreign-funds-to-relocate-70-000.

10 UNB. (2023, March 2). Dhaka wants foreign funds to relocate 70,000 Rohingyas to Bhasan Char. *Dhaka Tribune.* https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/305975/dhaka-wants-foreign-funds-to-relocate-70-000.

11 Korobi, S.A. (2023, March 19). Declining Funds, food for Rohingyas. *New Age,* https://www.newagebd.net/article/197176/declining-funds-food-for-rohingyas#:~:text=The%20World%20Food%20Programme%20reports,from%20acute%20malnutrition%20and%20anaemia.

12 The Financial Express. (2022, December 18). China now largest FDI source in BD. https://fairbd.net/chinese-investment-in-bangladesh-explained/#.

13 The Financial Express. (2022, December 18). China now largest FDI source in BD. https://fairbd.net/chinese-investment-in-bangladesh-explained/#.

14 Oinam, A. (2023, April 8). China's Investments in the Post-Coup Myanmar: An Assessment. CLAWS – Centre for Land Warfare Studies, New Delhi.

15 Blinken, A. J. (2023, January 31). *Marking Two Years Since the Military Coup in Burma.* U.S. Department of State. https://www.state.gov/marking-two-years-since-the-military-coup-in-burma/.

16 Martin, M. (2023, February 6). What the BURMA Act Does and Doesn't Mean for U.S. Policy in Myanmar. CSIS. https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-burma-act-does-and-doesnt-mean-us-policy-myanmar.

17 Martin, M. (2023, February 6). What the BURMA Act Does and Doesn't Mean for U.S. Policy in Myanmar. CSIS. https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-burma-act-does-and-doesnt-mean-us-policy-myanmar.

18 Reuters, Naypyitaw. (2017, November 20). China draws 3-stage path to resolve Rohingya crisis. *The Daily Star.* https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/china-draws-3-stage-path-ceasefire-myanmar-rakhine-bangladesh-asem-wang-yi-naypyitaw-1493917.

19 Al Jazeera. (2023, May 5). Rohingya delegation visits Myanmar amid latest repatriation plans. *Al Jazeera.* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/5/5/rohingya-delegation-visits-myanmar-amid-latest-repatriation-plans#:~:text=A%20Rohingya%20refugee%20delegation%20has,persecuted%20minority%20to%20their%20homeland.

20 NewAge Bangladesh. (2023, May 25). Repatriation Scheme: Myanmar team visits Rohingya again. *NewAge Bangladesh.* https://www.newagebd.net/article/202533/myanmar-team-visits-rohingyas-again.

21 NewAge Bangladesh. (2023, May 25). Repatriation Scheme: Myanmar team visits Rohingya again. *NewAge Bangladesh.* https://www.newagebd.net/article/202533/myanmar-team-visits-rohingyas-again.

22 International Court of Justice. (2020). *Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar) Request for the Indication of Provisional Measures, Order of 23 January 2020.*

23 International Court of Justice. (2020). *Reports of Judgments, Advisory Opinions and Orders Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar) Request for the Indication of Provisional Measures, Order of 23 January 2020.*

24 Myint-U, T. (2020). *The Hidden History of Burma: Race, Capitalism, and the Crisis of Democracy in the 21st Century. W.W. Norton.*

25 Albert, E., & Maizland, L. (2020, January 23). *The Rohingya Crisis. Council on Foreign Relations.*

26 Albert, E., & Maizland, L. (2020, January 23). *The Rohingya Crisis. Council on Foreign Relations.*

27 U.S. Department of State. (2023, March 24). *Burma Sanctions; BBC News. (2021, February 11). Myanmar coup: U.S. announces sanctions on leaders. BBC News.* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-56015749.

28 AP News. (2022, February 21), EU sanctions 22 Myanmar officials, gas company, over abuses. *AP News.* https://apnews.com/article/business-europe-elections-myanmar-aung-san-suu-kyi-4613d6b2545ea9411dddfa3b58f8bf49.

29 CEIC Data. (1976–2022). *Myanmar Foreign Direct Investment: 1976–2022.* https://www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/myanmar/foreign-direct-investment

30 Chau, T. & Oo, D. (2023, February 2). 'Riding a Rollercoaster' in Myanmar's post-coup economy. *Al Jazeera.* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/2/2/riding-a-rollercoaster-in-myanmars-post-coup-economy#:~:text=Deepening%20conflict%2C%20sudden%20changes%20to,in%20the%20country%20increasingly%20challenging.

31 Martin, M. (2023, February 6). What the BURMA Act Does and Doesn't Mean for U.S. Policy in Myanmar. CSIS. https://www.csis.org/analysis/what-burma-act-does-and-doesnt-mean-us-policy-myanmar.

