

The Predicament of the Rohingya Refugee, Between Violence and Expulsion

Muhammad Ridwan Mostafa

University of Chittagong, Bangladesh

Abstract The Rohingya, a Muslim minority group in Myanmar, have been persecuted from their ancestral land. Most of them have taken shelter in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, where they face an uncertain terminus and no manifest hope of returning to Myanmar. The article focuses on civil rights, violence, repatriation, and underlying causes of the Rohingya persecution and explores geopolitics and economic issues from diverse outlooks in Northern Rakhine. Furthermore, the case study focuses on the Tatmadaw's brutalities during Operation Clearance in the Rakhine State against the Rohingya refugee.

Keywords Rohingya. Rights. Repatriation. Violence. Tatmadaw. Myanmar.

Summary 1 Introduction. – 2 Methodology of the Study. – 3 Rohingya in Bangladesh and their Exodus. – 4 People without a State. – 5 Politics of Development and Expulsion. – 6 The Practice of Elimination. – 7 The Agony of the Survivor of Violence. 8 Repatriation. How Far? – 9 Conclusions.

1 Introduction

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority living in Myanmar's Rakhine State but are not recognised as Myanmar citizens. Since Myanmar's independence, they have been persecuted forcibly by the government. The majority of them have been forced to escape many countries, including Bangladesh, Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, and a small number of Rohingya minorities in India and Thailand. Additionally, Rohingya have fled to several countries, including the

United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Germany, the United States, New Zealand, Australia, and Japan. (Huennekes 2018). A group of Rohingya also lived in Indonesia, and some migrated to Canada.

Bangladesh is the home to the world's biggest refugee camp, Kutupalong, in Cox's Bazar, where more than 630,000 Rohingya refugees live (Skretteberg 2019). Myanmar's Rakhine State is adjacent to Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar. Historically, the Rakhine State in Myanmar and Chittagong and its surrounding area had been connected through trade and culture during pre- and post-British India (Karim 2000; Ibrahim 2016). Myanmar, India, Pakistan, and Bangladesh were British colonial territories. Following World War II, many countries decolonised from the British Empire. India and Pakistan gained independence in 1947, while Myanmar, known as 'Burma', became an independent country in 1948 from the British Empire. Bangladesh was formerly a part of Pakistan. Bangladesh became an independent country in 1971, following a nine-month war. These countries bear the colonial legacy. In the seventh century the religion of Islam reached this region through trade with India and the Arabs (Min 2012, cited in Ibrahim 2016). The history of Arakan province in Myanmar, now known as the Rakhine State, can be traced back to the eighth century and was associated with 'Bengal' through political, religious, and sociocultural ties (Bhonsale 2015). Until the tenth century AD, the Arakan region's dominant culture was Indian (Wilson 1817, cited in Ibrahim 2016). Gutman also endorsed ethnic links to Indian groups before the ninth century AD in the Rakhine State (Gutman 2001, cited in Ibrahim 2016). Historically, from the eleventh century began the Arakan ties with the Kingdom of central Burma (Ibrahim 2016). Since then, the Rohingya dominance ended upon the arrival of the 'Rakhine' from central Burma around 1000 AD (Gutman 2001, cited in Ibrahim 2016). Myanmar (Burma) was part of the British Empire from 1886 to 1948, and Burma ruled from 1919 to 1937 as a part of British India (*Facts and Details* 2008). During the British rule, many people came to Arakan for work from Chittagong and India (Ibrahim 2016).

In 1948, Myanmar became an independent State. Six months before independence, Myanmar's founding leader, Aung San, was assassinated on 19 July 1947, along with half his cabinet, who had led Myanmar against colonial rule and had been preparing to take power from the British (Rogers 2016). When the military government seized control in Myanmar in 1962, the Rohingya were viewed as 'Bengali Muslims' who migrated to Myanmar illegally from Bangladesh. They are also treated as 'Kalar', a derogatory term for the Rohingya (Habiburahman, Ansel 2019). As a result of the 1982 Citizenship Law, the Rohingya became 'Stateless'. Accordingly, the Myanmar military junta government issued three categories of citizenship in 1989, each with a distinct colour code: pink for full citizenship, blue for associate

citizenship, and green for naturalised citizenship, as well as a colour card for the Rohingya (Bari 2018; Ibrahim 2016; Farzana 2017; Akins 2018). Burma's Military rulers changed the country's name from Burma to Myanmar in 1989 (Bari 2018). In Myanmar, the Rohingya are not the only group discriminated against, and some other ethnic group such as the "Karen, Mon, Shan, and Chin have a long history of armed conflict against the State as these groups apprehend discrimination by the government. However, the State recognises these ethnic groups as Myanmar's national race" (Murshid 2018).

The Rohingya in Myanmar have been subjected to different types of misconduct by the Myanmar military junta, including gender-based violence, forced labour, torture, extortion, murder, expulsion from their land, unlawful taxation, mobility restrictions, and structural violence. The article highlights the rights issues, repatriation, violence, torture, and a brief historical and current circumstances of the Rohingya in Bangladesh.

2 Methodology of the Study

Using in-depth interviews and observation, the study was conducted at the Unchiprang Rohingya refugee camp, Teknaf, Cox's Bazar of Bangladesh. The in-depth interviews were conducted in January, February, and May 2019, and those who agreed to give the interview were 21 (13 male, 8 female). Secondary data were collected from various sources, e.g., articles, books, reports, newspapers, and websites. The study aimed to understand the level of atrocities in the Rakhine State during 'Operation Clearance' launched on 25 August 2017. Also, the study explores civil rights, expulsions, geopolitics, and economic issues from different perspectives.

