

**Forum:** Advisory Panel

**Issue:** Measures in halting the Rohingya persecution in Myanmar

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**Position:** Chair

## Overview of the Issue

The issue of the Rohingya persecution in Myanmar has an important issue in the past years. The Rohingya are an ethnic group, with the majority of them being Muslim. The Rohingya have been apart of Myanmar's population for the past couple of centuries, however recent cultural and political conflicts have caused an upset in the peace that once existed in the region. Many historians and organizations believe that the tensions between the Rohingya and the Myanmar government and people began as the country (Myanmar) gained its independence from Great Britain. In the year 1948, the Government of Myanmar declared all migration of the Rohingya as illegal, and further denied citizenship to the Rohingya population. As time passed, the Government of Myanmar began to exclude the Rohingya population from their public policies (economic, political, and geographical).

The first encounter of forced migration and acts of violence towards the Rohingya was during the 1970's. An army that indulged widespread brutality forcefully evicted more than 200,000 people. From the 1970's to roughly 2015, there were many recorded and unrecorded acts of violence, rape, forced labour, and religious persecution on the Rohingya from the Myanmar army. In 2013, the Human Rights Watch (HRW) published a report, accusing the Myanmar government of engaging in a campaign of "ethnic cleansing".

In October 2016, Rohingya assailants coordinated various attacks on Myanmar border patrol guards. Through these attacks, nine Myanmar border patrol guards were killed through operations organized by some 250 Rohingya assailants, according to the Myanmar Government. This incident raised tensions between the Rohingya and the Myanmar security forces. A wave of violence was triggered across the state of Rakhine. The Myanmar government ordered a security operation to take place, where hundreds of Rohingya were killed, and thousands experienced gruesome inhumane acts. As a result of these events, thousands were left displaced, and looked to their neighboring countries for help, thus causing

more than 74,000 Rohingya refugees to flee to Bangladesh, and many others to other countries.

The international world did not react kindly to the actions portrayed by the Myanmar security forces, and the Myanmar Government. As these extra-judiciary killings and acts against humanity were carried out by state agencies, the international community criticized the federal and legal forces of the government, more so of Nobel Peace Prize laureate Aung San Suu Kyi for not intervening and re-establishing the law. As Amnesty International's Crisis Response Director Tirana Hassan said, "This is a human rights and humanitarian catastrophe. In her first comments on the crisis, instead of promising concrete action to protect the people in Rakhine state, Aung San Suu Kyi appears to be downplaying the horrific reports coming out of the area." Furthermore, security forces have blocked channels of access to the state of Rakhine from humanitarian organizations. Tirana Hassan responded to this, "The government must allow immediate and unfettered access to aid organizations, which have been blocked from helping those who are stranded in the northern part of the state." As a result of this, the remaining Rohingya population in Myanmar has no help from the outside world, thus having to bear the torture put forth by the Myanmar security forces.

With the high level of outrage by the international community, various humanitarian organizations, and the UN decided to intervene. However, with all the peace talks and conferences that occurred, no long-term solution was reached. After some pressure by the international community, Myanmar agreed to work with the United Nations to improve the situation in Rakhine and for the Rohingya. Myanmar has begun to work with Bangladesh to bring repatriation of Rohingya refugees, however various UN agencies believe that the physical and societal state of Rakhine and Myanmar are not ready to welcome back the Rohingya. The United Nations High Commissioner of the OHCHR has said, "No repatriation should occur without sustained international monitoring of the conditions. The world cannot countenance a hasty window-dressing of these shocking atrocities, bundling people back to conditions of severe discrimination and latent violence." (Cumming-bruce, Nick. "Myanmar's Rohingya Actions May Be Genocide, U.N. Official Says.")

To read more on the issue, please visit the following sites:

- <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58519>
- <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=58397>
- <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>
- <https://www.cnn.com/2017/12/15/solution-to-myanmars-ethnic-cleansing-of-rohingya-easier-said-than-done.html>
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## Key Terms

**The Rohingya:** They are an ethnic group, with the majority of who are Muslim. For the past centuries they have lived in the Southeastern Asian nation of Myanmar. At the moment, there are roughly 1.1 million Rohingya people living in Myanmar. As they are an ethnic group, they speak a unique language and dialect, which is distinct to other languages spoken in Myanmar. Due to a stigma against the Rohingya in Myanmar, the majority of the Rohingya population lives in the western coastal state of Rakhine, and they require government permission to leave or enter. Due to the stigma around the Rohingya, Myanmar has limited all government projects for Rakhine, with many organizations highlighting the ghetto-like structure of the state. With all this paired with an ongoing campaign of violence and persecution, hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have fled Myanmar to neighboring countries to seek refuge.