32 The Irrawaddy. (2020, June 1). World Bank Approves $460 Million Funding for Power Generation, Health Services in Myanmar. *The Irrawaddy.* https://www.irrawaddy.com/news/burma/world-bank-approves-460-million-funding-power-generation-health-services-myanmar.html.

33 UNB, Dhaka. (2021, November 18). UN adopts resolution on Rohingyas' human rights in Myanmar. *Daily Star. https://www.thedailystar.net/news/asia/south-asia/news/un-adopts-resolution-human-rights-rohingya-muslims-myanmar-2232986.*

34 Archives. *Myanmar People and Races.* https://web.archive.org/web/20100609072939/http://myanmartravelinformation.com/mti-myanmar-people/index.htm

35 Mithun, M. B., & Arefin, A. (2020, November 26). Minorities among Minorities: The Case of Hindu Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh. *International Journal on Minority and Group Rights,* 28(1), 187-200. https://doi.org/10.1163/15718115-bja10020.

36 International Christian Concern. (2021, April 2). Myanmar's Persecuted Rohingya Christians – Minority of Minorities. *Persecution.org.* https://www.persecution.org/2021/04/02/myanmars-persecuted-rohingya-christians-minority-minorities/.

37 Al Jazeera. (2023, January 16). Firms in Europe, U.S. helping Myanmar manufacture arms, report says. *Al Jazeera.* https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/1/16/firms-in-europe-us-helping-myanmar-manufacture-arms-report#:~:text=Companies%20from%2013%20countries%20%E2%80%93%20including,a%20report%20released%20on%20Monday.

38 UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific. (2021, February 11). UNODC report: opium production drops again in Myanmar as the synthetic drug market expands,. UNODC Regional Office for Southeast Asia and the Pacific, United Nations. https://www.unodc.org/roseap/en/2021/02/myanmar-opium-survey-report-launch/story.html.

39 Strangio, S. (2022, February 2). Illicit Drug Production Has Surged Since Myanmar's Coup. *The Diplomat.* https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/illicit-drug-production-has-surged-since-myanmars-coup/..

40 Department of Narcotics Control, Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh. (2020). *Annual Drug Report Bangladesh 2020.*

41 Ahmed, I., & Biswas, N. R. (2022). *Rohingyas in Myanmar and Bangladesh: The Violence-Protection Dialectic and the Narratives of Certain Unsafety / Uncertain Safety. Centre for Genocide Studies, University of Dhaka and Institute for Risk and Disaster Reduction, University College London.*

42 Ahmed, I. (2022, September). Myanmar, Narco-terrorism, Rohingya, and the World. *Diplomats World.*

43 Marrero, L. (2018, June 15). Feeding the Beast: The Role of Myanmar's Illicit Economies in Continued State Instability. *International Affairs Review.*

44 Levin, D. (2015, October 22). *Myanmar's Jade Trade Is a $31 Billion 'Heist,' Report says. The New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2015/10/23/world/asia/myanmars-jade-trade-is-a-dollar31-billion-heist-report-says.html.

45 Agnew, J., & Entrikin, J. N. (Eds.). (2004). *The Marshall Plan Today Model and Metaphor* (1st ed.). Routledge.

46 UN News. (2017, September 11). UN human rights chief points to 'textbook example of ethnic cleansing' in Myanmar. United Nations. https://news.un.org/en/story/2017/09/564622-un-human-rights-chief-points-textbook-example-ethnic-cleansing-myanmar#:~:text=%E2%80%9CThe%20situation%20seems%20a%20textbook,access%20to%20human%20rights%20investigators.

47 Advisory Commission on Rakhine State. (2017, August 23). Overview of key points and recommendations. *Towards a Peaceful, Fair and Prosperous Future for the People of Rakhine: Final Report of the Advisory Commission on Rakhine State.*

48 UNFPA. (2021, August 19). Transformative education for adolescent youth in the Rohingya camps, one micro-garden at a time. *Reliefweb.* https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/transformative-education-adolescent-youth-rohingya-camps-one-micro-garden-time#:~:text=In%202021%2C%203%2C600%20adolescent%20youth,activity%20should%20not%20be%20underestimated.

Contact

For media inquiries, email media@newlinesinstitute.org

To submit a piece to the New Lines Institute, email submissions@newlinesinstitute.org

For other inquiries, send an email to info@newlinesinstitute.org

1660 L St. NW, Ste. 450
Washington, DC 20036

(202) 800-7302

Connect With Us

@newlinesinst | @New Lines Institute for Strategy and Policy | Subscribe | Sign up

NEW LINES INSTITUTE
FOR STRATEGY AND POLICY