3 Rohingya in Bangladesh and Their Exodus

Bangladesh is the most densely populated country globally, except for a few small city-States like Macau, Monaco, Singapore, Hong Kong, Maldives, and Malta (Simpson 2020). The Rohingya refugee camps are situated at Ukhiha and Teknaf Upazila of Cox's Bazar. The Rohingya refugee presence has created a socioeconomic and environmental adverse situation in Bangladesh, particularly in Cox's Bazar region, where the world's longest sandy beach is located.

There is also social disturbance in Cox's Bazar's host communities, and many Rohingya are involved in illegal drug trafficking, particularly 'yaba'. Many of the Rohingya people were detained by the Law Enforcement Agency for carrying yaba drugs in Chittagong and Cox's Bazar. According to *The Business Standard* report, at least 75

Rohingya refugees were killed by Law Enforcement Agencies during the gunfight (*The Business Standard* 2020a).

In 1978, the Myanmar government launched 'Operation Dragon King' (Naga Min) to register legal citizens and expel illegal foreigners, significantly impacting the Rohingya in the Rakhine State. In this period, approximately 200,000 Rohingya refugees fled to Bangladesh. However, most of them were repatriated by 1979, and around 100,000 died; the majority were children.¹

In Arakan, operation 'Naga Min' had reached by February 1978; illegal arrests, vandalism of mosques, destruction of villages, and appropriation of lands were the main mechanisms that forced the Rohingya to exodus from the Rakhine (Akins 2018). In 1991, 'Operation Pyi Thaya' (Clean and Beautiful Country) was compelled again, like 'Operation Naga Min', to sack the Rohingya from the Arakan. Burma's government executed the 'Four Cuts' strategy, e.g., denial of land, shelter, food, and security for ethnic minorities, massively affecting the Rohingya in Rakhine (Akins 2018). Another massive exodus began in 1991-92 from the Rakhine State to Bangladesh; the Burmese Army's torture forced to flee more than 250,000 refugees. In the name of 'Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation', the Rohingya were forcibly displaced from 1991 to 1992, and between 1993 to 1994, nearly 230,000 Rohingya refugees were repatriated. The rest were living at refugee camps in Bangladesh. However, Bangladesh is not a signatory of the 1951 UN Convention on the Status of Refugees or its 1967 Protocol. On the other hand, the Bangladesh government has accepted the Rohingya people to take shelter for a long time (HRW 2000).

The situation began to worsen in the history of the Rohingya after the attack of 'ARSA' (Arakan Salvation Army) on 25 August 2017. The 'ARSA' attacked thirty more police posts in Northern Rakhine and killed 12 members of Rakhine's security forces, thus breeding a massive crackdown on the Rohingya by the security forces of the Rakhine and local Buddhist mobs (*BBC News* 2017). Bangladesh hosts 4.7% of the world's refugees, and 230,000 more live outside refugee camps with host communities (Palma 2020). Since August 2017, approximately 745,000 Rohingya refugees have fled to Bangladesh, including more than 400,000 children. As of March 2019, 9,009,000 more Rohingya refugees live in Ukhiya and Teknaf Upzillas of Cox's Bazar in 34 refugee camps in Kutupalong-Balukhali Expansion Site, which hosts nearly 626,500 Rohingya refugees (OCHA 2019).

¹ <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/timeline-visual-history-rohingya-refugee-crisis>.

4 People without a State

Bangladesh is not a signatory of the 1951 *UN Convention on the Status of Refugees* or its 1967 *Protocol*. However, the Bangladesh government has accepted the Rohingya people to take shelter for a long time from a humanitarian standpoint. The Bangladesh Government used the term Rohingya as “forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals” in place of refugees (*The Daily Star* 2017).

The *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UDHR), Arts 15, § 1 and 14, § 1 ratify the right to nationality right to seek asylum from persecution (UNGA 1948). Furthermore, the *United Nations Refugee Convention* of 1951 also defines various refugee rights, including the right to education, shelter, employment rights, and some specific social, economic, and political rights endorsed as a human being (Betts, Loescher, Milner 2008). However, the Rohingya have been denied access to a number of rights in Myanmar, including the right to movement, the right to vote, the right to education, and the right to work. The State relentlessly oppresses the Rohingya; Myanmar’s constitution denies them as citizens of Myanmar. Ethnicity, language, history, and religion all played a role in creating the Rohingya, a Stateless people. The State of Myanmar’s geographical and political borders displaced them from the country they had called, and continue to call, home. The concepts of belonging and territoriality are entrenched in a people’s existence. The Rohingya people have developed an identity for themselves due to different cycles of atrocities, exclusions, and displacements that have occurred both within and beyond Myanmar (Mohsin 2020).

Hannah Arendt doubted human rights resolution; she marked the dilemma of Statelessness, which continues to plague refugees or Stateless people, including the Rohingya. Also, Arendt denounced the nation-State system, where minority rights were neglected in the nation-State system. She pointed out that Stateless pain is the loss of citizenship; thus, the loss of homes meant the loss of the entire social texture into which they were born and the loss of government protection (Arendt 1973).

