

Forum: Security Council
Issue: Defusing the Rohingya Crisis by setting up precursors for a sustainable reduction of tensions
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I. Introduction

II. Definition of Key Terms

a. Genocide

A genocide is an intentional killing of a large group of people, often a particular racial, ethnic or religious. Some of the worst genocides include the holocaust and the Rwandan Genocide.

b. Rohingya

The Rohingya people are a muslim minority who trace their roots back to Myanmar for centuries. They practice a variation of Sunni-Islam. There are about 3.5 million Rohingya in the world. About 1 million are in the Rakhine State in Myanmar where they live in poverty stricken conditions.

III. General Overview

a. Status of the Rohingya

The Rohingya have been denied citizenship rights since 1982 making them stateless. The Rohingya can register as temporary residents and gain identification cards known as white cards. However they cannot gain these white cards unless they identify as Bengali. They are seen as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh yet the majority living in the Rakhine state are not allowed to leave the state without government permission. Although Myanmar recognizes 135 ethnic groups the Rohingya are not considered one of them. There is widespread anti-muslim sentiment throughout Myanmar making it difficult for the government to take proactive steps to integrating the Rohingya into society. However the discrimination against the muslim minority has been effectively institutionalized. In some regions Rohingya may be unable to get married because authorities require pictures of the bride without a headscarf or the groom with a clean shaven face which is against their religious beliefs.

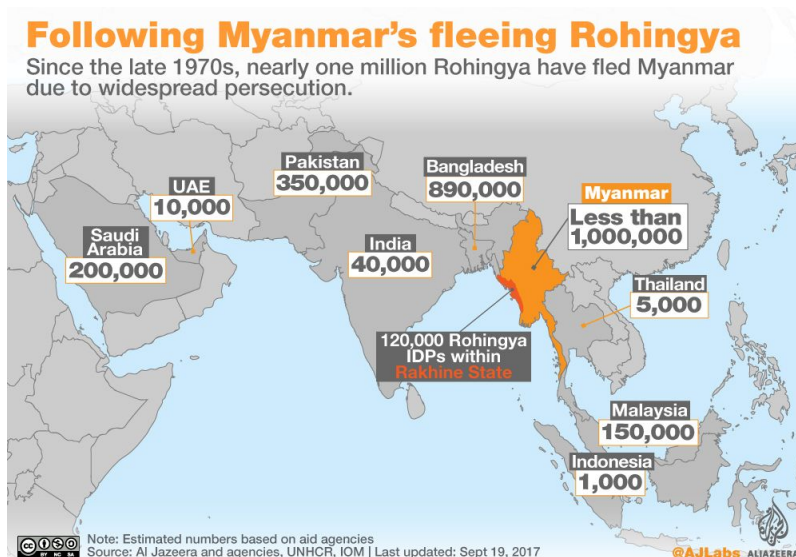
b. Efforts to solve the issue

The US, Canada, South Korea and Norway have all increased their humanitarian aid flow to the Rohingya. The United States has also continued to widen its sanctions against Myanmar. Bangladesh and Myanmar have held bilateral discussions aimed at repatriating the Rohingya and securing the human rights of the Rohingya in Myanmar. These talks however have not yielded impactful results. In October of 2018 they agreed

to repatriate several thousand refugees however did not specify how these refugees would be selected and without any guarantee conditions for the Rohingya in Myanmar had improved. The United Nations urged that the plan be called off as well as it being criticised by several countries including the US and several NGOs. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) is unlikely to intervene as Myanmar is one of its members and its members commitment to no interference in each others internal affairs. In September of 2018 the UN's fact-finding panel released a report and urged that Myanmar's army leaders be referred to the International Criminal Court (ICC). In 2016 an Advisory Commission on Ethnic Strife, headed by the former Secretary General was established but the tensions and outbreak of conflicts subsequently has proven it is largely ineffective. December of 2017 the UN special rapporteur was denied access to Myanmar.

c. Refugees

Refugees are migrating to Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. Most refugees flee to nearby Bangladesh which is home to more than 1.1 million refugees and the WHO predicts the birth of 60 000 babies in overcrowded camps in 2019. There is very little access to clean water and the risk of disease is high. Many refugees turn to smugglers and risk exploitation and sexual enslavement. There are 80 000 registered refugees in Malaysia and additionally tens of thousands of unregistered refugees there. In Myanmar Rohingya cannot work and are essentially



cut off from the rest of society. Thailand is a transit point for many refugees. Many arrive by boat from Bangladesh or Myanmar and continue to Indonesia or Malaysia. Here there are many human smugglers which the Thai government has attempted to crack down upon after the discovery of mass graves, however these crackdowns only disrupt the network, they do not dismantle it. In Indonesia the Rohingya are treated as illegal immigrants so the number of Rohingya there are fewer.