**Genocide:** “In the present Convention, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

- a) Killing members of the group;
- b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;
- c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;
- d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;
- e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.” (United Nations. “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.”)

**United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC):** “The [Human Rights Council](#) is an inter-governmental body within the United Nations system made up of 47 States responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights around the globe.” (United Nations. “United Nations Human Rights Council.”)

**Refugee Camp:** A temporary settlement to receive refugees or people in refugee-like situations. Bangladesh have built many refugee camps amidst the migration of the Rohingya to the country as a result of the stigma and violent campaigns against them in Myanmar.

**Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):** “The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) represents the world’s commitment to universal ideals of human

dignity. They have a unique mandate from the international community to promote and protect all human rights. They are mandated to promote and protect human rights for all people.” (OHCHR. “What We Do.”)

## Countries and Organizations Involved

**Bangladesh:** Bangladesh’s borders yielded to the mass of desperate people pouring in from Myanmar. It is estimated that Bangladeshi refugee camps are currently hosting above 622,000 Rohingya individuals, with most staying in Cox’s Bazaar, a district in eastern Bangladesh. Bangladesh’s main aim is to secure the return of the Rohingya to their “homeland” in Burma. Bangladesh has not granted the Rohingya formal status as refugees, restricts their rights to work and all plans for accommodation seem heavily predicated upon security and managed containment

**Myanmar:** Myanmar’s security forces has forced over 600,000 Rohingya to neighboring countries, mainly Bangladesh. As well as facilitating the persecution of the Rohingya, Myanmar’s involvement in the issue can be read in the overview of the issue.

**OHCHR:** The OHCHR is a UN agency that is heavily involved in facilitating a solution to the Rohingya crisis. The high commissioner, Zeid Ra’ad Al Hussein has initiated various talks between the governments of Bangladesh and Myanmar to draft a solution for the Rohingya minority. In addition, the agency has been responsible for writing reports on the situation on-ground, thus providing the international community with an objective understanding of the situation.

**BRAC:** “A group founded in Bangladesh, and was ranked the No. 1 nongovernmental organization in the world by NGO Advisor. Of the 1,300 staff members directly serving the refugee population in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh, many are locals who speak a dialect similar to that of the Rohingya in Rakhine State. BRAC has also trained 800 Rohingya refugees as volunteers. The group is now focused on health, education and the protection of women and girls.” (May, Tiffany. “Helping the Rohingya.”)

**IOM:** “The United Nation’s migration agency, manages camps and shelters in Cox’s Bazar. In addition to providing healthcare and sanitation, the group is scaling up programs to protect girls, women and others vulnerable to trafficking. IOM employs Rohingya refugees on a casual basis, and most of the 500 employees in Cox’s Bazar are Bangladeshi.” (May, Tiffany. “Helping the Rohingya.”)

**UNICEF:** “The organization is prioritizing shelter, food and water in its efforts to protect children and women, according to Jean-Jacques Simon, Unicef’s

communications chief in Bangladesh. In addition to distributing water daily, the group has plans to install water pumps and deep tube wells in the camps. Malnourished children are receiving therapeutic food and supplements. In a news release on Sept. 17, the group also announced plans to vaccinate 150,000 children against measles, rubella and polio.” (May, Tiffany. “Helping the Rohingya.”)

**The International Rescue Committee:** “The International Rescue Committee is helping the Rohingya remaining in Rakhine, with 400 staff members and volunteers providing medical care and emergency relief. Sanna Johnson, the group’s regional director for Asia, says its operations are complicated by restrictions from Myanmar’s government, which has banned international nongovernmental organizations from some areas of the state”(May, Tiffany. “Helping the Rohingya.”)

**United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC):** “the refugee agency for the United Nations has been working with Rohingya migrants since 1978. Of the UNHCR staff members responding to the most recent crisis, about 150 are in Bangladesh and nearly 30 are in Myanmar, according to Joung-ah Ghedini-Williams, an emergency response coordinator. In addition to distributing emergency aid and shelter materials, the group gives protection and support to unaccompanied children, the elderly and survivors of rape and trauma.” (May, Tiffany. “Helping the Rohingya.”)

**World Food Program (WFP):** “The agency has been distributing high-energy biscuits to migrants as they have arrived in Bangladesh. With 88 employees on the ground, it will continue to address food scarcity through subsidies in rice and nutritional powder.” (May, Tiffany. “Helping the Rohingya.”)

## Related UN resolutions and Previous Approaches to Solving the Issue

Currently, the United Nation Security Council has passed very few resolutions relating to the issue at hand. Most of the resolutions and documents that have been referenced to are still in their draft stages, with the UN aiming at resolving this conflict through local diplomatic policies. However, few external UN agencies have put forth resolutions to be debated upon, with the Organization of Islamic Cooperation submitting a resolution to the UN General Assembly. To find the resolution, click [here](#). The Security Council has not passed any resolutions directly relating to the issue, although they have called for the Myanmar government to halt excessive military support in the state of Rakhine.

