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## Displaced and Destitute

### The Precarious Lives of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh

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#### Abstract

Bangladesh has sheltered Rohingya Muslims fleeing Myanmar for the past forty years. Rohingyas have been coming to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh since the late 1970s, but the August 2017 incident in Myanmar's Rakhine state was the most severe disaster. In 2017, a significant number of Rohingya refugees escaped the persecution in Rakhine and relocated to Cox's Bazar district in Bangladesh, joining other Rohingya refugees who were already living there. They have been residing in a location with restricted amenities, no means of sustenance, and limited educational opportunities. Their living conditions in densely populated camps have rendered their existence intolerable. Rohingya refugees in the camps continue to encounter substantial obstacles five years after the 2017 campaign. Furthermore, the probability of their returning home appears unlikely. There is currently a great deal of uncertainty in the camps, necessitating further research. This paper strives toward that end.

**Keywords:** Rohingya, Myanmar, Bangladesh, persecution, refugee camps

#### Introduction

The Rohingya is "the most persecuted minorities in the world" (UNHCR, 2023). In 1982, the state apparatus labeled them as "stateless" and subjected them to persecution, even though they had been residing in Rakhine State, Myanmar for generations. They had limited worldwide recognition prior to the August 2017 atrocity. The August 2017 military campaign led by the Myanmar military in Rakhine caused a major humanitarian crisis for the Rohingya. The international community recognized the Myanmar government's systematic persecution of the Rohingya and implemented various measures to safeguard them.

In order to escape persecution at the hands of Buddhist nationalists and the Myanmar military, the Rohingya fled across the Naf river into Bangladesh. As it has done since the late 1970s, Bangladesh has once more offered sanctuary to them (Uddin, 2021a). International organizations promptly reacted to this humanitarian crisis and are still providing assistance. Despite the Rohingya's arrival in the late 1970s, the August 2017 campaign caused a massive refugee crisis. Beyond 400,000 Rohingyas who fled the country until 2016, over 700,000 joined them in the late 2017 and early 2028 (Uddin, 2021ab). Despite the most recent migration surge five years ago, Rohingyas' predicament remains unchanged, and their chances of repatriation seems slim. Further analysis is needed to understand the Rohingyas' limbo in Bangladeshi refugee camps.

This paper reviews relevant literature and empirical studies from 2015 to 2023. First, we will examine the Rohingyas' influx in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The arrival of these people has illuminated the current situation in Cox's Bazar, a tourist hub, and the challenges faced by the estimated one million Rohingya refugees in Ukhiya and Teknaf. It is crucial to consider the humanitarian crises and conflicts affecting postcolonial Global South communities, especially the latter in the present context. Providing background, the discussion shifts to the human rights violations in Myanmar. Relevantly, an assessment is conducted to determine the correlation between the deplorable conditions in the camps and tensions within the host community.

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## I. Shelter in Cox's Bazar Camps

Rohingyas fled persecution in the Rakhine state of Myanmar to Bangladesh since the late 1970s. In response to the continuous infiltration and the increasing demand for refugee shelter in Cox's Bazar district, the Bangladeshi government established two camps in the early 1990s—one in Ukhiya and the other in Teknaf—with the support of international aid agencies (Chowdhury, 2018). Therefore, following the 2017 Rohingya 'genocide' in Rakhine (Lee, 2021), which the UN described as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing" (UN News, 2017), Cox's Bazar became a harbor for the displaced Rohingyas. Immediate shelter was granted to more than 700,000 Rohingyas in an additional 32 makeshift camps subsequent to the influx of 2017-18.