d. Myanmar

Myanmar first democratically elected government has been hesitant to take steps to protect the Rohingya rights as they are afraid of the response of Buddhist nationalists. Myanmar's leader has denied accusations of ethnic cleansing and indeed any wrongdoing and has dismissed international criticism.

IV. Timeline of Events

1400-1800: thousands of muslims come to former Arakan Kingdom

1948: independence declared, citizenship law already exclusionary

1950s: self-identifying term "Rohingya" surfaces

1962: Military junta seizes power

1989: renamed Myanmar

1990s: issuing "white cards" becomes more common

2008: white card holders allowed to vote in constitutional referendum

2010: white card holders allowed to vote in general elections

2012: the Rakhine State Riots, killing hundreds and displacing hundreds of thousands. A state of emergency is declared.

2014: A UN backed census decided that the muslim minority group would be allowed to identify as Rohingya to register but after buddhist nationalists threaten a boycott the government decided they would have to identify as Bengali.

February 2015: president cancels white cards, meaning that those individuals were also unable to vote.

2016: first democratically elected government comes to power, however the military still maintains tight grip on country.

2016: series of violent clashes between Rohingya and military.

August 2016: UN advisory commission headed by former secretary general created.

December 2016: Obama lifts sanctions against Myanmar, a move criticized by many as premature, but implements them again a year later.

August 2017: clashes break out in the Rakhine state after a Rohingya militant group takes responsibility for attacks on police and army posts. The militant group is declared a terrorist group. The military launched a violent campaign that destroyed hundreds of Rohingya villages, forced nearly 700 000 Rohingya to flee and killed at least 6700 Rohingya.

September 2017: Bangladesh foreign minister condemns violence as genocide.

November 2017: Bangladesh and Myanmar sign a deal for the possible repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya however the plan continues to be delayed and has been widely criticized.

2018: team of UK medics leads an emergency response to disease outbreak in camps.

2018: military is clearing abandoned Rohingya villages.

September 2018: report by UN fact-finding panel released.

October 2018: Myanmar and Bangladesh authorities agree to repatriate several thousand Rohingya.

V. Questions to Consider

- Has my country been criticized for their handling of human rights issues?
- Has my country provided humanitarian aid to the area? If not is this due to GDP or a non interference policy?
- Is my country willing to take in Rohingya refugees?
- Does my country have an interest in repatriating the Rohingya? Should they be repatriated as soon as possible or do conditions have to significantly change?
- Are we in favor of sanctions? If so what kind?
- Have we been involved in bilateral or multilateral talks to solve the issue?

VI. Possible Solutions

As the report by the UN fact-finding report suggested there could be security council sanctions imposed which would only be lifted if the violence against the Rohingya ceased as well as the right to citizenship was granted. Top army officials

could be referred to the ICC, although this would require the cooperation of the Myanmar government which is highly unlikely. There could also be the reimplementing of the special rapporteur although this also requires Myanmar's cooperation. The security council could also back the Myanmar government over the military making it easier for that government to safeguard Rohingya rights if they choose to.

Part of the problem is the pressure from Buddhist nationalists and the pervasive discrimination and prejudice throughout the country. By tackling this discrimination the public pressure for institutionalized discrimination may decline. By creating intercultural dialogue and teaching Buddhists about Muslim faith and vice versa those barriers may be broken down. Given the Government's cooperation, talks between Rohingya leaders and government officials could lead to peace in the region.

Although these steps would not solve the issue condemning the treatment of the Rohingya and providing humanitarian aid and support to countries taking in many refugees. Improving hygiene and health in refugee camps could save many Rohingya lives.

VII. Conclusion

The treatment of the Rohingya in Myanmar is one of the worst human rights abuses currently being made by a government. The Myanmar government has shown little willingness to cooperate and the violence in the country is liable to continue if not multilateral action is taken. The humanitarian situation is desperate and tens of thousands of Rohingya have died in the Rakhine State, fleeing or in the refugee camps in neighboring countries.

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