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Security Council (SC)

Research Report

Topic 1: Rohingya Crisis



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Introduction

The crisis within the Rakhine state of Myanmar is perhaps one of the most underreported crises of the past five years. The Muslim minority of the Rohingyas in Myanmar, after clashes with the Burmese border police, have been systematically targeted by the Burmese military. This has eventually driven out more than 536,000 Rohingyas out of Myanmar¹, mostly to neighbouring Bangladesh, creating a geopolitical crisis.



Definition of Key Terms

Burma - is the old name for the country of Myanmar.

Rohingya people - are a Muslim minority primarily from the east area of Myanmar. There are an estimated 1 million living in Myanmar with another 700,000 living as refugees in the neighbouring country of Bangladesh. The people are currently facing a persecution and migration crisis infested by crime and human rights violations. According to the Myanmar nationality law of 1982, they have no right to Burmese nationality and as such have no legal home.

Rakhine state - is a state in Myanmar. It has been the host to numerous conflict and riots between Rohingya Muslims minorities and nationalist Rakhine Buddhist. The government

¹ Abel, Burden “Myanmar’s Humanitarian Crisis” “4th October 2016

<https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-bulletin-issue-4-october-2016-january-2017-enmy>

Accessed the 9th of January 2018

has declared a state of emergency in the region and has deployed military forces to the zone.

Human trafficking - refers to the trade of human beings for the purpose of forced labour, sexual slavery, or commercial sexual exploitation. It has seen a dramatic increase amongst the chaos of the Rohingya crisis. The Rohingya have become the most victimized people of these kind of delinquencies.

Background information

Myanmar, a predominantly Buddhist nation (88 -90%), has a history of the persecution of Muslims (around 4% of the population), namely the Rohingya minority. The origin of the Rohingya people dates back to the 15th Century where they describe themselves as descendants of Arab traders in the region of Myanmar – though the Burmese government disputes this, claiming that they are instead, illegal Bangladeshi immigrants². The recent persecution against the minority originated in the 1970's under the newly formed dictatorship of General Ne Win. Due to a combination of factors, such as the Rohingya minority segregating themselves due to abstinence towards the imposed Islamic law and ongoing conflicts against Buddhists in Pakistan, the Rohingyas have been gradually denied Burmese citizen's rights. Since the 1982 Citizenship Act, the Rohingya people have been denied Burmese citizenship, claiming that the minority are illegal immigrants despite having lived in Myanmar for centuries³. This policy directly conflicts with Myanmar's adoption of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) in 1948 which states that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms...without distinction of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status"⁴. Furthermore, Rohingyas are deprived of the right to free movement, higher education and are limited to only having two children⁵.

² BBC News "Rohingyas systemically persecuted" 5th November 2017 <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38168917>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

³ BBC News "Humanitarian help urgently needed" 3rd of August 2017 <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/asia-pacific/7872635.stm>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

⁴ United Nations "UN YEARBOOK" 31st of August 1948 https://web.archive.org/web/20130927221000/http://unyearbook.un.org/1948_49YUN/1948-49_P1_CH5.pdf
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

⁵ Kashyap, Aruna "Burma's bluff on the two-child policy for Rohingyas" 21st of June 2013
<https://www.hrw.org/news/2013/06/21/burmas-bluff-two-child-policy-rohingyas>
Accessed the 10th of January 2018

The situation we know of today started from a cumulation of events, though the Northern Rakhine State clashes of 2016 -17 were most significant. Having a considerable population of Rohingya Muslims, several border police posts in the Rakhine State were attacked by armed individuals, leaving a total of nine people dead⁶. The Rohingya insurgent group ‘Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army’ claimed responsibility⁷. Due to the incidents at the border, the Myanmar army began a series of crackdowns in the majority Rohingya Rakhine state where arbitrary arrest, extrajudicial killings, gang rapes, brutalities against civilians were reportedly carried out⁸. According to various news sources, hundreds of Rohingyas had been killed by the end of 2016 and many had fled from Myanmar to Bangladesh, creating the most desperate refugee crisis since the onset of the Syrian civil war. Myanmar has yet to allow Human Rights organisations nor media agencies to enter the persecuted areas of the Rakhine State – where during one incident in November 2016 the Myanmar military allegedly shot and killed villagers from helicopters for an alleged ambush by a Rohingya insurgent on a military officer⁹.

