

## PAMUN XVIII RESEARCH REPORT— QUESTION OF THE ROHINGYA CRISIS

---

### Introduction of Topic

The Rohingya Muslims are one of the most persecuted peoples today: about 687,000 of them have fled persecution in Myanmar since August 2017, and the United Nations says that the Rohingya's situation is the "world's fastest growing refugee crisis". In fact, the UN described the military action in Myanmar, which has caused the exodus of the Rohingya, as a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing". Numerous country leaders of the world have appealed to Myanmar to stop the violence against the Rohingya, but the military claims that it is only fighting terrorists and denies attacking civilians.

Solving the Rohingya crisis is necessary to fully achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is comprised of 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), 169 related targets, and a declaration. The Rohingya have been persecuted for a very long time; they have been physically assaulted, financially weakened, and granted limited or no access to health services, education, and employment. Even Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh face unsafe living conditions. This goes against SDG 3, which aims to ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all; SDG 4, which aims to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education for all; SDG 8, which aims to promote full and productive employment for all; SDG 10, which aims to reduce inequality within and among countries; and SDG 16, which aims to provide access to justice for all. Moreover, Paragraph 23 of the 2030 Agenda declaration states that "those whose needs are reflected in the Agenda include indigenous peoples, refugees and internally displaced persons and migrants". More action needs to be taken in order to ensure the safe return of the Rohingya refugees and the protection of rights of the Rohingya.

### Definition of Key Terms

#### Rohingya

The Rohingya people are a stateless ethnic group who have lived in Rakhine State (a state in Myanmar located at the Western coast adjacent to the Bay of Bengal) for centuries. This ethnic group represents the largest percentage of Muslims (about 4%) in Myanmar, where 88% of the population is Buddhist. Before the 2016-17 persecution of Rohingya by Myanmar military forces, more than a million Rohingya lived in Rakhine State. Since then, about 687,000 have fled to neighboring countries, especially Bangladesh, by land or boat due to ongoing violence and persecution.

## Burma

Burma is the former name of the Southeast Asian country currently named Myanmar. For centuries, Burma was the official English name of the country. In 1989, the country's official English name changed from the "Socialist Republic of the Union of Burma" to the "Union of Myanmar".

## Military Junta

A military junta, or a military dictatorship, is a form of government where a military force has complete control over political authority after taking power by force. Myanmar became a military dictatorship under the Burma Socialist Programme Party following a coup d'état in 1962. This military junta, which lasted till 2011, ruled as a single party system under a general. The Rohingya lost all the rights that they enjoyed prior the coup, and more than 250,000 Rohingya Muslims were pushed out across the border into Bangladesh between 1978 and 1991 due to heavy-handed government policies.

## International Criminal Court (ICC)

According to the ICC, the tribunal "investigates and, where warranted, tries individuals charged with the gravest crimes of concern to the international community: genocide, war crimes, crimes against humanity and the crime of aggression".

## Background Information

The Rohingya people have faced persecution for decades, and the conflict between the Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist community in Myanmar has been going on for a very long time. As soon as Rakhine State came under Burmese control in 1785, the differences in religion, language, and political support have ultimately caused the conflict we know today as the Rohingya Crisis.

### British Rule: 1824-1948

#### *Growth of Muslim community in the 19th century and early 20th century*

From 1824-1948, Burma was under British rule. The Muslim population in Rakhine grew rapidly during colonial times: according to the British census of 1872, 58,255 Muslims lived in Akyab District (the former capital of the Rakhine State), and by 1911, the Muslim population increased to 178,647. One of the main causes for the rise in population was the increased migration of Muslim workers from neighboring Bengal due to the significant need for labor for rice cultivation. All in all, the Muslim community expanded greatly during colonial times.

#### *Inter-communal conflicts during World War II*

During the Second World War, which took place between 1941 and 1945 in Myanmar, the Imperial Japanese Army (IJA) attacked Burma, which was still under British rule. The British forces were forced to retreat, and violence erupted between the Buddhist community in Rakhine, which sided with the Japanese, and the Muslim community, which sided with the British. As a matter of fact, the British forces promised the Rohingya Muslims a separate land called the “Muslim National Area” in exchange for their support. The Japanese advance led to an inter-communal conflict between the Muslims and Buddhists, and after the failure of the British counter-offensive from December 1942 to April 1943, the inter-communal conflict only worsened. Hence, many Muslims were driven out of Rakhine and sought to seek refuge elsewhere.