Bilateral agreements between Bangladesh and Myanmar have been agreed upon, however enforcing these agreements may not be as easy as many would have thought it would be. The bilateral agreements are aimed around the idea of having Myanmar repatriate Bangladesh for all Rohingya refugees that are currently seeking shelter in Bangladesh. The necessary safeguards for Rohingyas to return to Myanmar are absent, and there are ongoing restrictions on access for aid agencies, the media and other independent observers, the United Nations warned in January 2018, two months after Myanmar and Bangladesh agreed on a plan for the refugees' voluntary return to their homes. UNHCR remains prepared to work with both governments towards finding a long-term solution to this crisis in the interest of the refugees themselves, of both governments, the host community in Bangladesh and all communities in Rakhine state.

Solving the current crisis will not be easy, nor will it be short. Many resolutions and policies must be ratified to ensure that the Rohingya have a safe environment where they are able to live free from any danger. A safe environment needs to include the core necessities of life. A clause of resolution linking to the declaration of Human Rights may provide the Rohingya with confidence that they are able to live in Myanmar.

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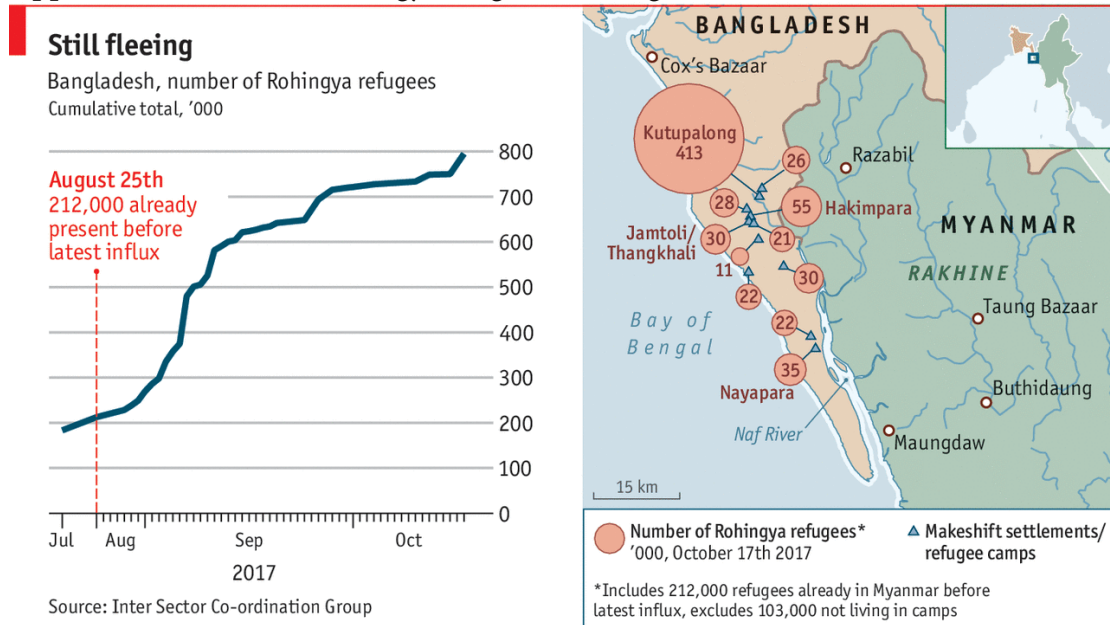
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## Appendix

### Appendix 1: The flow of Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh



<https://www.economist.com/blogs/graphicdetail/2017/10/daily-chart-13>














## Appendix 2: Major Ethnic Groups in Myanmar

### Major ethnic groups in Myanmar

Myanmar officially recognises 135 ethnic groups but Rohingya have been rendered stateless and stripped of their citizenship.

#### Ethnic Groups

	Bamar		Kachin
	Shan		Chin
	Karen		Karenni
	Rakhine*		Mon
	Rohingya		Wa
			Kokang Chinese

