



**Humanitarian Crisis and Failure of International Community:
A Study of Plight of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar**

Syed Mohammad Raghieb,¹ & Kamran Naseem²

Abstract:

The Rohingya refugee crisis is one of the world's most terrible incidents, which has been reported since 2012. Rakhine State Riot's images shared on social media sparked in a big manner globally. Since 2016, government forces have brutally killed thousands of people. Organized mobs and army units have brutally handled and killed people. However, this paper critically looks for insights into Rohingya's historical and ethnic linkage. The paper also looks at Myanmar's regressive approach towards Rohingya and the state's actions. The paper used descriptive methodology, and regressive state behaviour and analyzed the prosecution of Rohingya people through the human rights approach. This paper analyzes how a world-renowned human rights face, Aun San Suu Kyi, a winner of the Noble Peace Prize in 1991, neglected the issue of human rights. The other aspect of the paper highlights neighbour countries like India and Bangladesh, where these Rohingya refugees settled down under the UNHCR. The question is, why did the UN and World powers have not taken action against the brutal regime promptly? Why the world left them to suffer for so long, despite international human rights agencies and neighbours even the Muslim and Islamic World's effective presence?

Keywords: Rohingya, ethnic, cleansing, exodus, genocide, human rights, refugees

INTRODUCTION

The Rohingya Refugees crisis is one of the world's most brutal catastrophes that happened in Myanmar. The situation is going to complete its one decade in the coming months. The issue of the Arakan (Rakhine) state historically started in 1948 when Burma now (Myanmar) became the new state (country), and these Rohingya people became citizens of Burma at that time. After the new government emerged in 1950, the three districts of Rohingya started the voice of independence when the new constitution was set up in the country. Suddenly in 2012, a big difference emerged when the clash between Rohingya Muslims and Buddhist Rakhine took place. In this riot, more than 80 people were killed and many injured. This riot was the foundation of Rohingya's prosecution in different stages by the Buddhist groups. Later, the military junta was also involved in executing many Rohingya due to their religious identity.

¹ Post Doc. Scholar, Centre for West Asian Studies, School of International Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, India. Email: raghib.jnu@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Department of Political Science, Govt. Gordon College Rawalpindi, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: kamrann43@gmail.com

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LITERATURE REVIEW

Many articles have already been published on the Rohingya Crisis. In recent years, number of studies wither books or research articles dealing with Rohingya crises have been published. Shriful Islam (2019) highlighted the failure of human rights norms in Myanmar. His paper critically examines the human rights situation during the military regime. Sampurna Goswami (2020) discussed Indo-Myanmar relations regarding the Rohingya crisis, primarily from the security perspective. Azeem Ibrahim (2017) criticised the international community, especially the Muslim World, for their late response. Mohammad Abdul Bari (2018) elucidated the historical discrimination and exclusion of Rohingya people. Kamran Naseem, Manzoor Ahmad Naazer, and Amna Mahmood (2021) explored the root cause of Rohingya issue and analyzed the role of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation in the humanitarian crises faced by the Muslim minority in Myanmar. A latest book edited by Manzoor Hasan, Syed Mansoob Murshid and Priya Pillai (2023) illuminated the humanitarian and legal approaches and touched Myanmar's historical, social and political space for Rohingya people. He also explicated justice and accountability and multi-faceted engagements for concrete action. However, this paper deals with the area which was hardly touched by these researchers, especially human rights and the international response of powers, including the UN and other world organizations.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This article deals with the response of World powers and how neighbouring countries handled the Rohingya crises. The research is qualitative and its mainly employed historical and descriptive method. The researcher mainly used secondary sources available either in printed or electronic form including books, research articles, reports, and newspaper articles etc. The data collected from various sources were critical scrutinized through using thematic analysis method.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN MYANMAR AND FAILURE OF INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY

Genesis of the Rohingya Crises

In the early days of torture and execution of Rohingya people by the local Buddhist populace and the army at the mass level was not at that height of remnant action. But later, it took the new coordinated shape of the destruction of Rohingya people's home life and even the dignity of women. These Rohingya had no choice but to flee with some essentials belonging to the neighbour country for their safety. The mass level of rapes and killings have happened, which seems to be pre-planned and highly coordinated action by people and the army to force them to flee from that land or face the same brutality. The situation was unexpected and horrible as they narrated to the media and

other local non-governmental organizations, who came to help them at that time. This entire whimper and tears hardly reached the office of Prime Minister Aung San Suu Kyi. Some media reports said that the military establishment restricted her from taking any action against the culprit and accused people because the army was also involved in that carnage that would defame the establishment, especially the military.

Some reporters exposed the truth of the brutality, army involvement, and state repression in large numbers against the Rohingya people. These two journalists, Wa Lone and Soe Oo were later arrested by the state and jailed for seven years in Myanmar (Fullerton, & Goldberg, 2018). These two journalists reported the massacre of Rohingya Muslims, and later state put them behind bars in December last year. As the Guardian in his report quoted that "as he was led to a police van in handcuffs, Wa Lone said, 'I have no fear. I have not done anything wrong... I believe in justice, democracy and freedom". Kyaw Soe Oo hugged his wife while she was sobbing and held her until the police took him away (Fullerton, & Goldberg, 2018). The two prizewinning journalists of Reuter were released after more than one year in prison for covering the crackdown on Rohingya minority groups (Goldman, & Ives, 2019).

To look at the gravity of brutality without any apology, some western governments and groups raised the issue of why no crackdown has been reported in the country by the Myanmar government. It shows their attitude toward shielding criminals and killers of innocent. These concerned countries and human rights and other groups are doing their best to resist such a regime which protects the culprits holding power and uniform because they are also getting some help from permanent members of the UN Security Council like China which is openly supporting the government and army from external action by the UN approval.

The report recently published by Ontario International Development Agency (OIDA) said that since the 25th of August 2017, nearly 24000 Rohingya Muslims had been killed by Myanmar's state forces ("Former UN chief says," 2019).

The current Rohingya crisis disturbed the whole world's peace, especially neighbouring countries of Myanmar like India, Bangladesh, and Indonesia. The Rohingya issue has been raised, stressing Rohingya's peaceful settlement like Turkey and Qatar and stressing the peaceful settlement of Rohingya. The expectation of the UN was enormous on this issue, but nothing happened as such, nor has any firm resolution passed yet, except a few harsh words of condemnation.

The Rohingya, a Sunni Muslim ethnic group that is settled in the Western part of Myanmar's Arakan state, has approximately 3.5 million populations. Historically, the issue started in 1824 when British settled down these people as labourers in Arakan State. British colonialism entered Burma (now Myanmar) during the Second World War. These people supported the British against Japan and were rewarded for their support.

After the independence from Myanmar in 1948, these people have been in an extremely critical situation because the state, which is a military-dominated junta, abolished their civilian rights saying that these are the Bengali Muslims, not Myanmar's civilians. The persecution of these people has been going on since 1970, but the world hardly looks into it. It is said that since late 1970 nearly 1 million Rohingya Muslims have fled Myanmar due to widespread persecution by the local people, police and military, who were all Buddhist. Their house, property, women and children burned

down. The uncounted thousand brutal rapes and murders were reported across the Rakhine state by the military and local people known for being peace-loving due to their Buddhist religion. The issue of the Rohingya is a political issue related to their expulsion from voting rights and even exclusion from all kinds of government service. Like the 1974 law which stripped the Rohingya of their citizenship, in 1982, another law denied Rohingya citizenship in Burma but included 135 ethnic groups and tribes officially. After the 1982 incident, the next occurrence started in June 2012 with a new shape again, in which more or less 2,50,000 people fled towards Bangladesh, which was also reported by various media. During that period, their killing, rape and all kinds of brutality hardly stopped.