In order to escape the violence in Rakhine, the Muslim community wished to merge into East Pakistan during the Pakistan Movement in the 1940s. Before Burma gained independence from Britain in January 1948, Muslim leaders in Rakhine requested Muhammad Ali Jinnah, the founder of Pakistan, to incorporate a region of Rakhine to Pakistan given that the residents of these regions both practiced the same religion; however, the proposal was turned down by Jinnah since he did not want to interfere with Burmese matters.

### *Growing animosity after WWII and independence from British*

After the end of World War II, the British rewarded the Rohingya in Burma with prestigious government posts; nonetheless, they were not granted the autonomous state that they were promised. In 4 January 1948, Burma gained independence from Britain, and violent conflicts again broke out among the different ethnic groups. The Rohingya asked Burmese officials for the separate land that they were promised, but the officials rejected their request and denied them citizenship, as they considered the Rohingya foreigners. According to the International Crisis Group (ICG), the Rohingya Muslim migrants who fled Burma also returned to Rakhine with great difficulty given that the Buddhist dominated country considered them illegal immigrants.

The animosity between the Rohingya and the Burmese Buddhists continued to grow: the Buddhist community believed that the Rohingya benefited from colonial rule, given that they were offered prestigious posts in the government. This hatred was further fueled by a nationalist movement and a Buddhist religious revival. In 1950, a Muslim rebellion erupted against the policies of the Myanmar government. The Rohingya demanded citizenship and an autonomous state; however, the army ultimately crushed the resistance movement.

## **Military rule: 1962-2011**

### *Formation of the military junta*

On 2 March 1962, a military junta was formed: the military, which was led by General Ne Win, took control of Burma through a coup d'état, and the Burmese government was under direct control by the military until 2011. From 1962 to 1974, Burma was headed by a revolutionary

council under the general, and a one-party system was established. At this time, most aspects of society, be it business, media, or production, were nationalized under the Burmese Socialist Party.

### *Widespread pro-democracy demonstrations and continuation of military rule*

In 1988, due to the economic mismanagement and political oppression by the military junta, there were widespread pro-democracy demonstrations throughout the country. At this time, General Saw Maung staged another coup d'état and formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), declaring martial law and continuing military rule. In fact, it was SLORC that changed the country's official English name to the "Union of Myanmar" in 1989.

In May 1990, the government held free elections, and Aung San Suu Kyi's party, which was called the National League for Democracy (NLD), won 80% of the seats. However, the military junta refused to surrender control of the country. Aung San Suu Kyi was forced to spend the next 20 years under house arrest, and the military continued to rule the nation as SLORC until 1997, and then as the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) until 2011.

### *Persecution of Rohingya under military rule*

The Rohingya suffered after the military gained control in 1962. Between 1978 and 1991, oppressive government campaigns forced more than 250,000 Rohingya Muslims to leave Myanmar and seek refuge in Bangladesh. The military authorities viewed the minority group as a threat to nationalist identity.

The army killed, tortured, and raped the Rohingya, calling them foreigners. They stopped social and political organizations that were affiliated with the Rohingya. They transferred profitable, private Rohingya businesses to the government and greatly weakened the Rohingya community financially. The Rohingya suffered forced labor, arbitrary detention and physical assaults as a result of the heavy-handed campaigns of the military.

In 1982, a new citizenship law was passed wherein the government identified 135 national ethnic groups. The Rohingya weren't one of them, which effectively rendered them stateless.

## **The current crisis: 2016-Present**

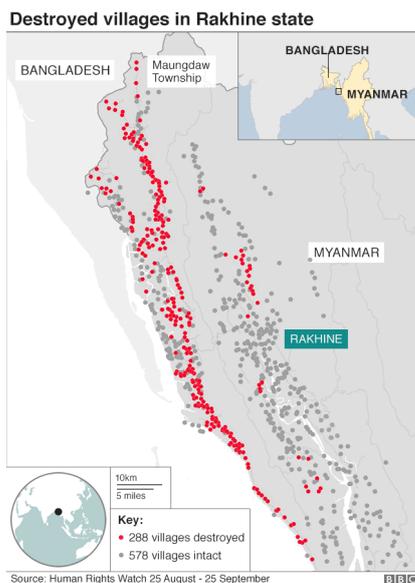
### *Persecution of the Rohingya before the crisis*

Even after the end of the military junta, the Rohingya continued to be persecuted. In June 2012, the 2012 Rakhine State riots took place. A series of religious conflicts erupted between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims, in which more than 200 Rohingya died and about 150,000 were rendered homeless. Between 2012 and 2015, more than 112,000 Rohingya fled to Malaysia.

