

Long History of Discrimination and Persecution - Rohingya

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Abstract: Rohingya, a nation victim of cruelty and ill-treatment, struck by malnutrition and homelessness, whose past is tarnished and whose future is unknown. Resolutions, conferences, agreements, meetings, protests, and what have not been held for these people but to no avail. Stuck on the borders of Myanmar and Bangladesh they look towards the progressive nations of the world, but they are Muslims, hopeful for the help of Allah, this is what keeps them going, every day they wake up with a new resolve, with new strength to face the ever-cruel world. They have faced discrimination and persecution for a long time, from the early times since Muslims had settled in that area, they have been subjugated to injustice and mistreatment in their now native land. However, 2016 brought a wave that was labeled genocide by the international community. This article has refreshed those events, lest we forget, and answers the question about how serious the issue is in current times.

Keywords: Rohingya, Muslims, Genocide.

1. INTRODUCTION

"the long history of discrimination and persecution against the Rohingya community could be considered as crimes against humanity" This was reported by the UN human rights commission that was envoy to Myanmar.

The current Rohingya persecution started in 2016 and the Rohingya genocide occurred in 2017. The population of Rohingya people in Myanmar was 1.4 million before these events. These Rohingya are the followers of Islam. This Rohingya nation is the most neglected and persecuted minority group in the world. They are stateless, having an Indo-Aryan ethnic group.

Geographically to the west of Myanmar, previously known as Burma, is the Bay of Bengal, Bangladesh, and India, and to its east are China, Laos, and Thailand, it is in Southeast Asia with an approximate area of 261228 km sq. It was under military control for a long time. However, in 2012 the military agreed to a schedule for stage-wise transfer of power to the political front. Principally, since 2012 democracy was introduced in the system and later, a free election was held on 8th November 2015 and the Government was formed. Aung San Suu Kyi who spent years in house arrest and was a Nobel peace prize winner was promoted to the state Counsellor of Myanmar.

Myanmar's population is Buddhists; however, it does contain minority groups like Muslims, 4% are Muslims. Gutman (1976) and Ibrahim (2016) claim Muslim population dates to before the arrival of ethnic Rakhine in the 9th and 10th centuries.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Myanmar, a Buddhist majority nation, claims to be followers of inner peace and wisdom and believes it is a source of achieving enlightenment, and they don't acknowledge a supreme God or deity. The reality of this peace and wisdom they had attained over generations had poured out when they subjugated their minority, the Rohingyas, a nation in Burma to

severe persecution because of which unrest spread and the human rights groups in the world became active. Like many areas in the world where Muslim minorities are dealt with harshly and not allowed to live in peace, the same has occurred in Myanmar. The religious strife which has been going on for decades came into full stride in 2016. News agencies from all around the world sent their agents to this area but the journalists were not spared from the injustice of the Myanmar military. However, as they do their job to the best of their abilities, they have been diligent, and much information was shared by them. Al Jazeera, BBC, the Guardian, and other news agencies have provided current and ongoing information to the masses about the situation with the Rohingya people.

Kyaw Hsan Hlaing writes in Al Jazeera:

“The military leadership appears to be introducing harsher punishments, with local media reporting on December 15 that a court sentenced the Rohingya arrested near to five years in prison for breaching the law, rather than two.”

As it is considered a genocide of the Rohingya nations, enough information can be gathered about this ongoing injustice from the Encyclopedias. When used, these Encyclopedias have comprehensive information gathered from authors like David Matheison. Carol Ember Malvin, Shoaib Daniyal.

“The Rohingya people of Myanmar (known as Burma before 1989) were stripped of citizenship in 1982, because they could not meet the requirement of proving their forefathers settled in Burma before 1823, and now account for one in seven of the global population of stateless people”, write Syed S Mahmood, Emily Wroe, Arlan Fuller, Jennifer Leaning in The Rohingya people of Myanmar: health, human rights, and identity, they also say, “Three of every four Rohingya outside Myanmar have not received refugee status protection from the UN, rendering them vulnerable to abuse by state authority. The UN estimates that 10 million people are stateless worldwide,6 making the 1.5 million Rohingya across southeast Asia account for more than one out of every seven stateless individuals.”