Presently, approximately one million Rohingyas are residing in 34 camps situated at the foothills of Ukhiya and Teknaf *upazilas* (Uddin, 2022). The huts, constructed from blue tarpaulin and bamboo, are frequently sweltering. Over the past few years, they have been supplied with inadequate solar energy. Due to the camp's location at the base of hills, landslides annually claim Rohingyas' lives during the rainy season. The camps accommodate approximately 40,000 individuals per square kilometer, which is among the highest densities in the world. There are only one or two rooms allowed to accommodate families of five or more members. Despite the provision of life-saving aid to refugees, the living conditions within these filthy, overcrowded, and unsanitary camps are appalling.

*The preceding discussion provides an insight into the living conditions of the Rohingyas living in the camps. It is important to have a thorough understanding of the changes that Cox's Bazar has experienced to accommodate a large number of refugees, as outlined briefly below.*

## II. Changed Landscape in Cox's Bazar

Cox's Bazar is a well-known tourist destination in Bangladesh due to its vast coastline. Although the Rohingya camps are located in two subdistricts namely, Ukhiya and Teknaf—about 50-80 km away from the headquarter of Cox's Bazar, the arrival of Rohingya refugees has significantly altered its dynamics. Despite infrastructural enhancements such as hotels and transportation, security issues have arisen, impacting both residents and tourists. Although the Rohingyas live a significant distance from the central area of Cox's Bazar, it has become a crucial location for NGOs and refugee support services, causing a blending of temporary and permanent settlements.

Despite receiving aid and support, Cox's Bazar has seen a decrease in safety due to occurrences of fraud, theft, and drug abuse, which have damaged its reputation. The Rohingya crisis has worsened tensions between the refugee population and the local community, resulting in social problems such as violence against women and strained relations between the two groups. The Rohingya influx has a notable environmental impact, causing deforestation and habitat degradation that endanger local wildlife and worsen socioeconomic tensions. Global initiatives to tackle these challenges and assist both refugees and host communities are continuous, yet the situation remains intricate and unsettled.

The Rohingya influx in 2017-2018 brought Cox's Bazar to global attention, attracting prominent figures such as Nobel laureates and world leaders who emphasized the crisis and supported humanitarian assistance. The increase has converted Cox's Bazar into a busy center for non-governmental organizations, making it a testing humanitarian ground for disaster management projects. The increase has caused a significant rise in traffic congestion, affecting both vehicle movement and the distribution of aid supplies, resulting in changes to the city's layout and focus.

The 34 refugee camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf serve as small-scale representations of Rohingya life, featuring temporary infrastructure to meet daily needs and facilitate trade. The camps contain a range of facilities, such as restaurants and mobile phone repair shops, demonstrating the Rohingyas' adjustment to their new surroundings. Gold jewelry stores and mobile phone shops are

common in the camps, indicating the cultural preferences and communication habits of the residents.



**Fig. 1: Cox's bazar District and Refugee Camps' Location**

Source: [https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Cox's\\_Bazar\\_District](https://en.banglapedia.org/index.php/Cox's_Bazar_District)

### III. Hosting the 'Stateless' Rohingyas

The narratives illustrate the living conditions of Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar camps, focusing on their shelter, cooperation, aid, and the severe situation of these displaced individuals.

#### 1. Rohingya-Bangladeshi relationship

Since the Rohingya arrived in Bangladesh, the local population, primarily Muslims residing in Cox's Bazar, notably in Ukhiya and Teknaf, offered shelter and aid to the Rohingya even before the

Bangladesh government and international humanitarian organizations. However, while some benefited from the Rohingya influx, particularly wealthy individuals and businesses that employed Rohingyas for low-skilled work and rented out properties, it is the economically disadvantaged hosts, such as small traders, unemployed individuals, and day laborers, who bear the brunt of the situation, as demonstrated by Robert Chambers (1986) in the context of Kakuma host community in Kenya. This disparity highlights that not all hosts experience the same benefits or hardships. Consequently, varying opinions exist among the hosts regarding the Rohingya's presence and settlement in Bangladesh. In this context, the host community refers primarily to Bangladeshi residents living near the camps in Ukhiya and Teknaf, although there are also Bangladeshis residing within the camp boundaries.