In 2014, Myanmar conducted its first census in more than 30 years; however, the Rohingya were again excluded, denying them citizenship and refusing to recognize them as a people. The government still sees the Rohingya as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

In November of 2015, the first democratic elections since the end of military rule took place; however, the Rohingya were neither allowed to participate as candidates, nor as voters. Suu Kyi's party, the NLD, won, and she became the de-facto leader in a power-sharing agreement with the military.

### *ARSA attacks and military response*



On October 9, 2016, about 300 Rohingya men attacked border posts in Rakhine State, killing nine police officers. The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) claimed responsibility for the border post attack, which sparked an intense crackdown by the Myanmar military. This triggered an exodus of 87,000 Rohingya to Bangladesh.

Later, on August 25, 2017, ARSA insurgents killed 12 security officers during a series of coordinated attacks that targeted at least 20 police outposts and an army base in Rakhine State. The military then declared ARSA a terrorist organization and responded with what they call "clearance operations".

As a part of the clearance operations, the military burned down at least 340 villages (according to Human Rights Watch); however, the military denied attacking civilians, saying it was targeting terrorists. The government also claimed that only 400 militants were killed, and the clearance operations ended on 5th September. Many organizations have refuted this claim; according to the international medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF), at least 6,700 Rohingya, including at least 730 children under the age of five, were killed in the month after the violence broke out. Myanmar's security forces have also been accused of opening fire on fleeing civilians and planting landmines near border crossings used by Rohingya to escape to Bangladesh.

On September 19, 2017, Suu Kyi condemned human rights violations in a televised speech. However, the leader has been widely criticized for not acknowledging the alleged atrocities by Myanmar's military, which has repeatedly denied conducting atrocities. Many believe that her control over the military is limited, and she is unable to stop the military action against the Rohingya given that her party shares a power sharing agreement with the military.

All this violence has triggered a mass exodus of Rohingya to Bangladesh. Before August 2017, there were approximately 307,500 Rohingya refugees living in camps and makeshift settlements, according to the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). About 687,000 more refugees

have arrived there since August 2017. Over the years, about 1 million Rohingya have fled to Bangladesh.

## Major Countries and Organizations Involved

### Myanmar

Myanmar (formerly called Burma) is a country in Southeast Asia on the Bay of Bengal. It has a population of 52.89 million (estimated 2016), and its official language is Burmese. According to the 2014 census, 87.9% of the country's population follows Buddhism, 6.2% follows Christianity, and 4.3% follows Islam. The country has more than 130 ethnic groups, and as a result, inter-communal conflicts take place very frequently. Since the military coup in 1962, the country has been under direct or indirect control by the military. Even though the military junta ended in 2011, Suu Kyi's NLD party is still in a power-sharing agreement with the military today, and she does not have complete control over the military. The Myanmar military has been accused of various human rights violations against the Rohingya; however, the government has denied any unlawful killings and has also denied access to a UN Fact-Finding Mission that was created by the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC) in March 2017 to investigate the human rights violations after the attacks on the Rohingya since October 2016. Moreover, the government has been accused of blocking UN aid and other humanitarian assistance for the remaining Rohingya in the country.

### National League for Democracy (NLD)

The National League for Democracy or NLD is a center-left social-democratic party that is the current governing political party in Myanmar. Aung San Suu Kyi, Tin Oo, Win Tin, Aung Gyi, and Aung Shwe are the founders of the party, and Aung San Suu Kyi is the current president and Tin Oo is the current chairman. Suu Kyi is the current state counsellor of Myanmar, a position equivalent to a prime minister. She is also a Nobel Peace Prize winner after spending 20 years under house arrest. The NLD was the most influential party of the pro-democracy uprising in 1988, and it has focused on constitutional reform and peace since entering the parliament.

### Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)

The Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) is a Rohingya insurgent group active in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar. ARSA was allegedly responsible for the border post attack that killed 9 police officers in 2016, which led to an intense military crackdown that prompted an exodus of 87,000 Rohingya, and for the coordinated attacks on the police outposts and army base that killed 12 security officers in 2017, which led to a number of military clearance operations that triggered a mass exodus of about 687,000 Rohingya.

## Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a very important country in the Rohingya crisis. 90% of the country's population is Muslim and 9% is Hindu, and the official language of Bangladesh is Bengali, which is similar to that of the Rohingya. The similarities in religion and language, as well as its proximity to Myanmar has made Bangladesh the Rohingya refugee hotspot. The country has about a million refugees, and it has been aided by many nations, organizations, and charities in order to deal with the large influx of Rohingya refugees. Bangladesh aims to build more shelters, especially in the Cox's Bazar area, which is filled with refugees; nevertheless, Bangladesh's poor economy is struggling. The country wants to restrict the refugees' travel to few areas and repatriate the refugees as soon as possible.

## The United States and the United Kingdom

The United States and the United Kingdom have both urged the military action against the Rohingya and the displacement of civilians to stop, and they have pledged aid to support the refugees fleeing Myanmar. On May 15, 2018, the United States announced "more than \$44 million in additional humanitarian assistance to meet the urgent needs of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and people affected by violence and conflict in Burma", bringing the total U.S. aid for refugees in and outside Myanmar to above US \$299 million since the beginning of 2017.

The UK has suspended training of the Myanmar military over its treatment of the Rohingya and has pledged £59 million in aid to support the refugees fleeing to Bangladesh. Moreover, as the rainy season neared, the UK also provided the Rohingya in Bangladesh with an additional £70 million of humanitarian support, bringing the total UK contribution to £129 million since August 2017.

## China

China, unlike Western countries, has urged the international community to "support the efforts of Myanmar in safeguarding the stability of its national development". China has strong ties with Myanmar and has repeatedly shielded the Myanmar government and military from international criticism over the Rohingya crisis. In fact, a draft Security Council resolution was made in response to the Rohingya crisis; however, it was blocked by a veto threat from China. Therefore, the Security Council only adopted a Presidential Statement in November 2017 expressing concern over reports of human rights violations by Myanmar's military (Appendix III).

In November 2017, China also served as an arbitrator for talks between Burma and Bangladesh on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees, but as explained below in the Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue section, the agreement did not meet international standards and not a single Rohingya refugee has been officially returned to Myanmar after the agreement.

## United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR)

UNHCR is the refugee agency for the United Nations. The UN programme aims to ensure that “everybody has the right to seek asylum and find safe refuge, having fled violence, persecution, war or disaster at home”. The UNHCR has contributed a lot to improve the Rohingya crisis by working with the Bangladesh government and other partners in order to respond to the immense humanitarian needs of the Rohingya. The organization supplies emergency life-saving aid to Bangladesh to support many refugees. Moreover, the organization is also helping develop better refugee facilities and improve water and sanitation facilities.

### International human rights organizations and medical charities

Various human rights organizations and medical charities, such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) have immensely helped the displaced Rohingya. While organizations like Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have reported various human rights violations by the Myanmar military and have implored organizations and countries to support Rohingya refugees, organizations like the ICRC and the MSF have provided a lot of humanitarian assistance to refugees.

### Timeline of Events

Date	Description of Event
1824-1948	Burma was a part of the British empire. The population of the Rohingya Muslims doubled.
1941-1945	World War II started in Myanmar: the IJA took over Rakhine state, and the British retreated. The Buddhist community in Rakhine State supported the Japanese, while the Muslims supported the English government in exchange for an autonomous state. This led to a lot of inter-communal conflicts between the two communities.
1948	Burma received independence from the British government. The Rohingya were seen as illegal immigrants, and they were denied citizenship and the autonomous state that they were promised.
1950	A muslim rebellion erupted wherein the Rohingya demanded for equal rights, but it was crushed by the army.
2 March 1962	The country of Burma fell under military control after General Ne Win’s military coup.