Stefan Bepler writes in The Rohingya conflict: Genesis, current situation and geopolitical aspects, “Since the mass exodus in August 2017 the Rohingya conflict in Myanmar is getting attention in the in-ternational public media. The ethnic-religious causes and humanitarian aspect of the refugee situation are put in the foreground.”

3. METHODS

To understand concepts, opinions, or experiences, non-numerical data is collected and analyzed in the qualitative method. For this research Article Qualitative method has been used. It uses the Grounded theory in which rich data is collected and theories are developed. The benefit of the qualitative method is that the insights provided in it are detailed and content-specific. Textual or visual content has been systematically analyzed. Qualitative research is used to understand how people experience the world says Pritha Bhandari.

Using the qualitative method, textual content was studied and analyzed for this article. Is the problem in Rohingya at an alarming level? To understand the problem in Rohingya, history has been studied first. Various media releases and reports have been consulted, and finally, the Seerah of the Prophet Muhammad s.a.w was looked upon to determine a solution to the problem.

Result

Apartheid:

Apartheid was a system of institutionalized racial segregation that existed in South Africa and South West Africa (now Namibia) from 1948 to the early 1990s; the condition of the Rohingya community has been compared to theirs by some analysts and political figures, including Nobel laureate Bishop Desmond Tutu, a South African anti-apartheid activist. The displacement and genocide of the Rohingya were so great that the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice started an investigation.

The Rohingya are indigenous to Myanmar, they settled in the area generations ago. According to the claim of Gutman (1976) and Ibrahim (2016), the Muslim population can be traced back to the 9th and 10th centuries. The community claims that they descended from the precolonial Arakan and Arakan states. Arakan is the historical-geographical name of the Rakhine, Myanmar state. However, the Myanmar government considers the Rohingya a migrant from the British colonial and precolonial migrants of Bangladesh.

The first Muslim known to have lived in Myanmar in Burmese history was during the reign of Mon, Thaton King, Byat Wi. But his nephews were executed due to their refusal to join forced labor or due to their Islamic faith according to some sources. During the reign of Burmese king Bayinnaung (1550 -1581 Ad), restrictions were imposed on the Muslim subjects. In 1559, Islamic ritual slaughter, Eid ul Adha, and Qurbani were also banned because according to rulers' faith, it was a cruel custom to kill animals in the name of religion.

Ethnic cleansing:

The events that occurred in 2016 and continue to date have been considered as ethnic cleansing and genocide by the UN and human rights watch groups. Due to the events in 2016 and subsequent events in the coming years between August 2017 and December 2017, almost 625,000 population of Rohingya crossed into Bangladesh and neighboring countries from Myanmar.

Myanmar security forces had inflicted many injustices against Rohingya during those years, the findings and explorations from the US found that the ultra-national Buddhists had incited hatred and racial discrimination against the Rohingya Muslims like summary executions, enforced disappearances, arbitrary arrests, detentions, torture, ill-treatment, and forced labor.

The genocide, persecution, and killing of Rohingya is a continuous and ongoing process by the military of Myanmar. The two phases of the genocide of Rohingya by Myanmar consisted of a military crackdown, resulting in them fleeing to other countries for refuge. The biggest refugee camp was established there for Rohingya refugees. They also fled to India, Thailand, Malaysia, and South and Southeast Asia. However, the persecution of those who were left behind never stopped. Like injustice and criminal treatment in many other countries where Muslims are in the minority, Burma is no exception. The government and the Buddhist nation have persecuted the Rohingyas from as far back as the 1970s.

Many refugees pay hefty fees to the agents to cross the borders into neighboring countries like Malaysia and must swim for hours after being taken in a boat to such destinations, some women and children drown in this process.

Sedimentary Island:

A sedimentary island in the Bay of Bengal was announced by the government of Bangladesh to be the place where they would relocate the 232,000 Rohingya refugees already in the country of Bhasan Char, in February 2017. Formed from washed silt from the Meghna River, this Island first appeared around 2007. Around 30 km away the nearest Island is the inhabited land. It was quoted as a terrible plan by the news agencies. Several parties opposed the substantial move. It was called a forced relocation by human rights parties because of the living conditions on the island and because it was low-lying and prone to flooding. It was known to be more favorable and accessible during winter and a good ground for pirates. The accusation was made against the Bangladesh authorities for beating the Rohingya who tried to flee Bhasan Char. Various destinations however responded to the refugees:

On 30 April 2017, Sri Lanka intercepted and detained an Indian boat of 32 Rohingya refugees off its northern coast after it entered Sri Lankan waters.

