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## ROHINGYA CRISIS IN BANGLADESH: CAUSES, CONSEQUENCES AND REMEDIES

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### ABSTRACT

Bangladesh, a nation marked by its dense population, continues to wrestle with multifaceted challenges even 52 years after gaining independence while navigating the sophistications of development. Among these challenges, the pressing issue of the Rohingya people's plight takes center stage, with various forms of oppression, including mass killings, executions, forced labor, deportation, and the denial of fundamental human rights, rendering them stateless. This study seeks to dissect the roots of the Rohingya crisis and explore its repercussions on Bangladesh. Employing an exploratory research approach, data from secondary sources were qualitatively analyzed using content analysis to discern underlying themes and patterns. The findings reveal that the Rohingya crisis is primarily driven by the lack of documentation, the rise of authoritarianism, and a complex religious landscape. Additionally, the paper identifies social, economic, and environmental challenges as direct consequences of refugee migration in Bangladesh. These insights hold significant implications for policymakers and practitioners actively involved in addressing the Rohingya crisis. Offering a comprehensive analysis, the study also proposes practical policy recommendations grounded in the specific context of the crisis, aiming for tangible applications in real-world scenarios.

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### INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya are an Islamic ethnic minority who have resided in Myanmar's predominantly Buddhist country for generations (Rahman & Mahajan, 2019). They are not counted among Myanmar's 135 designated ethnic groups and have been refused nationality since 1982, thereby making themselves stateless. An estimated 1 to 1.5 million Rohingya people reside in the three settlements of the North Rakhine region—Maungdaw, Buthidaung, and Rathedaung—in Myanmar. Human rights breaches against this population group are centered on discrimination and unfair treatment (Ahsan Ullah, 2016). In their native state, the Rohingya have endured decades of systemic oppression, deprivation, and intentional brutality. Such oppression has been pushing Rohingya women, youth, vulnerable children, and men into Bangladesh for several years, with notable increases after violent invasions in 1978, 1991–1992, and 2016. The largest and fastest refugee migration into Bangladesh, though, took place in August 2017. Ever since, at least 745,000 Rohingya people have fled to Cox's Bazar, along with more than 400,000 infants. Thousands of civilians have been set on fire, families have been separated apart and killed, and girls and women have been the victims of sexual assaults.

The significant proportion of the people who were able to escape were severely traumatized after witnessing terrible brutalities (Staggers-Hakim, 2016).

In the proximity of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, that currently is home to the largest refugee camp in the world, these people sought interim asylum in refugee camps. In March 2019, the Ukhiya and Teknaf Upazilas housed around 909,000 stateless Rohingya refugees. The large percentage of Rohingya refugees reside in 34 overpopulated shelters, most notably the Kutupalong-Balukhali expanded complex, which is home to 626,500 of them (Islam, 2018). The presence of Rohingyas in Cox's bazar posed a significant issue to Bangladesh's government, which, as a poor country, had to deal with a large number of refugees. Evidence says Rohingya people living in Bangladesh are involved in crime and human rights violations, posing a serious threat to the local population. Despite several approaches by Bangladesh to end the problem with a peaceful arrangement with Myanmar, they all ended up in the darkness (Knie & Pride, 2018). Bangladesh has attempted international cooperation several times, but each time has failed due to Myanmar's refusal and denial of agreement. It is therefore important to uncover the underlying causes of resulting the failure of crisis agreement and its impact in Bangladesh as a developing nation for an effective and efficient resolution of the state with global cooperation (Niyonkuru, 2016). Consequently, the objective of this study is to explore causes, consequences and remedies of Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh.

Eventually, the existing literature does not adequately address the core reasons and serious outcomes of the Rohingya problem, especially focusing on Myanmar's absence of democracy and the emergence of extremism, drug smuggling, and other significant hazards. As a result, the current paper aims to identify the fundamental reasons behind the Rohingya people's exodus from their home country to Bangladesh, in addition to the resulting effects and consequences.

## METHOD RESEARCH

Rohingya as an issue is a complex matter and has several variables that require different classes of methods for investigation (Hosen & Shahria, 2020). This paper follows an exploratory research approach focuses on the publication of earlier related works in secondary sources. To collect data, the author utilized several search engines and websites such as Google, Google Scholar, Science Direct, Research Gate, Social Science Research Network (SSRN), Academia.edu, and others. The information was sourced from reputable journal articles, reports by international organizations, legitimate newspapers, and other reliable sources. Moreover, the author adhered to the qualitative research approach in the domain of social science in an appropriate approach. That is, the data in this study was descriptively evaluated and interpreted. At the same time, the content analysis technique has been used as a qualitative research instrument. In essence, this research is a qualitative study that relies on secondary data.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Causes of Rohingya Crisis

Rohingya crisis begins with a decade of violation, oppression and discrimination against Rakhaine Muslim (Faisal, 2020). Their greatest migration started in August 2017 when an upsurge of cruelty erupted in Myanmar's Rakhine State, resulting millions of residents, half of

whom were children, to flee to Bangladesh. The majority of Rohingya homes were ravaged by fire, thousands of people were massacred or torn apart from their households, and numerous violations of human rights were noted. Some key socio and geopolitical factors impacted the procedure at a later point.