 Ethnic minority states

\* Includes other Rakhine Muslim minorities

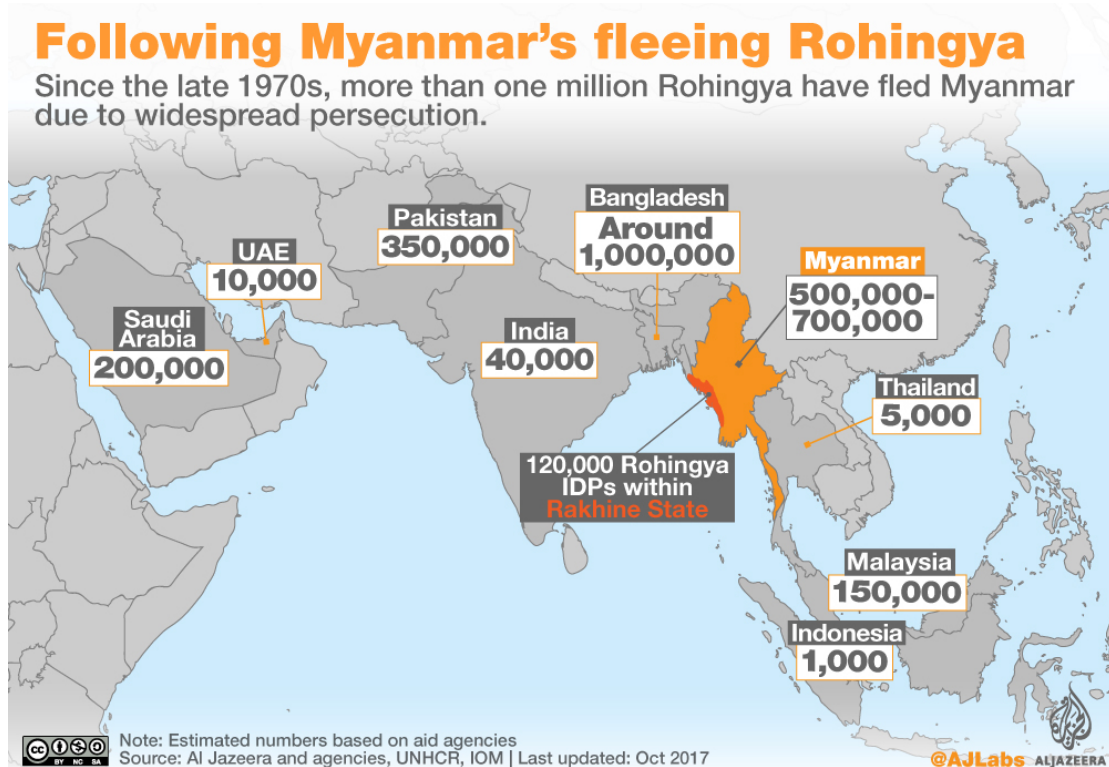


Sources: Al Jazeera, agencies, Free Burma Rangers, Burma - Insurgency and the Politics of Ethnicity (Martin Smith)



<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/09/rohingya-crisis-explained-maps-170910140906580.html>

### Appendix 3: View of Rohingya as spread across the Middle East to Southeastern Asia

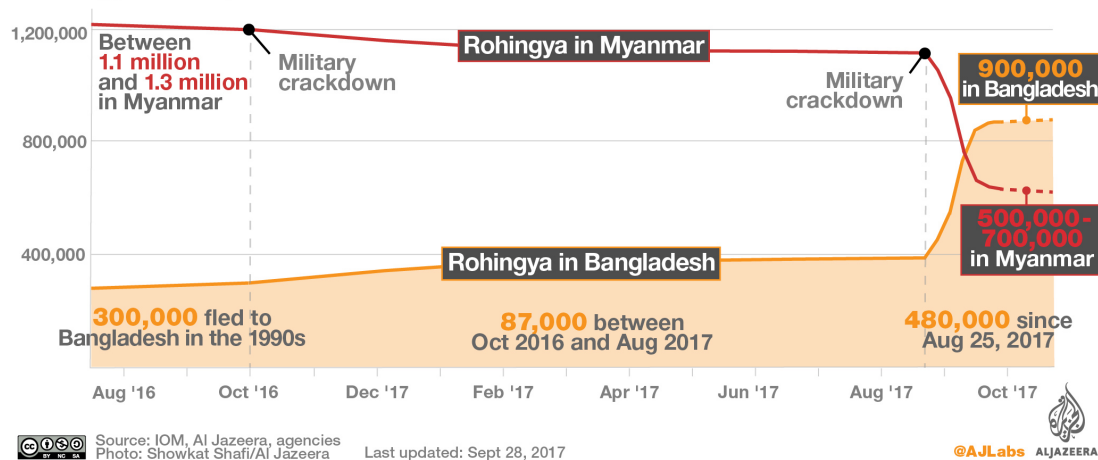


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### Appendix 4: How Myanmar expelled the majority of its Rohingya to Bangladesh

### How Myanmar expelled the majority of its Rohingya to Bangladesh

After the recent influx of a half-million Rohingya into Bangladesh, the country now hosts more Rohingya than Myanmar.



<http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/interactive/2017/09/rohingya-crisis-explained-maps-170910140906580.html>