In May 2017, Bangladesh detained 12 Rohingya people and 2 smugglers who attempted to leave the country by boat for Malaysia.

In August 2017, Thailand announced that it was "preparing to receive" Rohingya refugees fleeing Myanmar.

On 14 August 2017, India announced that it was deporting an estimated 40,000 Rohingya refugees including 14,000 of those registered with the U.N. refugee agency as well. In the months leading up to the announcement, a string of anti-Rohingya protests had taken place in the country.

In September 2017, Nepal increased surveillance at its border with India to prevent more Rohingya refugees from entering the country. A small community of Rohingya refugees live in the capital, Kathmandu. Rohingya refugees in a refugee camp in Bangladesh, 2017

In November 2017, the government of Bangladesh signed a pact with Myanmar to return the Rohingya refugees to their homes in the Rakhine territory. The deal arose after a diplomatic meeting on the matter between Aung San Suu Kyi and Abul Hassan Mahmud Ali, the foreign minister of Bangladesh.

August 2017:

Persecution was launched in response to the attack of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on the Myanmar border posts in August 2017.

Various UN agencies, ICC officials human rights groups, and governments have labeled it as ethnic cleansing and genocide. A “Textbook” example of ethnic cleansing, was the label given to it by the UN. A seven-member panel of “the Permanent Peoples Tribunal’ in September 2017 found the Burmese military and authority guilty of the crime of genocide against the Rohingya and the Kachin minority group. The Permanent Peoples' Tribunal is an international human rights organization founded in Bologna, Italy, on June 24, 1979, at the initiative of Senator Lelio Basso. It was formed at the final session of the Russell Tribunal as a vehicle to condemn the brutality of Latin American dictatorships. The court is composed of a president, four vice presidents, a secretary general, and 66 international members. Since its establishment, the Tribunal has held 46 sessions dealing with numerous cases of human rights violations in many countries. Again, Suu Kyi was criticized for her silence over the military action and issue. In August 2018, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights declared that Burmese military generals should be tried for genocide.

The Rohingya community is not allowed to travel without official permission. They previously were not allowed to have more than two children, but this law was not enforced. They had to give up one day of work and to be subjected to forced labor and one night shift of sentry duty, this was what they were subjected to. Much of the arable land of the Rohingya was distributed to the Buddhist settlers who migrated there from other regions after the Rohingya lost their land to the military.

Media access:

Media access and visits to international bodies in Myanmar have been blocked since 25 August. For violating a 1923 colonial law related to secrecy, two Reuters journalists were charged and imprisoned by the police who were covering the refugee story on Dec 2017. Bail was denied to two Reuters journalists on 1st February 2018 by a Myanmar court. The two journalists were released on 7 May 2019 along with over 6000 prisoners in a presidential order at the request of The UN Secretary-General António Guterres.

Expulsion:

The systematic process of driving hundreds of thousands of Rohingya out of Myanmar in early August 2017 was initiated by the Burmese military according to the Mission Report of OHCHR. A strategy set in motion before the incidents and crackdown of 25 August was being pursued.

Arrest and arbitrarily detain male Rohingyas between the ages of 15–40 years.

Arrest and arbitrarily detain Rohingya opinion-makers, leaders, and cultural and religious personalities.

Initiate acts to deprive Rohingya villagers of access to food, livelihoods, and other means of conducting daily activities and life.

Commit repeated acts of humiliation and violence before, during, and after 25 August, to drive out Rohingya villagers through incitement to hatred, violence, and killings, including by declaring the Rohingyas as Bengalis and illegal settlers in Myanmar.

Instill deep and widespread fear and trauma – physical, emotional, and psychological, in the Rohingya victims through acts of brutality, namely killings, disappearances, torture, rape and other forms of sexual violence. 1

Media sources:

The Myanmar government instructed media sources to not include issues regarding the Rohingya in 2014. Specifically, the Editor in Chief of the Myanmar Times sent a memo to his editorial team stating:

“... no material is to be run in any of our newspapers regarding the Rohingya, Bengalis, Muslims, and Buddhists and the ongoing issues in Rakhine without direct approval from my desk... Our coverage is unlikely to matter substantively in the scheme of things and there appears little sense in placing our heads on the block right at this time...”