Oman (2010) considered Arendt’s concept that

right to have rights is simply a tool to ensure that individuals have access to the still-dominant institutionalized form of such membership in a politico-legal community - that is, citizenship in a state. (Oman 2010, 289)

Arendt’s (1973) concept of statelessness and refugee misery are strikingly comparable to the plight of Rohingya refugees who are refused citizenship and persecuted by the government of Myanmar. The situation of the Rohingya became worse after the enactment of the 1982

Citizenship Law of Myanmar. Myanmar military government recognised 135 racial groups but excluded the Rohingya as one of Myanmar's ethnic groups; the Rohingya lost their citizenship rights and became Stateless; the Rohingya people live inside Myanmar as foreigners or illegal 'Bengalis' and are deprived of fundamental human rights, political, cultural, and economic rights (Bari 2018; Ibrahim 2016; Farzana 2017; Akins 2018; Mohsin 2020).

Moreover, two prominent Rohingya, Abdul Gaffar and Sultan Ahmed, had contributed to drafting Burma's Constitution, five Rohingya were elected parliament members in the 1951 election, and six were elected in the 1956 election. Sultan Mahmood, a Rohingya, was the health minister of the U Nu cabinet (EFSAS 2018). Even three Rohingya people had been elected, and some had the right to vote in Myanmar's 2010 national election (Ibrahim 2016). However, they were denied the right to vote in the 2015 and 2020 elections (Nu 2020). By enacting the Citizenship Law and State-sponsored violence, the Rohingya minority became Stateless.

5 Politics of Development and Expulsion

Why did Myanmar's government persecute the Rohingya minority in such a controlled setting? It is a big dilemma to find an answer. Many scholars have identified the crisis of the Rohingya issue from diverse perspectives, e.g., human rights, the refugee issue, nationalism, citizen right, geopolitics, religion, and ethnicity. Besides, international organisations, including the United Nations, have worked for a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis for a long time, but the Myanmar government has relentlessly ignored the Rohingya issue. Nonetheless, the Rohingya people have been oppressed in the guise of nationalism or citizenship. The Rohingya lost their land even in the name of development.

In the Rakhine State, the Rohingya became landless due to their land being expropriated by the local Rakhine and the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) to build new houses or camps, making the Rohingya landless. The Rohingyas' exodus and expropriation of their land issues are more pertinent to Marx's concept of 'primitive accumulation of capital' (Marx [1867] 1990) elucidated the historical consequences of 'primitive accumulation of capital' and the emergence of capitalism in England after collapsing Feudalism. According to Marx,

in the history of primitive accumulation, all revolutions are epoch-making that act as levers for the capitalist class in the course of its formation; but this is true above all for those moments when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence, and hurled onto the labour-market as free,

unprotected and rightless proletarians. The expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil is the basis of the whole process. The history of this expropriation assumes different aspects in different countries, and runs through its various phases in different orders of succession, and at different historical epochs. (Marx 1990, 876)

Marx asserts that the State has acted as the agent of all systematic 'primitive accumulation processes', without exception. Under colonial administrations, European States plundered the rest of the world on a large scale, seizing means of production and labour power (Marx 1976, cited in Roberts 2020).

Foreign governments and foreign corporations acquiring local land is a centuries-old trend in parts of the world. However, particular phases can be traced in such acquisitions' diversified histories and geographies. A significant movement in this direction began in 2006, as seen by rapid growth in the volume and geographic distribution of foreign acquisitions and buyer variety. "Between 2006 and 2011, foreign governments and companies are estimated to have bought more than 200 million hectares of land globally" (Sassen 2014). In the names of citizenship, scrutiny of the national race, or different operations by the Tatmadaw, the Rohingya lost land livelihood, and were evicted from their home, deprived of civil and political rights, and materialising a 'primitive accumulation of capital' materialised in Myanmar with the plunder of the land and livelihoods of the Rohingya and other minority groups in Myanmar.

Habiburrahman, a Rohingya refugee and author of *First, They Erased Our Name*, noted how the Military of Rakhine State brutally confiscated the Rohingya lands.

Habiburrahman and Ansel stated in their book,

across the whole of Arakan, the Army is establishing model villages known as NaTaLa, built on land confiscated from the Rohingya. Robbed of all their possessions, the Rohingya are forced to abandon their land and homes or to clear them to build new houses for the settlers from pure races, such as the Buddhist Rakhines and Bamars, who are often farmers, former Buddhist prisoners, or retired army officers and their families. Sometimes, these settlers are given kalars as slaves. (Habiburrahman, Ansel 2019)

Sassen (2017a) expounded that the Rohingya problem is not only a religious and ethnic substance but also the interest of the business. She expounded that religion and ethnicity focused more on national and international media, but there is a limitation in clarifying recent violence against the Rohingya. Persecution of the Rohingya has primarily been motivated by religion and ethnicity. However, the under-

lying issue is also about seizing their land, which has already begun in other parts of Myanmar, and the ultimate victims of this land acquisition are impoverished minorities, including minority Buddhists.

According to Saskia Sassen (2017a),

Myanmar has become a last Asian frontier for our current modes of development - plantation agriculture, mining, and water extraction. Its location makes it even more strategic. Besides being the largest country of south-east Asia, Myanmar is between the two most populous countries globally, China and India, both hungry for natural resources.

In 2016, the Myanmar Government selected three million acres of rural Rakhine land for allocation in 'economic development'. The Military of Myanmar has de facto control of managing economic development and land allocation. The Rohingya have greatly affected land allocation and economic development. The Military of Myanmar has organised land allocation for domestic and foreign actors for two decades in Rakhine and other Myanmar regions. In 2014 the Military attacked the Rohingya; thus, the affected Rohingya moved to government-controlled camps, ensuring them a safe return to their villages by the government, but this return did not happen (Sassen 2017b).