1978-1991	Heavy-handed government policies persecuted the Rohingya and pushed over 250,000 Rohingya across the border into Bangladesh.
1982	Burma passed a citizenship law. This law identified 135 national ethnic groups that did not include the Rohingya. This rendered the Rohingya stateless.
1988	General Saw Maung staged a coup d'état and formed the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC), declaring martial law and continuing military rule.
1989	The country of Burma, which was under SLORC, changed its official English name to the "Union of Myanmar".
May 1990	The government held free elections for the first time since 1962, and the National League for Democracy (NLD) won 80% of the seats. However, the military junta refused to surrender control of the country.
June 2012	The 2012 Rakhine State riots took place. A series of religious conflicts erupted between Rakhine Buddhists and Muslims, in which more than 200 Rohingya died and about 150,000 were rendered homeless.
2014	Myanmar conducted a census where the Rohingya were again excluded, denying them citizenship and refusing to recognize them as a people.
November 2015	The first democratic elections since the end of military rule took place, and the NLD won. Suu Kyi, the President of the NLD, became the de-facto leader in a power-sharing agreement with the military.
9 October 2016	The insurgent group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) attacked border posts in Rakhine State, killing nine police officers. This led to an intense crackdown by the military, and 87,000 Rohingya were forced to flee.
25 August 2017	ARSA insurgents killed 12 security officers during a series of coordinated attacks. The military then declared ARSA a terrorist organization and responded with what they call "clearance operations". This included the burning of over 250 Rohingya villages and killing innocent civilians. This led to an exodus of more than 650,000 Rohingya.
November 2017	A repatriation deal between Myanmar and Bangladesh was signed wherein

Myanmar agreed to repatriate the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. This agreement, however, did not meet international standards for the protection of rights of the Rohingya refugees.

## Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Security Council, 72nd Year: 8060th Meeting, 28 September 2017 (**S/PV.8060**)
- Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar: Draft Resolution / Egypt [On behalf of the Organization Of Islamic Cooperation], 31 October 2017 (**A/C.3/72/L.48**)
- Statement by the President of the Security Council, 6 November 2017 (**S/PRST/2017/22**)
- Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar, 8 December 2017 (**A/HRC/RES/S-27/1**)
- Resolution adopted by the General Assembly: Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar, 24 December 2017 (**A/RES/72/248**)
- Security Council, 73rd year: 8179th Meeting, 13 February 2018 (**S/PV.8179**)
- Letter dated 26 April 2018 from the President of the Security Council addressed to the Secretary-General, 26 April 2018 (**S/2018/391**)
- Security Council, 73rd Year: 8255th Meeting, 14 May 2018 (**S/PV.8255**)

## Main Issues

### Ramifications of the Rohingya Crisis

#### *Human rights violations against the Rohingya*

UN human rights chief Zeid Ra'ad al-Hussein stated, “an act of genocide against Rohingya Muslims by state forces cannot be ruled out”. Various human rights organizations and medical charities have reported appalling human rights violations against the Rohingya in Myanmar. According to the 2018 World Report by Human Rights Watch, “military units, assisted by ethnic Rakhine militias, attacked Rohingya villages and committed massacres, widespread rape, arbitrary detention, and mass arson”. Satellite imagery clearly revealed that more than 340 villages that mostly belonged to the Rohingya were either substantially or completely destroyed. Moreover, the report states that many Rohingya who were attempting to flee the country were

killed or crippled by landmines that were placed by soldiers near the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Even Amnesty International reported that the Myanmar military raped and abused Rohingya women and girls. The Rohingya living in Myanmar continue to be persecuted, and those who have fled also face unsafe living conditions.

132 members of parliament (MPs) from south-east Asia have asked the International Criminal Court (ICC) to investigate the Myanmar military for the crimes they have committed. A group of Bangladeshi organisations have also sent evidence of torture, rape and killing by Myanmar military to ICC prosecutors. However, the ICC has very limited jurisdiction in Myanmar since it is not a member state of the tribunal; the ICC can only exercise its powers if Myanmar or the UNSC refers the case to the court, neither of which have happened so far.

### *Unsafe living conditions for Rohingya refugees*

As a result of the military clearance operations in Myanmar, the Rohingya were forced to flee Myanmar to nearby countries, particularly Bangladesh. Although various organizations and countries are supplying aid and humanitarian assistance, access to food, safe drinking water, and shelter remains limited. According to the Inter Sector Coordination Group report from mid-April 2018, only 70% of the one million Rohingya refugees were receiving food aid. Moreover, diseases such as diphtheria, which causes damage to the heart and to the nervous system, have killed and infected many refugees. The WHO representative to Bangladesh stated that the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are an “extremely vulnerable population with low vaccination coverage, living in conditions that could be a breeding ground for infectious diseases like cholera, measles, rubella and diphtheria”. Vaccination campaigns are decreasing the outbreak of diseases; however, aid alone cannot solve the issue in the long-term.