### **Documentation and State Policy**

Promulgated in Military Citizenship Law of 1982 was one of the final nails of the statelessness of Rohingya people (Anwary, 2020). The law established two types of citizenship: "Associate" citizenship, which was available to those whose citizen petitions were still being processed, and "Naturalized" citizenship, which was available to non-citizens who could show that they and their forefathers had resided in the nation prior to its independence. As a result, all Rohingyas who called Myanmar their residence should have been able to maintain their citizenship under the Act's Section 6 as naturalized citizens, or as associate residents (Ahsan Ullah, 2016). Despite the fact that most Rohingyas can locate their ancestors back to the colonial period, the great majority have been denied citizenship due to a lack of sufficient documentation. People who were qualified under the citizenship law of 1948, which granted citizenship to those whose kin had remained in the state earlier to 1948, would no more be entitled under this new regulation. They would therefore be regarded as associate citizens if they applied for nationality in 1948. To become a naturalized citizen, one must show proof of entry and residence in Burma before to the country's independence in 1948 (application or their parents). The Rohingyas were not affected by the Foreigner Act [Indian Act III, 1846], the Registration of Foreigners Act [Burma Act VII, 1940], or the Registration of Foreigners Rules, 1948. This was true before and after Burma became independent (Ahsan Ullah, 2016).

### **Rise of Authoritarianism**

Aung San, the founder of democratic Burma, was a charismatic figure who was able to unite all of Burma's ethnic group before the country's establishment. The 1947 Panglong Agreement, signed under San's leadership, guaranteed that minority groups' desires for autonomy and federalism would be honored. After him in 1948, U Nu became the first Prime Minister of independent Burma. Several militant groups arose during his rule, effectively hijacking Burma's governmental apparatus (Thawngmung & Noah, 2021). It's questionable whether U Nu was motivated by a desire to spread Buddhism in Burma. Nu primarily supported Buddhism in Myanmar to undermine the dominance of communists, according to a groundbreaking research by Human Rights Watch. Buddhism was not utilized as a strategic weapon against the Rohingya in any of the ways it was employed for political goals during the country's parliamentary system. At the time, the Rohingya were also not denied basic rights. They were engaged voters in every election. They were even recognized as one of Burma's indigenous ethnic groups by the parliamentary administration. All of these liberties have been increasingly curtailed by Burma's uprising authoritarian regime (Fernandez Silva, 2020).

### **Religious Conundrum**

Myanmar is home to one of the world's most diverse cultures. The majority of the population is Buddhist, accounting for around 90% of the total. The Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar's Rakhine state (formerly Arakan) are an ethno-religious minority that have lived in the state for millennia (Fernandez Silva, 2020). Ruled by Buddhist king the presentation of Rohingya minority was always negligible. Over time the government persecuted the innocent Rohingya people and denied them as legal ethnic group within the country. Human Rights

Watch stated in 2002 that the state provided military orders mandating the destruction of unlicensed mosques. The government has converted former mosques and Islamic institutions into administrative offices. A total of 28 mosques and religious schools were attacked by mobs in 2001. Not only did state security fail to prevent the threats, but it actively contributed to the destruction. Since 1990, religious persecution of Rohingya Muslims has increased dramatically. The Burmese military has closed and destroyed Islamic schools (typically with the assistance of forced Muslim laborers), assaulted Rohingyas during prayer, prohibited the majority of religious exercises, and detained and tortured Islamic teachers and students (Sohel, 2017).

### **Impact of Crisis in Bangladesh**

#### ***Economic Impact***

State officials, humanitarian groups, medical experts, environmental officials, and law enforcement officials have ascertained that the occurrence of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh has a severe, long-term detrimental effect on Bangladeshi society, industry, politics, and climate, particularly in the south of the country. The Arakan crisis forced people to flee their homes and seek asylum in Bangladesh, which has had a detrimental influence on Bangladesh's economy, social system, and safety (Center, 2018). The Rohingya crisis, conferring to some Bangladeshi economists, has hindered Bangladesh's rapid economic growth in several areas. The inflow has already resulted in a spike in the price of daily necessities, a fall in salary rates, and a decrease in poverty rates in Bangladesh's southern region. In that sector, government spending has increased, excluding grants from other countries. The government's economic burden from Rohingya refugees is likely to grow if the crisis drags on (Ahmad & Naeem, 2020).