China, India, and Myanmar implement several development projects in the Rakhine State, regardless of the current Rohingya crisis. However, these countries are increasing their investment and influence in Myanmar's volatile Rakhine State, bordered by Chittagong to the northwest and the Bay of Bengal to the west. Myanmar has historically relied heavily on China for political and economic support and diversifies its portfolio through partnerships with India and other nations like Japan and Singapore (Islam 2017). China has established the Kyaukphyu Special Economic Zone and a deep-water port project in the Rakhine State; the first phase of the Kyaukphyu port project cost is estimated at \$1.3 billion (*The Star* 2020). These projects allow China to enter the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, a substantial drawback for India. With the pretext of investment, India and China have vested interests in dominating the Rakhine State. Besides, the Rakhine State is strategically significant for both China and India.

Although India is expanding its grip to be a global leader, relations with Myanmar are also strategically vital for India, especially in the Rakhine State, to safeguard India's considerably peripheral state where the presence of the insurgent group in Northeastern India, mainly Sikkim, Mizoram, Manipur, Sikkim, and Nagaland (Khan 2018). 'The Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project' in Myanmar, financed by India and Sittwe Port's construction, is also part of this project. The objectives are to create a multi-modal sea, river, and road transport corridor aimed at the shipment of cargo from India's

eastern ports to Myanmar through Sittwe port and India's northern Myanmar inland road (Chaudhury 2019), which project greatly benefited India's northeastern region. Both China and India have substantial geopolitical interests in Myanmar, especially in the Rakhine State, where the Rohingya minority forcibly flee to Bangladesh.

Furthermore, South Asian politics is spinning between the Chinese 'Belt and Road Initiative' (BRI) and 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' (IPS). Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, and Sri Lanka have already been involved in Chinese BRI (Bhadrakumar 2020); in contrast, India is a part of the 'Indo-Pacific Strategy' and Bangladesh is offered to join it (*The Daily Star* 2020). It appears that for business, geostrategic interest, and regional power, India and China can play a role in the repatriation of the Rohingya refugees. Nevertheless, these countries closely work with Myanmar in trade, investment, and security.

Amnesty International has recently found substantial business ties with the Tatmadaw (Myanmar's Army), and retired personnel backed Myanmar's largest business conglomerate, MEHL, accused of financing the 2017 'Operation Clearance' against the Rohingya. There is a significant investment of local companies and multinational corporations in different countries with MEHL, including Kiring Holdings of Japan, RMH of Singapore, Wanbao Mining of China, and multiple South Korean companies, e.g., Inno Group, Posco, and Pan-Pacific (Amnesty International 2020).

The US is keen to repatriate Rohingya, but US imports from Myanmar soared from \$366 million in 2017 to \$821 million in 2019, and exports rose from \$211 million in 2017 to \$347 million in 2019 amidst the ongoing Rohingya refugee crisis (Palma 2020).

Remarkably, both Bangladesh and Myanmar are the second and third largest Chinese arms importer in Asia; the first one is Pakistan. China supplied Bangladesh with \$1.93 billion in arms between 2008 and 2018, representing 71.8% of Bangladesh's military purchases during this timeframe. On the other hand, Myanmar is Asia's third biggest Chinese arms importer. From 2008 to 2018, China supplied \$1.283 billion in arms to Myanmar (*China Power Project* 2020).

Furthermore, Bangladesh and Myanmar have strong relations with China and India. While Bangladesh and Myanmar share the Indian border, Myanmar has a border with five other countries, including China, India, and Bangladesh. China and India have geostrategic interests in South Asia and Southeast Asia, where they aim to lead. China and India's role is extensively vital for keeping peace and security in these regions, particularly during the Rohingya crisis in Myanmar. Although the Rohingya refugee crisis has had an adverse impact on Bangladesh, trade with Myanmar has continued despite the Rohingya catastrophe.

6 The Practice of Elimination

MacLean (2018) explained the Rohingya crisis as the practices of 'lawfare' and 'spacio-cide'. In the former idea, he discussed Brooke Goldstein's concept of 'lawfare': the law is used as a weapon of war. The Rohingya became Stateless based on the Citizenship Law of 1982. The 'lawfare' approach was applied to Rohingya as Stateless persons. In the 'spacio-cide' idea of Sari Hanafi, MacLean elucidated the systematic destruction of the Rohingya's living space for security, development project, and model villages for the other parts of the region, which resulted in losing their ancestral land and adapted livelihood.

According to HRW, In Rakhine, 600,000 Rohingya remain in villages and IDP camps (Internally Displaced Person). They are subject to persecution and violence, live without freedom of movement, and are deprived of adequate food, healthcare, education, and livelihood in villages and IDP camps (HRW s.d).

7 The Agony of the Survivor of Violence

Since Myanmar's independence, the Rohingyas have been subjected to State-sponsored violence. The Rohingya situation in Myanmar's Rakhine State has deteriorated dramatically in recent years following the 'ARSA' attack. One of the survivors of Rohingya described the attack of the Myanmar Army on 25 August 2017:

That day felt like the last day of this world, as if the whole world was collapsing. I thought judgment day had arrived. (HRC 2018, 8)

Myanmar's security forces launched an operation against the Rohingya after ARSA attacked on 25 August 2017. This operation targeted the Rohingya living across Maungdaw, Buthdaung and Rathedaung areas and violently destroyed the Rohingya villages. This operation was called 'Operation Clearance'. Not only Tatmadaw attacked the Rohingya but also other security forces; some Rakhine and ethnic minority people also attacked the Rohingya. In this circumstances, by mid-August, approximately 725,000 Rohingya fled Bangladesh (HRC 2018).