### *Lack of legal status for Rohingya in Myanmar*

In 1982, the Rohingya were not part of the 135 recognized national ethnic groups. Later, in 2014, the Rohingya were again excluded from the census. The Rohingya are a stateless ethnic group without any basic rights as the Myanmar government continues to view them as illegal immigrants. As a result, even today, the Rohingya are deprived of fundamental rights such as the access to health services, education, and employment because they have no legal status. In fact, the illiteracy rate among the Rohingya is an astonishing 80 percent. Additionally, they are not granted the right to worship freely, and because of their religious and ethnic identity, they face restrictions on the right to marry, move freely and own property.

## **Barriers to solving the crisis**

### *Great influence of the military in Myanmar politics and economy*

When the NLD won the elections in 2015 after the end of the military junta, it seemed like the military that caused the country's economy to decline and oppressed ethnic minorities has stepped back, allowing a more democratic form of government. However, even though the NLD won the elections, the political and economic aspects of the country are tightly controlled by the same soldiers, and the power of the military is undiminished. The constitution preserves the army's position in politics: the army occupies 25% of the seats in parliament, and it gives the Commander in Chief a veto over constitutional amendments. The military's influence in politics has led to weak governance. There is no firm control over the oppressive military, and policies cannot be freely implemented. The military will slow down the reform process and "protect" the people of Myanmar through the persecution of the Rohingya. The present political system in Myanmar will continue to be oppressive toward the Rohingya as long as the military maintains its power.

Although Myanmar was expected to see healthy GDP growth, economic mismanagement has caused the economy to decline. The economy is dominated by supporters of the old military regime, and companies are under the control of the Ministry of Defense. Myanmar's informal economy, the part of the economy that is neither taxed nor monitored by the government, is one of the largest in the world. The informal economy involves many members of the military companies, and corruption and drug trafficking are major issues in the informal sector. It is also partly due to the military that no efficient regulatory system exists given that the military exercises so much power in the government. Furthermore, political instability as well as the Rohingya crisis discourages foreign investment. A strong and stable economy is needed for the proper repatriation of the Rohingya; if the economy does not improve and the involvement of the military in the economy is not reduced, the needs of all the Rohingya cannot be met.

### ***Deep cultural divide between the Buddhist community and the Rohingya muslims***

Since the late 1900s, the government has been excluding the Rohingya as seen in the 1985 citizenship law and the 2014 census. This issue is especially hard to solve given that public opinion also sides with the authorities on this matter. The hatred has become a deep cultural divide, and a majority of the population view the Rohingya as illegal migrants from Bangladesh who are a threat to the Buddhist community. Therefore, it is important that the government start portraying the Rohingya more positively in order to change the negative perception of the Rohingya.

## **Previous Attempts to solve the Issue**

### **Humanitarian assistance by countries and organizations**

Although humanitarian assistance does not really tackle the root problem, it is important to note the various nations and organizations that are contributing to taking care of the physical survival of the refugees.

Countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, and Australia have pledged aid to support the refugees fleeing Myanmar. Since 2017, the US has pledged more than US \$299 million, the UK has pledged £129 million, and Australia has pledged more than US \$53 million. Moreover, various organizations, such as UNHCR, ICRC, and MSF, have helped improve the living conditions of the Rohingya refugees. They are supplying necessities and are helping to prevent the outbreak of diseases.