The current unrest started in August 2017, which compelled a large number of people to leave their homes with or without precious belongings; some even left their injured people. Such massive human exodus reminded us of the plight and suffering of the people of West Asia and Europe, like the Syrian Crisis and the Bosnian War. According to an estimate, more than 4,00,000 people left home from the Arakan state of Myanmar in East Asia, a country that Buddhists dominate. It is one of the complete humanitarian catastrophes in the world, where nobody is doing enough for humanity because they have economic and military relations with Myanmar.

INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

The European Council recently decided to adopt additional sanctions against Myanmar's senior military and border guard officials for their alleged role in the human rights violations of Rohingya people. The Burma Human Rights Network (BHRN) welcomed this decision, increasing further pressure on the Myanmar government (Celik, 2018). The countries of Europe are more concerned about providing justice to these Rohingya Muslims, but no concrete steps have been taken so far by the neighbour countries who are keeping these people inside their borders after the request of the UN Human Rights Commission for Refugees.

Recently, the Canadian government revoked the honorary citizenship of Myanmar Prime Minister Aung San Suu Kyi. The senators took this measure and unanimously passed a proposal to revoke her citizenship. Canada took this decision after the United Nations investigation in which Myanmar's six top generals were found guilty and charged with genocide and crimes against humanity. Due to their cruelty, more than 7,00,000 Rohingya Muslims left Myanmar and entered Bangladesh in August 2017 (Jett, 2018). The action may not be forced on the Myanmar government, but gradually the pressure is growing high day by day due to such efforts.

The Organization of Islamic Countries (OIC), representing around 57 Muslim states, failed to address the Rohingya issue quickly. To provide some relief to the Rohingya, the general secretary of OIC Yousef bin Ahmad al-Othaimaen visited Bangladesh on a four-day visit and met Bangladesh's Prime Minister and Foreign Minister. He also said, "we want to see a permanent solution to the Rohingya Muslim minority in Myanmar" ("OIC, UN Working," 2017). The OIC also called the international entities to undertake the cause of the Rohingya community. It also "welcomed the powerful nations with Muslim minorities such as the US, China and Russia to have their own representative in the organization" (Mahmood, 2018). The organization also visited Rohingya refugee camps in southern Bangladesh during the two-day 45th session of the OIC summit of foreign ministers in Dhaka.

The assistant secretary-general for OIC's humanitarian affairs division, Hesham Youseff, said that "We will [now] play a strong role along with Bangladesh, the United Nations and the International community. He also said that OIC which is "the collective voice of the Muslim world", regretted not "responding immediately" to the situation" (Mahmood, 2018).

At one point, the whole world is against the brutality of the Rohingya Muslims, but the government of India is not taking it as a humanitarian crisis, honestly. The government deported seven Rohingya Muslims to Myanmar, despite knowing the situation that they could prosecute thereby Myanmar's government. The UN criticised the government's stand because the problem is not conducive to sending these refugees back through deportation. As per the Times of India newspaper report, the UN refugee agency said it was "greatly concerned" for the safety and security of the seven men who were returned to Myanmar from India on Thursday (UN blasts India's deportation," 2018).