According to the Médecines Sans Frontières survey report, nearly 9,400 people died between 25 August and 24 September 2017, and approximately 730 children were killed under the age of five (Médecines Sans Frontières 2018). In Min Gyi (Tula Toli), a village of Maungdaw, during 'Operation Clearance' of Tatmadaw, many women and girls were raped and killed or severely wounded by the Tatmadaw. In Min Gyi and Maung Nu villages, the inhabitants were savagely killed to

gether in a row (HRC 2018). According to the Independent International Fact-finding Mission Report on Myanmar (HRC 2018), at least 392 villages were partly or entirely demolished in the Rakhine State by the Tatmadaw. Over 1,000 Rohingya refugees were interviewed by the Public International Law and Policy Group (PILPG) in the Cox's Bazar camps, revealing shocking violence, abuse, and widespread human rights violations against them. Numerous killings, torture, persecutions, rapes, and other forms of sexual violence are included among the abuses (Michael, Williams, Sterio 2021).

I interviewed twenty-one Rohingya who were forced to flee to Bangladesh during Myanmar Army's 'Operation Clearance'. They left Myanmar with their family, without belongings, and most of them were empty-handed. The respondents I interviewed came from Buthidaung and Maungdaw areas. Everyone's journey to Bangladesh was dreadful. Many of them had walked almost 5-6 days to go to Bangladesh. During 'Operation Clearance', the Tatmadaw and the local Rakhine killed their family members, relatives, and neighbours. They also lost their accustomed livelihood in Myanmar, including livestock, agricultural land, shrimp farming, money, and business. All of the Rohingya wanted to return to their home country except one Rohingya woman who lost her husband, killed by the Tatmadaw.

According to the violence survivors I interviewed during 'Operation Clearance', the atrocities level was almost the same in the Rakhine State. Everyone said their houses were burnt, villages razed, unarmed Rohingyas were killed, men and women wounded, and some women and girls had been raped by the Tatmadaw and local 'Buddhists'.

Rahima Khatun (pseudonym), a 42-year-old widow, hailed from Nafpura of Maungdaw, Myanmar, mother of four sons and one daughter, is now living at the Unchiprang camp in Teknaf, Cox's Bazar. Myanmar's Army killed her three sons during the August 2017 crackdown in Rakhine State. Even though she could not get her son's dead body, her only living son is in another camp in Teknaf. Rahima is living at camp with her daughter. She is extremely isolated, and her existence in the refugee camp is dismal due to her family members' horrific deaths at the hands of the Tatmadaw and the loss of her livelihood. She was unable to forget the four goats she had left in Myanmar. Myanmar's military also torched her home. In addition, she could never forget the brutal death of her sons. She hopes that if the situation improves in Myanmar, she will leave Bangladesh.

Abul Kalam (pseudonym), a Rohingya refugee, was an affluent farmer in Jambunia, Maungdaw, Myanmar, and a father of three sons and four daughters. He lives with family members at the Unchiprang refugee camp. He said that he had approximately 9-acre agricultural land and a cattle farm with fourteen cows and five goats. During 'Operation Clearance', his cows and goats were plundered by the Tatmadaw and the 'local Rakhine'. Moreover, they had looted his

house. After robbing his home, the Tatmadaw burned the house and murdered his younger brother. Kalam could not even bury him properly following a religious funeral practice. Now, he has to look after his brother's family. Once a wealthy farmer in Myanmar, now a refugee in Bangladesh, he said:

it is painful when we do not have anything to do except take relief.

He is striving to adjust to changing situations. However, Kalam desires to return home and seeks Bangladesh's government initiative for repatriation as early as possible.

On 3 September 2017, Nurul Alam (pseudonym) 47 year-old, a Rohingya man, fled to Bangladesh with his wife, sons, and daughters. However, after five days of walking, they reached the Bangladesh border. In Rakhine State, he worked on agricultural land in his village. The Tatmadaw burnt down his house. Alam said: "the Tatmadaw killed nearly forty people in my village, and the same troop raped four of my relatives".

Alam said:

Myanmar police arrested my uncle without any interrogation and killed him brutally. In my tiny life three times, I had to take shelter three times in Bangladesh, first in 1978, second in 1991, and lastly in 2017.

He said:

How could we survive in the Rakhine state with misery and torture by the Myanmar government?

Alam wants safe and sustainable repatriation, including civil rights and recognition of the Rohingya people. He said he has many unfulfilled dreams, but Alam does not know when his dreams will come true. Alam wants to return to his motherland, where he was born and buried his father, grandfather, great-grandfather, and many relatives. Alam said: "He could not go outside Maungdaw in Myanmar". In the Rakhine State, they could not go outside the Rakhine State.

Rabiul (pseudonym), a farmer, is the father of five sons and five daughters. On 1st September 2017, he arrived in Bangladesh from Myanmar. When all his family members came to Bangladesh, Rabiul's elder son remained in Maungdaw, Myanmar, and tried to sell his fourteen cows and goats. However, the son could not sell cows and goats, but his son was brutally fired by the Army and died quickly in front of his house.