Up until Autumn of 2017, there have been approximately 536,000 Rohingya refugees that have fled – or have been driven out of – Rakhine, most fleeing to Bangladesh¹⁰. In February, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human rights (OHCHR) released a report based upon interviews with 200 Rohingya refugees, stating that many had been abused by the Burmese army, including gang -rape, mass killing, and the killing of children¹¹. In February 2017, the Bangladesh government announced plans to relocate new refugees to an uninhabited, sedimentary island in the Bay of Bengal. This has caused several controversies,

⁶ The Guardian “Myanmar says nine police killed by insurgents on Bangladesh border” 10th of October 2016
<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2016/oct/10/myanmar-nine-police-killed-insurgents-bangladesh-border>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

⁷ Bank, Dongali “Islamist fears rise in Rohingya-linked violence” 16th of October 2016
<https://www.bangkokpost.com/archive/islamist-fears-rise-in-rohingya-linked-violence/1111481>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

⁸ Amnesty International “Myanmar security forces target Rohingya vicious scorched earth campaign” 5th of December 2016
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/press-releases/2016/12/myanmar-security-forces-target-rohingya-viscious-scorched-earth-campaign/>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

⁹ Al Jazeera “Rohingya abuse may be crimes against humanity: Amnesty” 19th of December 2016
<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/12/rohingya-crimes-humanity-amnesty-161219045655733.html>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

¹⁰ UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs “Myanmar; Humanitarian Bulletin” 30th of January 2017
<https://reliefweb.int/report/myanmar/myanmar-humanitarian-bulletin-issue-4-october-2016-january-2017-enmy>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

¹¹ BBC News “UN condemns ‘devastating’ Rohingya abuse in Myanmar” 3rd of February 2017
<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-38858655>
Accessed the 9th of January 2018

as the nearest inhabited island is 30 kilometres, especially prone to flooding and has been described as “only accessible during winter and a haven for pirates”¹². The Indian government has refused to accept Rohingya refugees, in August 2017 they announced their plan to deport all 40,000 residing within their borders, which was accompanied by a string of anti -Rohingya protests in the country.

As of August 2017, the Burmese military began a “systematic” process of driving out the Rohingyas from the Rakhine state – a note from the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights found that their strategy was pursued to,¹³

- Arrest and detain male Rohingyas between the ages of 15 -40
- Arrest and detain Rohingya opinion -makers, leaders and cultural personalities.
- Initiate acts to deprive Rohingya villagers of access to food and other means of conducting daily activities of life.
- Instil deep and widespread trauma – physical, emotional and psychological, in the Rohingya victims via acts of brutality, namely killings, disappearances, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence.

In a recent turn of events the Bangladeshi and Burmese government have come to an agreement as of December 2017 that Rohingya refugees residing in Bangladesh are to return to their homes in Rakhine, Myanmar.

Major Countries and Organisations Involved

Myanmar - Home to the Rohingya Crisis, the country has been the propagator of increased violence towards the Muslim minority. They have declared the Rohingya illegal immigrants from Bangladesh and have denied them citizenship. Inciting the unrest in the Rakhine province, where the Rohingya live in, is the contrast in religious beliefs between the Muslim minority and the Buddhist majority. Military has been deployed to control the crime -sprout and flow of immigrants

¹² Al Jazeera “Bangladesh pushes on with Rohingya island plan” 31st of January 2017

<http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/01/bangladesh-pushes-rohingya-island-plan-170131050223171.html>