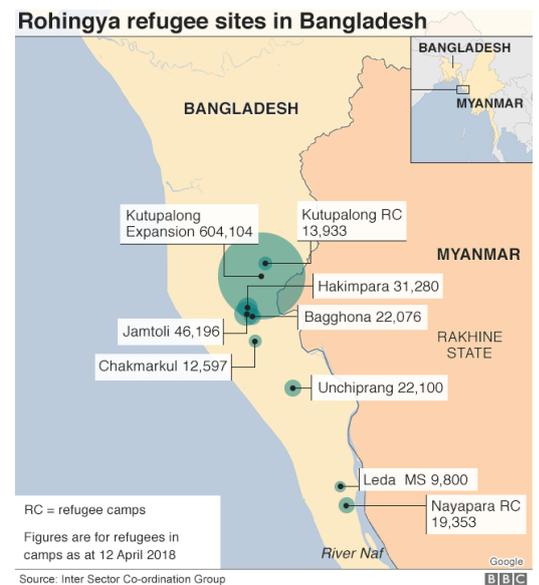
As previously mentioned, the UNHCR has contributed a lot to improve the Rohingya crisis by working with the Bangladesh government and other partners. According to the UNHCR, the organization has airlifted 1,500 metric tons of emergency life-saving aid to Bangladesh, and more aid is being moved by sea. The aid includes blankets, plastic sheets, sleeping mats, family tents, plastic rolls, kitchen sets, jerry cans and buckets collectively valued at US \$7.8 million, which has been used to support 250,000 refugees. The organization is also helping the Bangladesh government to develop the Kutupalong Extension, which is a new site near Kutupalong refugee camp in Bangladesh. In order to fight health issues like acute watery diarrhoea, the organization is also building a total of 8,000 latrines for the refugees. UNHCR and partners have already built about 500 latrines, 51 shallow tube wells, and 8 deep tube wells to ensure access to safe drinking water.

From August 2017 to June 2018, ICRC has assisted many refugees. 13,200 people have received cash assistance; 280,000 people have received food; and 216,000 households have received some type of assistance such as hygiene kits, mosquito nets, and blankets. Moreover, 800,000 liters of water has been distributed to affected communities.

As of March 2018, MSF has established 10 health facilities, employed more than 2,800 medical staff, and carried out about 360,000 patient consultations. MSF has helped treat health issues including respiratory infections, diarrhoeal diseases, and skin diseases, and improved water and sanitation services.

### Attempts at repatriation of the Rohingya

In November 2017, Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed to begin the repatriation of the Rohingya in two years. The Bangladeshi foreign secretary Shahidul Haque stated that the agreement asked for 300 refugees to be repatriated every day. However, this agreement has raised a lot of concerns regarding



the safety of the Rohingya. The Rohingya refugees and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International have expressed concern that they would be forced to return and would again face unsafe conditions in Myanmar.

A spokesperson from the UNHCR implored Myanmar to “address the underlying causes of the crisis” and said that “refugees should only return when they feel it is safe for them to go back”. Sirajul Mostofa, a Rohingya community leader in a camp in Cox's Bazar, said, "Our first priority is, they have to grant us citizenship as Rohingyas. Secondly, they have to give back our lands. Thirdly, our security must be ensured internationally. Otherwise, this is not good for us."

Out of the 950,000 refugees in Bangladesh refugee camps, only 8,032 names were considered for repatriation earlier this year. Till now, not a single Rohingya refugee has returned under the formal framework agreed with Bangladesh. Thus, although the repatriation timeframe has been decided, it is necessary for the Myanmar government to tackle the issues that it is facing before the Rohingya are repatriated.

In June 2018, the UN reached a secret agreement with Myanmar to ensure the "voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable" repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar or wherever they choose. Under the deal, UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) will be given access to Rakhine State. However, according to Reuters, the agreement does not explicitly guarantee citizenship or freedom of movement beyond the borders of Rakhine; thus, the Rohingya are not willing to accept this deal. The UNHCR told Rohingya officials that the agreement was only about granting few aid agencies access to Rakhine, given that the needs of the Rohingya are not met in this agreement.

## **Possible Solutions**

In this year's PAMUN conference, delegates are expected to write specialized clauses, which should later amount to a coherent resolution with each of them addressing a specific aspect of the topic. When writing their clauses, delegates are to focus on a specific aspect or a “specialized topic” of the general issue that are outlined by ‘major issues’ and ‘possible solutions’ of this report. During your conference, chairs will deliver their delegates with more specific instructions. However, please keep in mind that these ideas do not in any way set restrictions for debate. Moreover, each solution has both its benefits and disadvantages that delegates should thoroughly consider.

Below is a list of ideas in order for the Myanmar government to address the underlying causes of the crisis and ensure the safe repatriation and treatment of the Rohingya. Persecution against the Rohingya should stop, humanitarian aid groups and UN investigators should be allowed in Rakhine, and the Rohingya should be repatriated and given citizenship. Solutions should include measures to tackle

the current humanitarian crisis and long-term solutions for the “voluntary, safe, dignified and sustainable” return of the Rohingya.