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_genocide#See_also

The editors told the Burmese reporters to ignore or use caution when reporting about the Rohingya issue according to Aung Zaw, the founder and editor of Irrawaddy Magazine. This self-censorship was attributed to staying safe from potential international backlash the Myanmar government may face by reporting about the Rohingya. The Rohingya have been secluded as much as possible by the Rakhine authorities from the Myanmar society and international visitors. Those who spoke with the reporters or journalists were arrested or beaten.

Different ways were used to report the Rohingya crisis and provide coverage to it in different countries. 50 news reports qualitatively and 258 news reports quantitatively were examined by MD Khadimul Islam of the University of Mississippi belonging to Bangladesh, India, and China and he found that the reports from India and Bangladesh were focused on "human interest and protest frame" and from Chinese media, they focused on security and conflict of the Rohingya with the Myanmar government.

Cox's Bazar:

Displaced by the violence, many of the Rohingya fled to COX's Bazar in Bangladesh. This area was considered climate-vulnerable and at risk of weather events such as extreme rainfall, landslides, flash floods, and tropical cyclones. Declining forest cover is, a threat to the environment, this is what causes an armed conflict. On the border of armed conflict is the majority of forest loss within Myanmar. It can be directly attributed to it.

Many of the Rohingyas displaced by the violence fled to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. Armed conflicts within Myanmar are a significant threat to the environment and contribute to the declining forest cover which is estimated at 0.87% per year. Most of the forest loss within Myanmar is on the periphery of armed conflicts or can be directly attributed to conflict.

More than 90% of villages were partially or destroyed by fire as the result of the military operations in Rakhine State and their environment and ecosystem were also damaged. Burmese military burned and arson the area heavily. A significant loss in forest cover and cultivated wetlands was experienced by Rakhine state. Forest cover was prevalent in the Rakhine state before the conflict, but the extent of the damage was extreme. All forms of environmental land cover types such as cultivated wetlands were decimated after the military operations.

Widespread environmental degradation has been caused due to the migration of Rohingya Muslims into Bangladesh. Stairs and terraces were cut into existing landscapes to facilitate the need for living spaces for refugees. From the Ukhia, Whykong, and Teknaf forest ranges along the Myanmar-Bangladesh border to build temporary housing. Forest cover loss within the region has been significantly driven due to the need for fuel for cooking. degradation of critical habitats threatening the region's wildlife is the result of these forest uses. One such example of this is the Kutupalong camp's expansion. This expansion encroached onto the endangered Asian elephant's migration route.

Utilizing 1328 acres of forest land, the Kutupalong Rohingya refugee camp in Bangladesh was found to be the largest refugee camp in 2018. Landslides and flash floods are found here, along unpaved, and slippery roads, elderly, young, and Rohingya women are at risk because of these. 100 tons of disposable waste is collected each month which also poses a risk.

International criticism:

The ongoing genocide against the Rohingya people garnered strong criticism internationally and it also generated serious concerns about the human rights issues. International communities and human rights organizations had all described the violence as ethnic cleansing and genocide. Soon after the security forces and Buddhist militia started "clearance operations", the world leaders warned the Myanmar authorities to avoid civilian casualties. In late September, a seven-member panel of the Permanent Peoples' Tribunal accused Myanmar of conducting genocide against the Rohingya and the Kachin minority groups. The verdict came after a five-day trial, held at the law faculty of the University of Malaya, which examined various documentaries, expert views, and the testimony of victims. The tribunal made 17 recommendations including demilitarisation of Rakhine State and the end of discriminatory citizenship law. The United Nations' human rights chief Zeid bin Ra'ad described the persecution as "a textbook example of ethnic cleansing". On 5 December 2017, Ra'ad announced that the Rohingya persecution may constitute genocide under international human rights laws. In November, British Prime Minister Theresa May and United States Secretary of State Rex Tillerson described the situation as "ethnic cleansing" while French President Emmanuel Macron called it genocide.