Accessed the 9th of January 2018

¹³ United Nations “Mission report of OHCHR rapid response mission to Cox’s bazar, Bangladesh” 13-24th September 2017

<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Countries/MM/CXBMissionSummaryFindingsOctober2017.pdf>

Accessed the 9th of January 2018

Bangladesh - Chosen because of its proximity and unrestricted borders, it has become a location to over 20 refugee camps, hosting almost 33,000 registered Rohingya. This number increases when you count in those who have not been registered. It is estimated that up to 600,000 people fled to Bangladesh around August, 2017. With a GDP of 220 billion dollars, Bangladesh's ability to help the increasing number of refugees has been put into question. In January 2017, Myanmar agreed to begin talks with Bangladesh over the tens of thousands of refugees who have fled across the border.

China - The country has expressed concern over the crisis and humanitarian violations in the area. Principally led by the effect it might have on their projects in the Rakhine province, the super power has taken the lead in finding a diplomatic solution that will end the violence and economic stagnation in the region. It also is part of their new approach to global affairs, as China wishes to become a more involved and active super power.

United States – As with any conflict, the United States is always a significant and influential force when it comes to human rights abuses and geopolitical international relations.

Relevant UN Resolutions

Very little has been discussed so far in reference to the crisis as such very little effort has been made by the UN to solve the situation, however, there are previously initiated resolution that can indirectly play effect upon the situation in the region. Violence of sexual manner has been addressed in past resolution and as such can be used to fight the ongoing situation in Myanmar.

SC resolution 2106

Adopted by the Security Council at its 6984th meeting, on 24 June 2013 with the purpose of preventing and responding to incidents of sexual violence. This issue has been a recurring concern in the state and having measures to prevent it will drastically mitigate the damage happening in the region. The priority should be to secure the safety of all victims of the crisis.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

On November 19th, China's foreign minister, Wang Yi, announced that Beijing was brokering a plan to bring about "a final and fundamental solution" to the crisis. This constituted a three -phase action plan that would address the ongoing conflict, encourage

communication between Bangladesh and Myanmar through international consultation and lastly an investigation into the root of the problem as means to find the appropriate mend. The first phase is a suggested ceasefire between the two conflicting parties. The purpose of the phase was to establish stability and peace to avoid the recurrence of the situation; most significantly the war.

The second phase was addressing the distribution of responsibility and equal footing in the approach of the issue. Reparation between the Burmese and Bangladeshi governments has reached basic consensus and are to be implemented soon.

The third phase was part of China's belief that the issue laid in the poverty of the Rakhine state. The region is rich in resources and as such makes for an area of possible investment. They encourage all international bodies to allocate capital into promoting through poverty alleviation and incite stability through this development. China is willing to take the helm in these endeavours.

Possible Solutions

One country alone cannot fix the problem. The situation has become a matter of international attention and a solution that will protect Rohingya people from the violence and crime is at the forefront of the propositions.

To begin with, a solution to the rampant abuse and crime committed to all people caught in the crisis must be found. Therefore, it would be prudent to seek to establish an institution or organization that can collaborate with local law enforcement to expose, minimize and prevent the violence, sexual abuse and trafficking that plagues the victims of the situation. For example, Thailand, a popular market for human traffickers, could create a body in charge of dealing with corrupt officials and criminals that participate in these sorts of undertakings.

Secondly, with damage mitigation in mind, further aid must be to provide with basic amenities such as shelter, food and medicine. As of yet, organizations in charge have little resources to carry out the large projects needed to provide all refugees with these necessities. Encouraging the cooperation of international forces to support these charity groups and organization will alleviate the pressure from the mass flow of displaced people.

Finally, a long-term solution must be thought out. The Secretary General has proposed the assignment of an envoy that can make a proper analysis of the situation in order to suggest a clear answer to the problem. Many believe the issue lies in the level of education and poverty of the region. Addressing both factors could lead to a more prosperous state. Economic development is a well-advised approach to remedying the ongoing violence of the area.

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