Response of the Muslim Countries

In the whole picture, Turkey is doing a marvellous job, and they did the same for the Rohingya people in the 2012 crisis and still do it for them in the current situation. Turkey took the lead in humanitarian aid and other rapid assistance for affected people. Turkey proved that despite the regional conflict at his door, he supported, cared and stood for the help of the Rohingya. Ankara is the world's second donor, with \$6 billion for humanitarian aid yearly after the US \$6.3 billion. Here it also proved that Turkey is the only country that quickly responded to the help of the Rohingya people. On 1st of September 2017, Turkey urged Bangladesh to open the door to Rohingya Muslims; his foreign minister Mevlut Cavasoglu said on the day of Eid-Al Azha that "Open your door to Rohingya Muslims; we all cover the expenses" ("Turkey to Bangladesh," 2017). Apart from this help, the first lady of Turkey, Emine Erdogan, who often rush to help people, said after a week that "the government of Turkey will stand beside the Rohingyas, who have fled to Bangladesh in the face of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar's Rakhine" ("Turkey to stand," 2017). Turkey distributed 1000 tons of aid later, and the second relief material containing 10,000 tons assured they would also be delivered shortly; this was the assurance of Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdogan ("Turkey to deliver," 2017). This proves his great humanitarian policy across the world. Turkish union launched an aid campaign for the Rohingya, around 1,00,000 Turkish Lira (\$29000) for four Turkish NGOs ("Turkish union launches, 2017). Apart from this, Turkey also distributed emergency aid to Rohingya Muslims, 1,10,000 emergency aid among these people, by the Turkey-based Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH). The IHH also distributed food, kitchenware, tents, and clothing to more than 22,000 families. It also supplied various materials for daily use and other built shelters for 250 families (Geylan, 2017). This kind of donation campaign is still going on there, despite their regular help to the Syrian people and other victims of war and displacement.

Why India Failed on the Rohingya Issue?

There is no doubt that the people of India humbly helped these refugees and let them settle in various Indian cities. Historically, the Indian people and the government welcomed Tibetan people, Tamil refugees, Chakma and Bangladeshi refugees earlier due to the crisis. In the current Rohingya crisis, New Delhi has given shelter to around 40,000 Rohingya people across the cities of India like Jaipur, Jammu, New Delhi, and Hyderabad etc., some through the United Nations Human Rights

Commission for Refugees (UNHCR), some through other Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in various cities across the country but with surveillance. However, in the last couple of years, there was little noise against them, but suddenly the government said that they would deport all the Rohingya refugees and further noted that they threaten national security. The statement was hardly based on the humanitarian line but was a very rigid state of affairs. The right-wing government of Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP), known for its anti-Muslim rhetoric and line, came to power after the Gujarat massacre in 2002. So much hate spreads in society in a particular community. The Indian leadership, mostly government ministers like Kirren Rijju (minister of state for home) on this issue, said that "Rohingya Muslims to be deported, don't give a lesson to India on refugees, and the crisis will create security problems in India" ("Rohingya Muslims to be deported," 2017). Even home minister Rajnath Singh said in the NHRC national seminar that "Rohingya Muslims are not refugees, they are illegal migrants; he further said that India is not a signatory, not a violation of the UN Convention of 1951. At the same meeting, he said, 'Rohingya Muslims are not the human right issue' (Sharma, 2017). Apart from all this hate rhetoric, India finally sent 53 tons of relief material to Rohingya reported in many newspapers due to public and international pressure ("Indian Relief material distributed," 2017).

Human Rights Violations

This current crisis also raises many questions about the signatories of the Geneva Convention and other International World powers and how they view this crisis. As per some commentators, it's a tremendous brutal acts by the Myanmar army and other terrorist gangs who are roaming freely and killing people (Children, Women and older) in the name of peculiar nationalism. It is a clear-cut violation of Article 2 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), which said that "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms outlined in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or another opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or another status." This crisis is very severe, which is no less than a war, where all kinds of humanitarian laws are applicable and respected. The World body of human rights, Human Rights Watch (HRW), also criticised this ongoing ethnic cleansing and strongly condemned such brutality through their website and other news reports ("Human Right Watch criticised," n.d.). The HRW recently said that 'Burma's Rohingya needs the world's attention (Kumar, 2017). HRW also urged to impose arms sanctions on Myanmar for the ethnic cleansing of Rohingya ("Burma: Targeted sanctions," 2017). In such repeated appeals and voices of the World human rights group, most of the world and international community hardly took any step to escalate the tension and save the people. Why such a delay happens is also a widely asked question by the world's peace-loving people for the decade-long persecution of Rohingya people.