## **2. Humanitarian Aid**

Food for the roughly one million Rohingyas in the camps comes from different international organizations, such as the World Food Programme (WFP). Until about two years ago, Rohingyas were only allowed to buy specific items from a limited food list. Now, refugees in many camps can buy any food they want by showing their food cards at designated stores. Simply receiving monthly food aid is often insufficient due to a limited choice of allowed food items. However, host communities find it unacceptable that only Rohingyas receive humanitarian aid while the local impoverished hosts do not. Food aid partially meets the nutritional needs of the Rohingya community. However, it has caused dissatisfaction among the local residents and impeded their capacity to find work. The Rohingya population is discontent with the current food assistance. They have limited access to a variety of food products. Furthermore, they are prohibited from leaving the camp to move outside or work (Uddin, 2021a). They seek employment to support their families and earn enough money to meet their basic needs, including permission to work and freedom of movement.

Humanitarian organizations have been providing essential items like clothing, toothbrushes, toothpaste, soap, shampoo, sandals, mosquito nets, and sanitary products to the Rohingyas, in addition to shelter and food. Nevertheless, aid is often ineffective. Regular donations of shampoo and dishwashing liquid to Rohingyas are not being utilized due to the lack of coordination among aid organizations. Furthermore, they often acquire materials that are left unused or are in excess of what they need. They are obtaining identical products from different organizations. Rohingyas often bargain with local markets or private buyers to sell extra goods. The volatility of the local market negatively impacts the communities acting as hosts (Uddin, 2021b).

## **3. New-Old Rohingya relations**

The evolving dynamics of relationships among Rohingya communities and their host communities underline a distinction between the Old Rohingyas (pre-2017 arrivals) and the New Rohingyas (post-2017 arrivals). This shift in relations is attributed to differing perspectives within the Rohingya population itself. Old Rohingyas lament that their once-amicable rapport with locals has deteriorated due to the influx of New Rohingyas. Conversely, New Rohingyas argue that Old Rohingyas benefit from aid and support while sidelining newcomers. This internal conflict has escalated to the point where Old Rohingyas perceive the presence of New Rohingyas as a direct threat to their identity and security. There are noticeable differences in attitudes toward coexistence and social cohesion between Old and New Rohingyas. Elderly Rohingyas express a desire for integration but face challenges due to new arrivals. New Rohingyas, on the other hand, feel that Old Rohingyas are not receptive to positive relationships with the host community and expect government relocation to Arakan with Bangladeshi citizenship. Despite challenges, some hosts and Rohingyas believe that addressing conflicting issues and maintaining separate living patterns can foster peaceful coexistence. Recognizing and bridging cultural differences, such as attire symbolism, can contribute to better understanding and harmony. Both groups stress the importance of government and donor support to achieve lasting social cohesion.

#### **4. Healthcare Facilities**

Owing to the scarcity of healthcare facilities in each camp, the Rohingya population expresses discontentment with the quality of care they are provided. They do not receive adequate medical care from physicians or staff due to restricted access. Consequently, they are deprived of appropriate medical care. Needless to say, the victims of the 2017 atrocities are subjected to inadequate and inconsistent psychiatric care and mental support due to the psychological trauma they have endured.

The Rohingya community has been disproportionately impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic due to inadequate infrastructure for timely vaccination administration and hygiene maintenance. Constantly worsening conditions are the result of population density. They identified insufficient medication supplies, doctor and staff interactions, mistreatment by health workers, and a general lack of trust in health clinics as major barriers to accessing medical care. In addition, distance serves as an impediment to healthcare access. As a consequence, they are subject to supplementary healthcare expenditures due to the necessity of visiting private clinics for treatment and procuring their medications from pharmacies or alternative sources.