Life's meaning is different from a different perspective; once the Rohingya have a familiar livelihood, now they have become refugees.

They are Stateless, but once, they had their own house, relatives, and villages in Rakhine. The Tatmadaw and ‘local Rakhine’ committed violence against the Rohingya in ways that were almost identical to those described by I interviewed, including burning homes, razing villages, robbing cattle, raping, killing, and wounding unarmed Rohingya civilians.

8 Repatriation. How Far?

Almost four years have passed since the Rohingya refugee influx in Bangladesh started, but not a single Rohingya refugee has been repatriated to Myanmar. Bangladesh and Myanmar signed an agreement for repatriation in November 2017, and later in 2018, the UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) signed a multilateral agreement with Myanmar for the Rohingya refugee repatriation. Consequently, two dates had been fixed for repatriation in 2018 and 2019, but no single Rohingya returned to Myanmar. Bangladesh has sent information of 60,000 Rohingya and later sent verified information of 30,000 Rohingya, but no one goes back, and Myanmar Government is delaying a Joint Working Group Meeting due to the COVID-19 pandemics (Palma 2020).

When I interviewed the Rohingya refugees, I asked them about repatriation: twenty out of twenty-one refugees want to return with a durable solution, confirming Rohingya’s civil rights and recognition as a national race. One Rohingya said:

They will force us to stay in the concentration camp if we go without citizenship rights. It is like we will return from the Bangladesh refugee camp to the Myanmar concentration camp. Another Rohingya refugee said we want to return to our homeland, but the government has to ensure our security to live peacefully; we also want freedom of movement and the right to vote.

For repatriating the Rohingya, regional powers such as India, China, Japan, and Russia are not playing a pivotal role for the minority Rohingya of Myanmar. China wants a bilateral solution to the Rohingya issue. Furthermore, the UN Security Council could not issue any resolution supporting the Rohingya issue against Myanmar: although the British government drafted a resolution for the Security Council, China and Russia boycotted talks on the British drafted resolution (Nichols 2018).

The Myanmar crackdown against the Rohingya has been defined by the United Nations “a textbook example of ethnic cleansing” (Cumming-Bruce 2017). The Gambia filed a genocidal case in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar in favour of

the Rohingya on 11 November 2019, supported by the Organisation of Islamic Country (OIC). On 23 January 2020, the ICJ ordered Myanmar to take immediate action to prevent the genocide of the Rohingya Muslim minority. ICJ ordered four provisional measures requested by the Gambia. Myanmar must take all measures within its powers to protect the Rohingya under the *Convention on the Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, Art. 11, guarantee that Military and other irregular armed groups do not commit genocide against them, and take adequate measures to prevent the destruction and ensure the preservation of evidence related to allegations. Additionally, Myanmar must submit a compliance report within four months and subsequently every six months until the case's final verdict (ICJ 2020).

The case is ongoing, and Canada and the Netherlands government have agreed to support the Gambia in this case (*Al Jazeera* 2020). Recently, two Tatmadaw soldiers directly involved in the Rohingya killing have given video statements on brutal atrocities during the 'Operation Clearance' in the Rakhine State against the Rohingya. Fortify Rights, an independent organisation, believed that these two soldiers are now under ICJ's custody in the Hague, Netherlands. They committed the crime against unarmed Rohingya in 2017 in different villages in Buthidaung Township. They are responsible for killing approximately 180 Rohingya minorities (Fortify Rights 2020).

According to Matthew Smith, Chief Executive Officer at Fortify Rights:

these men could be the first perpetrators from Myanmar tried at the ICC and the first insider witnesses in the court's custody. We expect prompt action. (Fortify Rights 2020)

9 Conclusions

There is no country that will accept the Rohingya refugees as citizens, neither Myanmar nor any third country. Following the recent migration of Rohingya in Bangladesh, not a single Rohingya has returned to their birthplace. They wish to return to their homeland with a sustainable solution. However, due to Myanmar's reluctance, the process of repatriating the Rohingya from Bangladesh has been delayed. The core issue is Myanmar's recognition of the Rohingya as citizens, which is relatively overlooked in the repatriation dialogue. Bangladesh is home to over one million Rohingya refugees; this crisis has become a burning issue for Bangladesh due to the adverse effect of hosting them for a long time. In Cox's Bazar region, where the Rohingya refugees are sheltered, the host communities' livelihoods have been seriously disrupted. There is a growing conflict inside the camps with rival groups of the Rohingya. On 6 October 2020, four

Rohingya people were killed in a clash between two rival groups inside the Kutupalong Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, the world's largest refugee camp (*The Business Standard* 2020b). This clash between the Rohingya groups impacted the refugees' movement and created tension inside and outside the camps.

Most Rohingya survive either in refugee camps or in detention camps within and outside Myanmar; they lost their familiar livelihood, home, education, citizenship right, freedom of movement, and numerous problems as Stateless people.

This study examines the causes of the Rohingya problem from the perspectives of human rights, violence, development, geopolitics, and repatriation. The Rohingyas' miseries will not end until they get citizenship right in Myanmar, and the government of Myanmar structurally persecuted them using the law and the military force to commit genocidal crimes against them. Also, the repatriation progress of the Rohingya community has been overdue for Myanmar's unfeasible initiative.