#### ***Social Impact***

Several NGO employees have expressed concern about the Rohingyas' lack of awareness. Some implementers have built very shallow tube wells, at a much lower height than is ideal, which has prompted additional concerns about the optimal location of these systems. It reflects that tubewells will eventually become obsolete since they will not be able to reach groundwater (Mekki et al., 2017). As a result, there is likely to be a scarcity of safe drinking water. Kids in the camps either don't own shoes or refuse to wear them. As a result, family planning-related illnesses pose a significant threat. The number of Rohingya people living in the camps is expected to rise in the coming days, putting additional stress on already-scarce resources like food, employment, healthcare, and more.

#### ***Environmental Impact***

A considerable number of Rohingyas from Myanmar have migrated to Teknaf's forest areas, posing a serious danger to the region's long-term forest management. The ever-increasing population has an impact on local resources and the environment. Many additional challenges, such as biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation and mitigation, and coastal resilience, are intertwined with forest resources. The 2017 Rohingya influx was a completely different kind of shock for Bangladesh. The Rohingya response strategy must include a sustainable forest management plan (Bandur, 2019). Teknaf Wildlife Sanctuary covers 11,615 hectares and is home to 538 plant species and 613 animal species, including Asian elephants. Forests and trees play a variety of roles in enhancing community resilience

and reducing vulnerability to climate-related pressures. As a result, the current deforestation condition is concerning for the Teknaf peninsula's coastal resiliency (Imtiaz, 2018).

### **Government Initiatives**

A multitude of initiatives has been set in motion to grapple with the intricate Rohingya issue in Bangladesh, a challenge that has captured global attention (Knie & Pride, 2018). These initiatives, stemming from both local and international actors, aim to address the multifaceted dimensions of the crisis. The complexity of the Rohingya issue necessitates a comprehensive and collaborative approach, and these initiatives represent a collective endeavour to alleviate the suffering and promote lasting solutions for the affected population in Bangladesh.

### **Humanitarian Support**

The Rohingya people have received humanitarian aid from both national and international NGOs as well as the Ministry of Disaster Management and Relief of the Bangladeshi government. In order to provide aid to the Rohingya population, a Geneva pledge conference was organized by the UN, IOM, UNHCR, and OCHA, with the support of Kuwait and the EU. The conference aimed to gather funds and requested a total of US\$ 434 million to address the humanitarian needs of the Rohingya people.

### **Diplomatic Initiatives**

The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees has called the persecution of the Rohingya in Myanmar an act of ethnic cleansing. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina of Bangladesh has put up a five-point plan: i) Immediately and permanently, Myanmar must put an end to the violence and ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine State. ii) The UN Secretary-General ought to dispatch a Fact-Finding Mission to Myanmar without delay. iii) It is imperative to ensure the safety of all civilians, regardless of their religious or ethnic backgrounds. This could be accomplished by establishing UN-monitored "safe zones" inside Myanmar. iv) Safely and permanently reintegrate all Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh back into their communities in Myanmar. v) The entire, definite, and instantaneous implementation of the Kofi Annan Commission Report's recommendations is required (Khatun, 2017).

### **Bilateral Agreement**

On the 24-27 October 2017, Bangladesh's home minister visited Myanmar and met with Myanmar's minister of home affairs to discuss possible ways to return the Rohingyas. Bangladesh and Myanmar engaged two pacts on security and border assistance during the visit. They promised to make tangible steps and take concrete measures to ensure the Rohingyas' safe, honourable, and secure return to Myanmar.

### **Legal Status of Rohingyas**

The Myanmar government refers to the Rohingyas as "illegal Bengali immigrants to Myanmar." However, the Bangladeshi government disagrees with this classification and opposes Myanmar's stance on the Rohingyas' ethnic identity. Rather than referring to them as Myanmar's Rohingya refugees, Bangladesh identifies them as "forcibly displaced Myanmar residents" to avoid any confusion regarding their identity (Khatun, 2017).

## **CONCLUSION**

Bangladesh is dealing with a multi-faceted dilemma as a result of the Rohingya catastrophe. The international community must step up its efforts to provide long-term support and assistance to the Rohingyas, including providing them with basic necessities like food,

water, shelter, and healthcare. Additionally, the Bangladeshi government should work with the international community to address the root causes of the crisis, such as the persecution of the Rohingyas in Myanmar. This can include diplomatic efforts to pressure the Myanmar government to stop its human rights abuses against the Rohingya population, as well as working to create safe conditions for their return. Finally, more attention needs to be given to the mental health needs of both the Rohingya refugees and the host communities in Bangladesh, who have been impacted by the influx of refugees. Overall, a number of coordinated, sustained, and comprehensive approach is needed to address the Rohingya crisis and ensure the protection and well-being of all those affected by it.

In summary, the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh remains a pressing global concern, demanding sustained attention and collaborative efforts. The initiatives undertaken thus far, spanning diplomatic, humanitarian, and legal realms, reflect a collective commitment to address the multifaceted challenges faced by the Rohingya population. As the international community strives for lasting solutions, continued collaboration and a comprehensive approach are imperative to alleviate the immediate plight and pave the way for a more secure and sustainable future for the affected communities.

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