As reported by the Rohingyas, the limited capacity for communication with medical center staff and physicians (resulting from language barriers) impedes their ability to express their concerns clearly, and health workers subject them to mistreatment. Furthermore, health centers suffer from a dearth of vital medications; as a result, a significant number of Rohingyas have lodged complaints regarding their inability to obtain the prescribed drugs. A significant number of Rohingya women avoid health centers out of shame—particular on reproductive health, marital issues. While a number of healthcare facilities remained closed for an extended period of time, the Covid-19 pandemic prompted the closure of others. Additionally, there is widespread concern that a lack of funding may result in a decline in the number of health centers, similar to other services.

#### **5. Freedom of Movement and Work Facilities**

Rohingyas residing in refugee camps have been confined to the camp's perimeter since their inception, depriving them of the fundamental right to freedom of movement. As a consequence, a considerable number of individuals characterize camp life as an open-air "prison" (Uddin, 2021ab). Furthermore, employment is formally prohibited for the Rohingya community in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, a subset of Rohingyas engages in 'unlawful' (e.g., self-employment income generating activities and local level endeavors) practices both within and beyond the camps. Under such conditions, locals employ them for meager compensation, which inevitably impacts local labor and exacerbates local discontent. To facilitate the Rohingyas' progressive self-sufficiency, a multitude of international organizations continue to engage in negotiations with the government regarding the provision of employment prospects. Rohingyas assert that the provision of employment opportunities would diminish their continued dependence on humanitarian aid. The Bangladeshi government has yet to grant the Rohingyas freedom of movement, access to education and employment, and support due to apprehensions regarding their social integration with the local population.

#### **6. Education and Skills – lost generation**

Some Rohingyas express that their life in the camp is wretched due to the fact that they have been denied the freedom to move around since the beginning and are confined within the limits of the camp (Uddin, 2021ab). However, some Rohingyas participate in illegal activities both inside and outside the camps. The host communities employ them at low wages, which negatively impacts local employment and leads to dissatisfaction among locals. Multiple international organizations are in ongoing negotiations with the government to provide job opportunities for the Rohingya people, aiming to help them achieve financial independence over time. Employment opportunities would unquestionably decrease the continuous dependence of refugee communities on life-saving aid. The Bangladeshi government has not given the Rohingyas freedom of movement, education, or employment due to worries about their social integration with the local population.

The Rohingya's lack of shelter and education makes them vulnerable, putting a strain on Bangladesh and NGOs/INGOs and impeding the implementation of long-term solutions. Education plays a crucial role in mitigating the risk of disorientation and lack of direction among refugee children. It provides them with the necessary tools and knowledge to navigate their future, pursue meaningful careers, and develop essential skills. It promotes the dissemination of knowledge, reduces the impact of negative events, and cultivates a sense of solidarity among members of the neighborhood. It speeds up the process of returning refugees to their home country, promotes economic growth in the area, and helps create peaceful living conditions between the host community and refugees. To achieve this goal, it is crucial to enhance the educational infrastructure in the economically and educationally disadvantaged host societies of Cox's Bazar. By adopting this approach, these societies can progress and acknowledge the vital importance of education for the Rohingya children.

## **7. Security and Surveillance**

The increase in criminal activities in Rohingya refugee camps is concerning and creates substantial difficulties for security forces responsible for upholding law and order. The camps, originally designed as safe refuges, have transformed into centers of violence and criminal activity, raising worries among both Rohingya residents and the local communities. The severity of the situation is highlighted by recent events, such as the assassination of Rohingya activist Mohib Ullah Master and the mass killing of six men by criminal gangs. The Arakan Rohingya Solidarity Army (ARSA) has been accused of planning some of these violent acts, worsening tensions and insecurity in the camps.

The high population density in the camps, with 40,000-70,000 refugees per square kilometer, makes it harder to maintain law and order. Official data shows a concerning pattern, with 115 deaths and over 2,400 reported crimes in the last five years. Economic opportunities and uncertainty about repatriation have led to a conducive environment for criminal activity due to frustrations. Reports suggest that several armed gangs are involved in a range of criminal activities such as murder, rape, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and human smuggling. There are concerns about ARSA's involvement in criminal activities in the camps, possibly linked to other extremist groups.