- Addressing the various ramifications of the Rohingya crisis (under Main Issues) and increasing humanitarian assistance for refugees
- Calling upon Myanmar to allow all UN fact-finding missions and humanitarian assistance from the UN and other human rights organizations by expanding the June deal
- Understanding the requirements of the Rohingya refugees before making any more decisions regarding their repatriation
- Providing incentives to the Myanmar government to ensure that it abides by a repatriation agreement that fully meets the Rohingya’s needs
- Asking neighboring countries such as India and relevant groups such as the Non-Aligned Movement to play a bigger role in solving the crisis
- Calling for government programs in Myanmar to include Rohingya in society and to change public perception of the ethnic group
- Calling upon the Security Council to refer the case against Myanmar military officials to the International Criminal Court to strengthen the admissibility of the case
- As a last resort, placing economic sanctions against Myanmar’s military and government

## For further inquiry

Abdelkader, Engy. “The History of the Persecution of Myanmar's Rohingya.” *The Conversation*, The Conversation, 24 July 2018, [theconversation.com/the-history-of-the-persecution-of-myanmars-rohingya-84040](https://theconversation.com/the-history-of-the-persecution-of-myanmars-rohingya-84040).

Albert, Eleanor. “What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?” *Council on Foreign Relations*, Council on Foreign Relations, 20 Apr. 2018, [www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis](https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis).

Ellis-Petersen, Hannah. “Myanmar and UN Announce Deal for Return of Rohingya.” *The Guardian*, Guardian News and Media, 1 June 2018, [www.theguardian.com/global/2018/jun/01/myanmar-and-un-announce-deal-for-safe-return-of-rohingya](https://www.theguardian.com/global/2018/jun/01/myanmar-and-un-announce-deal-for-safe-return-of-rohingya).

Lynn, Kyaw Ye. "Myanmar Blocks Rohingya Aid despite Safe Return Pledge." *Anadolu Agency*, Anadolu Agency, 19 Apr. 2018, [www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/myanmar-blocks-rohingya-aid-despite-safe-return-pledge/1123021](http://www.aa.com.tr/en/asia-pacific/myanmar-blocks-rohingya-aid-despite-safe-return-pledge/1123021).

McPherson, Poppy. "Secret U.N.-Myanmar Deal on Rohingya Offers No Guarantees on..." *Reuters*, Reuters, 29 June 2018, [www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/secret-u-n-myanmar-deal-on-rohingya-offers-no-guarantees-on-citizenship-idUSKBN1JP2PF](http://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya/secret-u-n-myanmar-deal-on-rohingya-offers-no-guarantees-on-citizenship-idUSKBN1JP2PF).

"Myanmar: A Political Economy Analysis." ReliefWeb, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 13 Feb. 2018, [reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-political-economy-analysis](http://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-political-economy-analysis).

"Rohingya Crisis: Bangladesh and Myanmar Agree Repatriation Timeframe." *BBC News*, BBC, 16 Jan. 2018, [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42699602](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-42699602).

"Who Are the Rohingya?" *Al Jazeera*, Al Jazeera, 18 Apr. 2018, [www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html](http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2017/08/rohingya-muslims-170831065142812.html).

"Zeid Calls for ICC Probe into Myanmar Rohingya Crisis | UN News." *United Nations*, United Nations, 4 July 2018, [news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1013932](http://news.un.org/en/story/2018/07/1013932).

## Appendices

- I. What you need to know about the Rohingya Crisis: [www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561](http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561)

This is a detailed overview of the Rohingya Crisis by the BBC, which explains who the Rohingya are, why they are fleeing Myanmar, and what is the international response to the crisis.

- II. Rohingya crisis - How we got here: <https://edition.cnn.com/2017/11/12/asia/rohingya-crisis-timeline/index.html>

This is a timeline by the CNN on how the conflict between the Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist community began.

- III. UN Security Council Presidential Statement on the Rohingya Crisis (6 November 2017): <https://undocs.org/S/PRST/2017/22>

The Presidential Statement by the Security Council (S/PRST/2017/22) outlines the committee's objectives and concerns regarding the Rohingya crisis.