4. DISCUSSION

Lack of education and resources:

All the refugee-run schools in which the Rohingya children were learning have been shut down by the Bangladesh government in December 2021 and now these children have nothing to do. This was done because these schools were teaching in the Bangla language and there were chances to integrate with the Bangla by these children. It's been a while now since this crisis erupted, and these children have grown from being a child to teenager, from a teenager to adults, they also aspire to be successful in life, but they don't have fair chances in life to proceed according to their aspirations, talent, and skills. These children are hindered from getting a school education, earning an income, and moving freely through or beyond the camp. The girls are married off at an early age.

Shamsud Douza, the Additional Refugee, Relief, and Repatriation Commissioner told Al Jazeera "We want their [Rohingya] safe and voluntary return to their homeland," Douza said. But he also admitted that several repatriation attempts have failed and prospects of safe repatriation soon are "very dim".¹

The Rohingya are not living a dignified life and the patience of their hosts might be lost soon as they feel that Rohingya although getting foreign aid are still stealing jobs, refugees cut the barbed wires of their camps at various places and then they sneak out to offer their services at various places at half the wage.

The World Food Program aid to a million refugees was cut by a third to just \$8 per month due to a funding shortfall which means that even more refugees' health and wellness are at risk. 45% of Rohingya were not eating well even before the cuts and were facing malnutrition, the children in the camps are at the risk of becoming a lost generation according to Al Jazeera news.

Rohingya are in a stateless situation. They are trapped on the border of both states with no prospects of where the future will take them. The circumstances need an immediate coordinated international response for the safe return of Rohingya to their homeland, not only to establish a respectful civilian life but to achieve justice for past atrocities as well.

Dr. Delwar Hossain, director of the East Asia Study Center at Dhaka University, told Al Jazeera that the world's attention has already moved from the Rohingya refugees, and they possibly could become a "permanent fixture within the Bangladeshi territory".²

Children face disease outbreaks, malnutrition, inadequate educational opportunities, and the risks related to neglect, exploitation, and violence including gender-based violence risks, child marriage, and child labor.

Rohingya Youth:

According to one report, a recent assessment conducted by NRC found that Rohingya youth and adolescents are eager to receive vocational training and build a technical knowledge base, which will help them earn money to support themselves and their families. Some of this training is available, but much more must be provided, and existing initiatives expanded.³

Like any other youth community, these youth and young adults could be assets for the community if given the opportunity that has not been arranged by the world. The donor community and the government need to work together to make that possible.

Crime and refugee crisis

In January 2018, a study found that at least 25,00 Rohingya were killed, 18,000 women and girls were affected by perpetrated gangrapes and other forms of sexual violence attacks, 116,000 Rohingya were beaten and 36,000 were thrown in fire.

A refugee crisis arose when military operations displaced many people. After the Vietnam war, a vast number of human exodus occurred when the Rohingya refugees fled Myanmar in 2017. As of September 2017, 700,000 people fled Rakhine state and took shelter at neighbors.

² <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/8/25/six-years-of-rohingya-exodus-food-crisis-and-fears-of-a-lost-generation>

³ <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/8/24/rohingya-youth-long-for-a-future-beyond-the-barbed-wire>

There was a strong reaction by the international society against the actions performed by the Myanmar military and government towards the Rohingya Muslims. Organizations like the UN, Amnesty International, the US State Department, the Government of Bangladesh, and Malaysia, all condemned these actions. The silence and inaction of Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi over the issue and for not preventing the military from their injustice were heavily criticized.

Journalists were also not spared by the military of Myanmar. In December 2017 two Reuter journalists, covering the Inn Din massacre, were arrested, and imprisoned. In the village of Inn Din in Rakhine State Myanmar, the Inn Din Massacre was a mass execution of Rohingya by the Myanmar Army and Rakhine locals on September 2nd, 2017. This was admitted by the military on 10th January 2018 because of an investigation.

In November 2018 the Foreign secretary told reporters that Myanmar was ready to accept refugees back to Rakhine state in two months. Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a deal at that time to facilitate the return of the refugees. There were mixed responses from the International community.

The UN High Commission visited the Bangladesh refugee camps at the border of Bangladesh and Rohingya. The prime Minister of Bangladesh did ask the refugees to return to Myanmar, but the UN commented that this return should be when the conditions on the border and in Myanmar are safe for these refugees.