Bangladesh has implemented enhanced security measures to combat security threats, such as increased border patrols and surveillance along the Naf river to prevent drug smuggling. Government officials are hesitant to admit the existence of terrorist elements in the camps due to concerns about how it might affect the repatriation process. The recent turmoil in Myanmar has worsened these difficulties, as the weakened law enforcement has led to a rise in drug trafficking.

The illegal drug trade, especially the smuggling of Yaba tablet from Myanmar, has worsened the security situation as armed groups vie for dominance in this profitable market. The involvement of the Rohingya, the Border Guard (Bangladesh-Myanmar), and Bangladeshi drug traders is widely acknowledged. Since the Rohingyas arrived in Bangladesh, the local population believes that they are being exploited for labor at a significantly reduced wage. Consequently, the entire country's youth generation, including Cox's Bazar, is experiencing a severe crisis.

Authorities must prioritize security measures in Rohingya camps, address the root causes of criminality, and work on sustainable solutions to ensure the safety and well-being of all inhabitants. Efforts to combat drug trafficking and dismantle criminal networks should be paired with initiatives focused on creating economic opportunities and addressing the root causes of grievances within the Rohingya population. Comprehensive measures are necessary to effectively improve security in the camps and achieve long-term stability.

## **8. Gender Based Violence**

The camps where refugees reside are deplorably filthy and impoverished to an extreme degree.

Frequently, they are also hazardous. Latent animosity and insecurity have an impact on all individuals, but women, children, and the elderly are especially susceptible. As a result of the prevalence of domestic and sexual violence, women of all ages endure insecurity. The incidence of violence against women by their own men is reportedly higher in Rohingya refugee camps than in Rakhine. As stated by Rohingya males, females, and children, communal violence is widespread within camps. There is evidence to suggest that the majority of Rohingya refugee survivors of gender-based violence (approximately 98 percent) are female adolescents and women since their arrival in Cox's Bazar in 2017. As reported by married adolescent girls and Rohingya women, intimate partner violence is the prevailing type of gender-based violence. Gender-based violence perpetrated by individuals external to the camps was reported by male adolescents and members of the Rohingya community.

However, this was not explicitly stated by women and girls; they claimed that the violence took place within the camp. Gender roles, financial crisis, lack of education, unemployment, and overcrowding are cited by the Rohingya as the principal factors contributing to gender-based violence. As the number of Rohingya compelled to reside in confined spaces increases, camp leaders (*Majhi*, religious leaders) regard domestic violence as a private matter. Despite the fact that humanitarian organizations and Rohingya communities were unable to report gender-based violence due to fear and the dissemination of gender-specific information, it is now apparent that camp security and safety have declined. Throughout the Covid-19 pandemic, the reduction in GBV personnel and the suspension of numerous GBV-related operations have eroded the trust between humanitarian partners and the Rohingya. In the existing situation, the changes in the life of Rohingya women living in the camps are noticeable. Below is a brief overview of it.

## 9. Changed Gender Norms

Traditionally in Myanmar, Rohingya women and girls were restricted to domestic duties and religious learning, with little independence and financial freedom. They relied completely on male family members for their livelihood, and societal standards accepted domestic violence as a way to show marital affection and obedience. Deprived of any means to address violence, they suffered quietly, without control over their movement and communication with men.

Since seeking refuge in Bangladesh, Rohingya women have undergone a notable change in their social interactions. Many now embrace their newfound independence and actively engage in community leadership and various organizational positions within refugee camps. They are able to receive education and vocational training, which equips them with skills that were previously unattainable. NGOs and governmental bodies provide programs to address health, safety, and interpersonal issues, and encourage individuals to report abuse to the appropriate authorities.