Meanwhile, the role of regional forces, such as China and India, is relatively fuzzy in Rohingya's repatriation and settlement. Though these two countries have invested heavily in the Rakhine State, both countries still have commendable ties to Bangladesh. The repatriation of Rohingya needs decisive action from China, India, Russia, Japan, the United States, and several international organisations, such as the United Nations, ASEAN, the European Union, and the UN Security Council.

The Rohingya living in the camps in Bangladesh also try to cross the country illegally in dangerous boat journeys. The Rohingya refugees pass through an uncertain journey in the camp with agony but hope to return. They want to repatriate to their home country with a durable solution despite all those restrictions. Most of them said to fulfil their demands, including recognising Rohingya as a citizen, releasing the prisoner, freedom of movement, social security, right to vote, permission for business, employment rights, and access to formal education.

Bibliography

- Akins, H. (2018). "The Two Faces of Democratization in Myanmar. A Case Study of the Rohingya and Burmese Nationalism". *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs*, 38(2), 229-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13602004.2018.1475619>.
- Al Jazeera* (2020). "Canada, Netherlands Join Gambia's Genocide Case against Myanmar". *Al Jazeera*, 3 September. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2020/9/3/canada-netherlands-join-gambias-genocide-case-against-myanmar>.
- Amnesty International (2020). "Military Ltd. The Company Financing Human Rights Abuses in Myanmar". *Amnesty International*, 10 September. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/2969/2020/en>.
- Arendt, H. (1973). *The Origins of Totalitarianism*. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

- Bari, M.A. (2018). *The Rohingya Crisis. A People Facing Extinction*. Leicestershire (UK): Kube Publishing.
- BBC News (2017). "Myanmar. What Sparked latest violence in Rakhine?". *BBC News*, 19 September. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41082689>.
- Betts, A.; Loescher, G.; Milner, J. (2008). *UNHCR. The Politics and Practice of Refugee Protection into the 21st Century*. New York: Routledge.
- Bhadrakumar, M. (2020). "The Myanmar-China Pact Is a Setback for India". *Asia Times*, 24 January. <https://asiatimes.com/2020/01/the-myanmar-china-pact-is-a-setback-for-india>.
- Bhonsale, M.S. (2015). "Evolution of the Arakan 'Problem' in Burma". *Proceedings of the Indian History Congress*, 76, 631-6. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/44156630>.
- Chaudhury, D.R. (2019). "India All Set to Take Over Ops in Myanmar's Sittwe Port after Chabahar". *The Economic Times*, 8 January. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/news/defence/india-all-set-to-take-over-ops-in-myanmars-sittwe-port-after-chabahar/article-show/67437859.cms>.
- China Power Project (2020). "How Dominant is China in the Global Arms Trade?". *China Power Project*, 20 August. <https://chinapower.csis.org/china-global-arms-trade>.
- Cumming-Bruce, N. (2017). "Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar Is 'Ethnic Cleansing', U.N. Rights Chief Says". *The New York Times*, 11 September. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/11/world/asia/myanmar-rohingya-ethnic-cleansing.html>.
- EFSAS, European Foundation for South Asian Studies (2018). "The Rohingya Issue. Its Wider Ramifications for South Asia". *European Foundation for South Asian Studies*. <https://www.efsas.org/publications/study-papers/the-rohingya-issue-%E2%80%93-its-wider-ramifications-for-south-asia>.
- Facts and Details (2008). "British Rule of Burma". *Facts and Details*. https://factsanddetails.com/southeast-asia/Myanmar/sub5_5a/entry-3007.html.
- Farzana, K.F. (2017). *Memories of Burmese Rohingya Refugees. Contested Identity and Belonging*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. <https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-58360-4>.
- Fortify Rights (2020). "International Criminal Court. Prosecute and Offer Witness Protection to Myanmar Army Deserters". *Fortify Rights*, 8 September. <https://www.fortifyrights.org/mya-inv-2020-09-08>.
- Habiburahman; Ansel, S. (2019). *First, They Erased Our Name* [ebook]. Transl. by A. Reece. Melbourne; London: Scribe.
- HRC, Human Rights Council (2018). "Report of the Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar". *United Nations Human Rights Council*. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/hrc/myanmar/fm/pages/index.aspx>.
- HRW, Human Rights Watch (s.d.). "Rohingya". *Human Rights Watch*. <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya>.
- HRW (2000). "Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh. Still no Durable Solution". *Human Rights Watch*, 1st May. <https://www.hrw.org/report/2000/05/01/burmese-refugees-bangladesh/still-no-durable-solution>.
- Huennekes, J. (2018). "Emotional Remittances in the Transnational Lives of Rohingya Families Living in Malaysia". *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 31(3), 353-70. <https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/fey036>.