International Reaction:

Aung San Suu Kyi was pressured to condemn the atrocities and address human rights crisis issues through the international reaction. Under the 2008 constitution, her power was restricted, key ministers like home, border affairs, and defense were placed under military control and 25% of seats in the legislature were reserved for serving military offices. Seizing control of the government Min Aung Hlaing launched a military coup in 2021 and was regarded as the most powerful person in the country.

Human rights organizations, Amnesty International and the United States have called the situation with the Rohingya human rights crisis and crime against humanity, and that the civilians are being targeted in a systematic campaign of violence by the military. This military crackdown received criticism from various segments from around the world.

Deep concerns were shown by Kofi Anan after his weeklong visit to the Rakhine state about human rights. A nine-member commission was formed in August 2016, and he was leading it to look at and make improvements on improving the situation in the state.

Concerns were expressed about the violence in Rakhine state and the displacement of Rohingyas by the U.S. Department of State. The Government of Malaysia also condemned the crackdown in Rakhine state and ongoing protests.

John McKissick is the head of a UN refugee agency based in the Bangladeshi town of Cox's Bazar. He accused Myanmar of conducting ethnic cleansing in the Rakhine state to free it from the Muslim minority in November 2016. Myanmar envoy in Bangladesh was summoned to convey "tremendous concern" over the Rohingya persecution.

In 2016 the UN Human Rights Commissioner Zeid Raad Al Hussein stated "The cruelty to which these Rohingya children have been subjected is unbearable – what kind of hatred could make a man stab a baby who was crying out for his mother's milk?" A spokesperson for the government stated that the allegations were very serious, and they would be investigated.

On 23 May 2017, a report released by the Myanmar military rejected the allegations made by the OHCHR in February, stating that "out of 18 accusations included in the OHCHR report, 12 were found to be incorrect, with the remaining six accusations found to be false and fabricated accusations based on lies and invented statements."

In December 2017, a coalition of 69 human rights non-governmental organizations appointed an Independent Fact-Finding Mission team, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, and called upon the UN Security Council to take "immediate action" in response to the humanitarian crisis by exploring "all avenues for justice and accountability, including through international courts". The coalition also called for arms embargoes and targeted sanctions. The distinct OHCHR-appointed Independent Fact-Finding Mission 2018 Report similarly recommended that the UN Security Council issue a Chapter VII referral to the International Criminal Court, or, in the alternative, establish an ad hoc international criminal tribunal. They also recommended: "enhanced monitoring, documentation, analysis and public reporting on the situation of human rights", the allocation of appropriate resources, repatriation "only when safe, voluntary and dignified with explicit

human rights protections in place", termination of operational support for Tatmadaw until the genuine commitment to reform and cooperation is secured, and the establishment of a trust fund for victims.⁴

To assist Rohingya refugees residing in Bangladesh, Japan pledged to offer around \$2.9 million in aid to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The Washington-based Public International Law & Policy Group recommended "that a criminal tribunal should be established or granted jurisdiction to further investigate international crimes committed in Rakhine State and prosecute those responsible" and "the urgent establishment of an accountability mechanism or an immediate referral of the situation to the ICC."

"the [Burmese] military has consistently failed to respect international human rights law and the international humanitarian law principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution" Was the report published by OHCHR Independent Fact-Finding Mission. It was recommended that for committing atrocities against the Rohingya six Burmese generals in the Tatmadaw should face trial in an international tribunal report.

On 19th December 2016, the leader of ASEAN countries, Anifah Aman foreign minister of Malaysia made a call for a collective effort to resolve the crisis. The issue of the Rohingya crisis was also discussed with Suu Kyi at the 30th ASEAN summit by the Indonesian president.

The reluctance of ASEAN states to comment on the issue might be explained by the concern that the rise of China and its influence in Myanmar could risk ASEAN's interest in the country. Azeem Ibrahim, the author of *The Rohingyas: Inside Myanmar's Hidden Genocide*, noted "Myanmar's interactions with ASEAN are perhaps indicative of its wider approach to international relations." While ASEAN member states welcome economic opportunities with China's rise, they fear its growing influence. It was suggested that ASEAN's criticism of Myanmar's domestic crisis would lead to closer ties between China and Myanmar. China–Myanmar relations are the international relations between the People's Republic of China and Myanmar. China and Myanmar have active bilateral relations with each other. The relation is often described as a *pauk-phew* relationship, based on a Burmese term for kinsfolk that implicates special asymmetric obligations between the two countries.⁵

ASEAN released a report in June 2019 and they stated optimism in that report that half a million Rohingya Muslims will return to Myanmar in two years. This report polished over the atrocities committed by the Suu Kyi's regime.