This change has empowered Rohingya women to assert their rights and has also increased awareness of social justice and legal options among younger generations. In the past, silence was common in response to violence, but now women and children are well-informed about their rights and how to get help in cases of abuse or harassment. Although facing cultural and religious barriers affecting trust, there has been a gradual enhancement in their well-being and empowerment since moving to Bangladesh.

Despite positive advancements, there are troubling patterns emerging regarding the safety and welfare of women in refugee settlements. The cramped and overcrowded camps have increased the susceptibility to violence against women and girls. Child marriage, polygamy, and sexual abuse are on the rise due to the weakening of traditional family systems and the financial benefits linked to refugee aid cards.

Rohingya women have made progress in asserting their independence and accessing education and empowerment opportunities in Bangladesh. However, challenges such as safety, gender-based violence, and changes in traditional family structures persist in refugee settlements. To tackle these



intricate issues, a comprehensive strategy is needed that integrates legal safeguards, community empowerment, and efforts to confront detrimental cultural practices.

#### **IV. Repatriation: between Hope and Myth**

Repatriation is a primary method for resolving refugee situations, such as the one involving the Rohingya. The Bangladesh government discourage or reject the remaining two options, local integration and third country settlement, for obvious reasons. Unfortunately, the protracted negotiations about the repatriation of refugees that have been ongoing since 2017 have unfruitfully concluded thus far. Repatriation deadlines for 2018 and 2019 have not been fulfilled (The Diplomat, 2022). Extremely unlikely is repatriation going to happen. Despite this, Rohingyas have demonstrated an intense yearning to return to their homeland. On this desire, neither Bangladesh nor international organizations have taken action. Due to the ineffectiveness of pressure on Myanmar, Rohingyas have been prevented from returning to their homeland. To resolve the crisis (i.e., repatriation) it is required to redefine the citizenship law in Myanmar that should incorporate the Rohingyas given its earlier residents.

On occasion, however, repatriation efforts have been observed among the Rohingya population. The repatriation movement to Rakhine stalled following the death in 2021 of Mahbubullah Master, the principal organizer of the campaign for their repatriation. Their repatriation campaign was relaunched under the slogan "Go Home." In June 2022, they also staged several demonstrations within their camp in opposition to this (Al Jazeera, 2022). They gathered in various camps on August 25, 2022, the fifth anniversary of the 2017 genocide, and expressed their strong desire to return to their homeland (Reuters, 2022). Nonetheless, neither the means nor the opportunities to return home are provided to them.

#### **V. Relocation to an Isolated Island – Bhasan Char**

In order to reduce the pressure of the Rohingyas in the camps, the Bangladesh government took steps to relocate the Rohingyas ignoring the opinion of most of the humanitarian organizations. An estimated USD 350 million was allocated for the development of a livable habitat on Bhasan Char Island, situated around 200 kilometers from the Ukhiya-Teknaf camps, near the Bay of Bengal. The municipality provides agricultural land, 120 cyclone shelters, two hospitals, four community clinics, mosques, telecommunications services, education centers, playgrounds, and a police station (Abrar, 2020). It also has a year-round clean water supply and uninterrupted power supply. The government has been compelled to strategize and execute the project since 2015 due to the deteriorating security situation in Teknaf and Ukhiya upazilas of Cox's Bazar district, which has been characterized by drug smuggling, human trafficking, and border conflicts among refugee groups (Abrar, 2020). Furthermore, many consider the management of the strain caused by a growing population to be a factor, albeit one that is inconsequential in comparison to the overall population.