- Ibrahim, A. (2016). *The Rohingyas. Inside Myanmar's Genocide*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ICJ, International Court of Justice (2020). "Application of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (The Gambia v. Myanmar) Order". *International Court of Justice*. <https://www.icj-cij.org/en/case/178>.
- Islam, M.S. (2017). "Rakhine. Where China Meets India". *The Daily Star*, 8 October. <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/mayanmar-rohingya-refugee-crisis-rakhine-where-china-meets-india-1472947>.
- Karim, A. (2000). *The Rohingyas. A Short Account of their History and Culture*. Chittagong: Arakan Historical Society.
- Khan, A. (2018). "The Strategic Importance of Rakhine State. Understanding Land Grabbing as a Motivator behind the Forceful Expulsion of Rohingyas". *The Daily Star*, 2 September. <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/opinion/perspective/the-strategic-importance-rakhine-state-1628290?amp>.
- MacLean, K. (2018). "The Rohingya Crisis and the Practices of Erasure". *Journal of Genocide Research*, 21(1), 83-95. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2018.1506628>.
- Marx, K. [1867] (1990). *Capital. A Critique of Political Economy*. Transl. by B. Fowkes. New York: Penguin.
- Médecins Sans Frontières (2018). "No One Was Left. Death and Violence against the Rohingya in Rakhine State". *Médecins Sans Frontières*, 9 March. <https://www.msf.org/myanmarbangladesh-%E2%80%98no-one-was-left-%E2%80%99-death-and-violence-against-rohingya>.
- Médecins Sans Frontières (2020). "Timeline. A Visual History of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis". *Médecins Sans Frontières*, 21 August. <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/news/timeline-visual-history-rohingya-refugee-crisis>.
- Michael, P.M.P.; Williams, P.R.; Sterio, M. (2021). "Why the US Should Recognize the Rohingya Genocide". *The Diplomat*, 1st June. <https://thediplomat.com/2021/06/why-the-us-should-recognize-the-rohingya-genocide>.
- Mohsin, A. (2020). "Caught between the Nation and the State. Voices of Rohingya Refugee Women in Bangladesh". *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*, 5(2), 144-57. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2057891119874882>.
- Murshid, N. (2018). "Bangladesh Copes With the Rohingya Crisis by Itself". *Current History*, 117(798), 129-34. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2018.117.798.129>.
- Nu, W.W. (2020). "Myanmar Went to the Polls for the Second Time since the End of Military Rule but the Election Was not Free or Fair". *Time*, 12 November. <https://time.com/5910739/myanmar-election-rohingya>.
- Nichols, M. (2018). "U.N. Security Council Mulls Myanmar Action. Russia, China Boycott Talks". *Reuters*, 17 December. <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-un-idUSKBN10G2CJ>.
- OCHA, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (2019). "Rohingya Refugee Crisis". *Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs*, 19 April. <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>.
- Oman, N. (2010). "Hannah Arendt's 'Right to Have Rights'. A Philosophical Context for Human Security". *Journal of Human Rights*, 9(3), 279-302. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14754835.2010.501262>.
- Palma, P. (2020). "Rohingya Repatriation. Myanmar Doing Little while Bangladesh Facing Challenges". *The Daily Star*, 25 August. <https://www.thedailystar.net>

- lystar.net/frontpage/news/rohingya-repatriation-attempts-result-zero-1950345.
- Roberts, W.C. (2020). "What Was Primitive Accumulation? Reconstructing the Origin of a Critical Concept". *European Journal of Political Theory*, 19(4), 532-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1474885117735961>.
- Rogers, B. (2016). *Burma. A Nation at the Crossroads*. Revised ed. New York: Random House.
- Sassen, S. (2014). *Expulsions. Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy*. Cambridge (MA): Harvard University Press.
- Sassen, S. (2017a). "Is Rohingya Persecution Caused by Business Interests rather than Religion?". *The Guardian*, 4 January. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2017/jan/04/is-rohingya-persecution-caused-by-business-interests-rather-than-religion>.
- Sassen, S. (2017b). "The Assault on the Rohingya Is not only about Religion. It's also about Land". *The Huffington Post*, 15 September. https://www.huffpost.com/entry/rohingya-land-grab-military_b_59b96400e4b02da0e13e79f4?section=us_theworldpost.
- Simpson, V. (2020). "The Most Densely Populated Countries in the World". *World Atlas*, 30 August 2020. <https://www.worldatlas.com/articles/most-densely-populated-countries-in-the-world.html>.
- Skretteberg, R. (2019). "The Rohingya. Trapped in the World's Largest Refugee Camp". *Norwegian Refugee Council*, 25 August. <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2019/trapped-in-the-worlds-largest-refugee-camp>.
- The Business Standard* (2020a). "Another Rohingya 'Robber' Killed in 'Gunfight'". *The Business Standard*, 6 March. <https://www.tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/another-rohingya-robber-killed-gunfight-52906>.
- The Business Standard* (2020b). "4 Rohingyas Killed in Clash at Kutupalong Camp". *The Business Standard*, 6 October. <https://tbsnews.net/bangladesh/crime/4-rohingyas-killed-clash-kutupalong-camp-142114>.
- The Daily Star* (2017). "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals". *The Daily Star*, 29 September. <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/forcibly-displaced-myanmar-nationals-1469374>.
- The Daily Star* (2020). "Indo-Pacific Strategy: US Wants Dhaka on Its Side". *The Daily Star*, 17 October. <https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/indo-pacific-strategy-us-wants-dhaka-its-side-1979329>.
- The Star* (2020). "China's CITIC to Build Myanmar's Huge Kyaukphyu Deep Seaport, First Phase to Cost US \$1.3 bln". *The Star*, 17 February. <https://www.thestar.com.my/news/regional/2020/02/17/china039s-citic-to-build-myanmar039s-huge-kyaukphyu-deep-seaport-first-phase-to-cost-us13-blm>.
- UNGA, United Nations General Assembly (1948). "Universal Declaration of Human Rights". *United Nations*. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>.
- UNHCR, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (1951). "Convention and Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees". *United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees*. <https://www.unhcr.org/protection/basic/3b66c2aa10/convention-protocol-relating-status-refugees.html>.