Matthew Smith of the NGO Fortify Rights said, "We can now say with a high level of confidence that state-led security forces and local armed residents have committed mass killings." Smith accused the Burmese military of trying to expel all Rohingyas from the country.

A lawsuit was filed against Myanmar in the UN International Court of Justice on behalf of the Rohingya by the Gambia with the support of the 57 nations of the Organization for Islamic Cooperation on 11 November 2019. The lawsuit was filed in the World Court as a dispute between nations that alleged that Myanmar was committing genocide against the Muslim minority group. The court made no ruling, it was maintained by the government of Myanmar that the actions they took were necessary to counter-terrorism, A legal team was personally led by Aung San Suu Kyi in the first public hearings for the case on 10 – 12 December 2019. The court did rule that measures should be taken on an emergency basis to protect the Rohingya Muslims and to retain evidence of possible genocide.

On 13th November 2019, the Burmese Rohingya Organisation of the UK filed a federal case in Argentina against Suu Kyi and the top military and civilian leader under universal jurisdiction, with the legal basis that for certain grave crimes any state can prosecute regardless of where the crime was committed and who was involved. A full investigation into possible crimes against the Rohingya by senior military and civilian officials was authorized by the UN International Criminal Court on 14th November 2019. Myanmar is not a signatory to the Rome Statute, so the International Criminal Court does not have jurisdiction in Myanmar, but the suit in the court has been allowed because Bangladesh is a signatory and many Rohingya have fled to it.

⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rohingya_genocide#Background

⁵ China–Myanmar relations - Wikipedia

In solidarity with the Rohingya, protests were held in various capital cities in Asian countries in late November of 2016. Also, protests were held on 8th September 2017 in countries like Bangladesh, Indonesia, the Philippines, Malaysia, and Pakistan. Melbourne and Australia, Washington DC in the United States, Cape Town in South Africa, and Hong Kong.

Open Air Prison

A report released by Amnesty International stated that the Rohingya have been living in an open-air prison, a restricted area, there they live under a viciously institutionalized and segregated system, having limited human rights, freedom of movement, access to food, health care, and education. People Rohingya have been cut off from the rest of Myanmar and confined in their villages, townships, and poorly maintained camps, they need prior permission to travel and are harassed in the process, they face torture and arrested while doing so. This was like apartheid according to the rights group because all of this is systematic discrimination and persecution.

In 2016, Aung San Suu Kyi was criticized for her silence over the issue and for supporting the military actions. She was relieved of her 1997 Freedom of Oxford award over "inaction" in handling the raging violence. Others argue that since the military retains significant autonomy and power in the government, she may be powerless to control them. Her inaction, on behalf of the Rohingya, brought a plea for action from fellow Nobel Peace Prize laureate Malala Yousafzai. Numerous people had called for Suu Kyi's Nobel Prize to be revoked. Nobel Peace Prize laureate Desmond Tutu also criticized Suu Kyi's stand to defend the military actions. The Economist criticized Suu Kyi's stance, arguing: "The violence in Rakhine has reached such an unconscionable level that there can be no justifying continued passivity."

The best response to the violence was to impose sanctions and penalties on the military and firms that do business with companies that are linked to it, these penalties were imposed by the United States and other countries in the past.

According to The Economist, "The Burmese army is not easy to influence, but economic and diplomatic isolation seems to have played a part in persuading it to surrender its power in the first place."

Role of Social Media

It was claimed by the chairman of the U.N Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar that social media had played a determining role in the Rohingya crisis. The United Nations Human Rights Council said that this platform is used by people who aim to spread information, and it has been used as an instrument in this case for the same. Social media was accused of enabling the spread of content that incited Islamophobia against the Rohingya Muslims.