Since the commencement of this process in December 2020, an estimated 30,000 Rohingya have been able to relocate to Bhasan Char (Dhaka Tribune, 2023). Despite initial resistance stemming from factors such as security concerns, the potential for flooding in Bhasan Char, and the difficulties associated with relocation, international organizations ultimately acquiesced to the relocation of the Rohingya population in Bhasan Char and commenced assisting this population. Considering the daily expenditures and management that are involved, the number of Rohingyas relocated and the financial investment allocated towards this resettlement are both negligible. The deficiencies in the management and planning of Bhasan Char have also been exposed through their rapid escape from the isolated island within a short span of days after their relocation (Daily Star, 2022).

#### **VI. Interethnic Marriage**

Amidst the unpredictability of their lives, the Rohingyas are eager to enter into matrimony with Bangladeshis of any age or occupation, so as to secure their own survival and that of future

generations through the acquisition of Bangladeshi citizenship. Because Rohingyas are permitted to become Bangladeshi citizens via interethnic marriage (Rohingya-Bengali). However, this opportunity has become exceedingly limited, particularly since 2014 when interethnic marriage between citizens of Bangladesh and Myanmar was outlawed (Uddin, 2021a). Nonetheless, the marriage is conducted clandestinely. Registration is not required for a Muslim marriage to be considered valid. Despite the recent implementation of mandatory registration in Bangladesh, unregistered marriages continue to persist within Rohingya society. Consequently, while Rohingyas are afforded the opportunity to attain Bangladeshi citizenship, they are frequently subjected to deprivation rather than that privilege. Contrarily, the introduction of numerous Rohingya practices, such as polygamy, into the local society has incited host communities to discontent.

## **VII. Justice for Genocide**

In August 2017, the Myanmar military initiated a brutal campaign aimed at the Rohingya population, resulting in the displacement of almost 750,000 people. This campaign involved extensive atrocities, including indiscriminate killings, injuries, mass rapes of women and girls, arbitrary arrests, and thousands of murders. By analyzing strategic planning and the genocide framework proposed by Gregory Stanton in "Call it Genocide" (2017) alongside the 1948 United Nations Convention, it is clear that these actions meet the criteria for genocide. The United Nations characterized the crackdown as a clear instance of ethnic cleansing, demonstrating features in line with genocide. Multiple organizations have classified the persecution by the Myanmar military and Rakhine Buddhists as crimes against humanity, genocidal assault, and slow genocide. The United Nations' reaction to the Rohingya crisis has been varied, with little agreement among member states.

In November 2019, The Gambia lodged a genocide complaint against Myanmar with the International Court of Justice (ICJ), backed by the Organization for Islamic Cooperation (OIC). Argentina filed a lawsuit against Myanmar in 2021, alleging genocide against the Rohingya people. Various nations, such as those in Europe and the United States, have enforced sanctions against Myanmar's military in reaction to these atrocities. In November 2021, the United Nations General Assembly's Third Committee approved a resolution named "The Human Rights Situation of the Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar," which was co-sponsored by the European Union and the Organization for Islamic Cooperation.

In March 2022, the United States formally categorized the systematic and widespread atrocities carried out by the Myanmar military as genocide. Yet, these endeavors did not alter the fate of the Rohingyas, nor did they establish a conducive atmosphere for their repatriation. The Rohingya population still experiences severe conditions and uncertainty, prevented from going back to Rakhine state by the Myanmar government despite global initiatives and legal measures. Years of being stateless have kept them in a continuous state of banishment, with minimal advancement towards justice or return to their home country.

## **VIII. Uncoordinated Support**

The Bangladeshi government's support for the Rohingya, including shelter and aid, is largely dependent on humanitarian organizations. Yet, these endeavors frequently lack coordination and efficacy, resulting in unfulfilled requirements and increasing local intolerance towards the Rohingya. Aid programs often neglect the cultural and personal needs of Rohingyas, leading to their exclusion from decision-making processes, despite efforts to enhance living conditions and foster self-sufficiency.

Humanitarian organizations, mainly responsible to donors rather than the Rohingya community, find it difficult to tackle the intricate challenges presented by the crisis. Although they offer support,

their strategies are unclear and do not tackle the root causes, leading to continued reliance on aid and tense relationships with local communities.

The current humanitarian framework, influenced by donor preferences and Western perspectives, ultimately hinders sustainable solutions and fails to adequately meet the needs of displaced refugees. Their primary focus is on providing aid rather than addressing the underlying causes or achieving a comprehensive resolution that takes into account historical, cultural, geographical, and logistical factors. The limitations consist of low involvement of affected populations, lack of consideration for socio-cultural contexts, and excessive focus on camp-based programs.

To overcome these deficiencies, a fundamental change in approach towards a participatory method is crucially required. This includes empowering Rohingya communities, promoting self-reliance, and guaranteeing their participation in decision-making procedures. International organizations should give precedence to the welfare of both Rohingya refugees and the local host communities, work together with governments, and concentrate on sustainable solutions rather than temporary assistance.

The future humanitarianism should construct relationship between the Rohingyas with their ancestral lands, not just history and culture. Implementing practical actions like changing laws, assisting with repatriation, offering education and job training, dealing with religious aspects, and punishing those responsible for genocide are crucial for resolving the crisis in a lasting manner. An innovative and time-sensitive strategy is essential to ensure the well-being of the more than one million displaced Rohingyas in Bangladesh and to achieve a sustainable solution to this prolonged humanitarian crisis.

### **Conclusion—with hope and despair**

More than 700,000 Rohingyas escaped from Myanmar's Rakhine state and sought shelter in the upazilas of Ukhiya and Teknaf in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh from late 2017 and early 2018. With the help of local Bangladeshis, security forces, and international organizations, they moved into newly built camps, increasing the current Rohingya population of more than 400,000. Currently, there are 34 camps in the Ukhiya-Teknaf hills housing over one million Rohingya refugees, with more Rohingya living in Chittagong-Cox's Bazar region.

The Rohingya's departure in 2017 resulted from being forcibly expelled by the Myanmar military government and Rakhine Buddhists, adding to the history of persecution faced by this marginalized group. International efforts to address the Rohingya crisis have been insufficient despite widespread global awareness. The United Nations and other organizations have not been successful in holding responsible parties accountable or aiding in the return of individuals to their home countries, highlighting inherent deficiencies in dealing with humanitarian emergencies.

The Rohingya have a history marked by forced removal and exclusion. Under British rule and the 1982 Citizenship Act of Myanmar, they were ignored and deprived of citizenship, leading to systematic discrimination such as limited mobility and education, as well as restrictions on marriage and family size. Although there was temporary hope when Aung San Suu Kyi came into power in 2016, those hopes were crushed by the severe crackdown in 2017 that occurred under her leadership.

Myanmar's lack of commitment and ongoing persecution have hindered efforts to repatriate Rohingya refugees, as shown by unsuccessful repatriation agreements and persistent violence in Rakhine. Notwithstanding the legal measures implemented by The Gambia and Argentina and international pressure, substantial progress has yet to be made, resulting in the Rohingya being confined to a liminal existence characterized by uncertainty.

The situation of the Rohingya has worsened due to the Covid-19 pandemic, making living conditions in crowded camps even more difficult and endangering both the Rohingya and the

communities hosting them. Efforts to move Rohingya to Bhasan Char were intended to reduce strain on camps but were met with resistance and dissatisfaction from Rohingya, who desire to go back to their original homes despite the uncertainty about their future.

Although there was initial unity, relations between Rohingya and host communities have deteriorated due to increasing animosity towards the Rohingya's extended stay and its perceived effects on local infrastructure and security. Both Rohingya and host communities desire repatriation, emphasizing the immediate need for lasting solutions and global intervention to tackle the underlying issues of the crisis. The lack of action on the Rohingya crisis prolongs human suffering and raises regional security issues, highlighting the urgent need for coordinated actions by governments and international organizations to support the repatriation of Rohingyas and protect their basic rights and dignity.

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