Internet.org is a partnership between social networking services company Meta Platforms and six companies (Samsung, Ericsson, MediaTek, Opera Software, Nokia, and Qualcomm) that plans to bring affordable access to selected Internet services to less developed countries by increasing efficiency and facilitating the development of new business models around the provision of Internet access.⁶ This initiative was brought to Myanmar in 2015. Media outlets that could be professional and reliable in Myanmar were not free from government intervention in time for the recent democratic transition. Social media was the primary source of information as only 1% of people had internet access and thus this media outlet became a source of spreading hate speech and rumors in the name of news. Rumors and misinformation became undistinguishable from authentic and reliable news. These media outlets were unmonitored such as Facebook, as it only had two Burmese-speaking employees at that time. Frequent anti-Rohingya sentiments included high Muslim birthrates, increasing economic influence, and planning to take over the country. Myanmar military was banned from Facebook in February 2021 and rules were set out for Tatmadaw.

Not only by Myanmar military but also Myanmar military personal accounts and pages on Facebook were responsible for inciting violence and as a result ethnic cleansing of the Rakhine according to the UN. Facebook had to ban these accounts and pages. 12 million accounts followed these accounts which makes up a big portion of the Myanmar population.

A lawsuit was launched by 100 Rohingya in 2021 against Facebook claiming that it did not do enough to prevent the propagation of hate speech because it was interested in prioritizing engagement. On 10 December 2021, sixteen Rohingya youth living in Cox's Bazar refugee camp made a complaint against Facebook to the Irish National Contact Point for the OECD Guidelines for Multinational Enterprises, alleging that Facebook had violated the guidelines, and owed them a

⁶ Internet.org - Wikipedia

remedy. The lead complainants in the case included members of the Rohingya civil society group Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPH). Mohibullah, who founded ARSPH, and had spearheaded efforts amongst camp based Rohingya refugees to hold Facebook accountable, had been murdered just over two months earlier.⁸

5. CONCLUSION

Rohingya are facing a crisis, dying due to violations against them, crime is spreading through them, and education is diminishing, they try to look for resolutions like migrating to other countries but that is not easy either and many die at sea. However, what is the solution to this issue according to the Seerah of Prophet Muhammad (peace and blessings be upon him),

When the Muslims were being persecuted in Makkah the Prophet (P) permitted them to migrate to Abyssinia and later to Madina. The migration to Abyssinia occurred twice, once in 613 and the second time in 616 CE, due to the persecution of the Quresh, 11 men and 4 women migrated in the first migration and 83 men, and 14 women migrated in the second. on the invitation of the people of Madinah and their allegiance to help and protect him, the Prophet Muhammad (P) himself migrated to Madinah, it was there that he spread the dawah illallah and got his revenge from the Makkans for persecuting the Muslims. There was double punishment for the people of Makkah, defeat in this world, and the punishment of the hereafter. The Rohingyas try to migrate to other lands but that's not easy and the authorities don't help them unlike the Prophet (s.a.w) whose help and dua was with the migrants.

With the number of persecutions against Muslims increasing in the world, it is about time that the Muslim authorities start thinking about possible solutions, sending aid alone is not sufficient and does not help stop the continuous martyr of people. This aid does not even often reach the affected people of war-torn areas. Diplomatic dialogue needs to be encouraged between Myanmar, Bangladesh, and international stakeholders. Advocacy for the protection of the rights of the Rohingya people needs to be done, rights to citizenship, freedom of movement, and access to basic services should be emphasized. Treaties need to be drawn just like the Prophet s.a.w drew treaties with the Jews of Madinah when he migrated there and then the safe and voluntary return of the Rohingya people to Myanmar needs to be facilitated, with the guarantee of their safety, security, and rights, including the restoration of citizenship.

International criminal tribunals should become mobilized to hold accountable perpetrators of human rights violations and atrocities against the Rohingya people.

The root cause of the crisis needs to be addressed, which includes the lack of citizenship, discrimination, and marginalization. Economic development initiatives need to be addressed in the Rakhine state to combat unemployment, poverty, and socio-economic disparities because these factors also contribute to the crisis.

Finally, a persistent spread of information and awareness is direly needed to highlight this struggle and to push the United Nations Organizations to send their peace missions to the area to bring the crisis to an end. cooperation needs to be fostered among governments, NGOs, and multilateral organizations to support efforts to promote peace and stability in the region and end the crisis.

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