Lackadaisical Approach of The UNO

The world's most robust institution, the UN, reacted very poorly to the entire issue of the current Rohingya crisis. It is one of the generous setbacks for the effectiveness of the world's top institution, which was set up for peace. From day one, UN hardly took stern action against Myanmar's previous military or the so-called current democratic government. It is one of the failures of the UN, which took too much time to call for aid and end of persecution of the Rohingya people. Marzuki Darusman, a Malaysian lawyer and human rights activist backed by Australia, told the human rights

council in Geneva that “his investigator needs full and unfettered access to Myanmar” (“UN investigators demand,” 2017). Myanmar government denied the rights group access to the villages where they burned and killed thousands of people. The UN is further scaling up assistance due to the number of Rohingya refugees growing daily. The UN warned the world that the Rohingya crisis would increase in recent years. As per the UN news centre report, the UN sped up the assistance. UN Security General Antonio Guterres renews his call to the Myanmar government to take steps and address the crisis (“Myanmar’s refugee problem,” 2018). As per media reports, 200 villages have been burned down by these military and Buddhist monks in the Arakan state. Some other international organizations have become silent spectators. Why could the UN not take firm action against vogue states, despite the colossal human exodus and their continued apathy? Such lacuna is an old syndrome in the UN that set up for collective peace through stern action against crime against humanity.

Crimes against Humanity

Once we look through the intensity of brutality of crimes (mass killing, rapes and torture), it has shaken the human heart and mind across the world. Even the Buddhists, known for being peace-loving people, are now criticizing and questioning their practice. It is also a big question that the Buddhist Monks, who are known for preaching the lesson of peace of Mahatma Buddha across the globe, have failed to practice peace. Because the violence has been spread by the monk Ashin Wirathu (leader of the anti-Muslim 969 movement), which has been found notorious, he is a dishonourable figure, and even “Times 2013” covered his picture by using headlines “the face of Buddhist terror” (2013) on the 01st of July 2013. It is not happening all of a sudden. The notion and idea of an anti-Muslim flare of ethnic cleansing of Rohingya have long been in the people's minds, but the rapid rise of Buddhist nationalism by the group of Monks led by Wirathu has spread it into multifold. They applied the terrorist method to do such acts through bloodshed and were fully supported by the ruling military. Aung San Suu Kyi, who got the Noble award in 1991 for nonviolent, democratic and human rights activist and fought for the establishment of the rule of law, hardly took any affirmative action on time. She spent most of her time in detention between 1989 and 2010. She came to power in November 2015 after 15 years of house arrest by the military ruler. She has also continued silently on this issue, despite her torment during the military regime. Now, ignored the international calls for intervention may be due to internal pressure from the military and people. Still, she has denied in the parliament that there had been any 'armed clashes or clearance operations' since the 5th of September 2017. Thus, we can call this period a great injustice of the Rohingya people by the military government and Suu Kyi's democratic government, who hardly cared about the human rights and democratic rights of human beings and ignored the Geneva Convention 1949 articles.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, the Rohingya crisis is one of the most severe world catastrophes where brutal ethnic cleansing against a particular community happened in the period. The victims have been consistently and helplessly looking at the world, neighbours and the international communities for justice. The civilian leader and noble peace awardee, a known figure defender of democracy and human rights, Suu Kyi, was even denied in the parliament. Still, she has rejected in the parliament that there had been any 'armed clashes or clearance operations' since the 5th of September 2017.

Due to her open lies in front of the world community, especially the European Union took a hard stand; the UK withdrew the honour of the Noble Prize of Aung San Suu Kyi due to ineffective efforts by her and in response to the humanitarian crisis. In a fragile power-sharing agreement, Suu Kyi hardly controls the army. Suu Kyi's silent behaviour reveals that the military is ruling Myanmar, not the democratic government. Canadian government revokes the citizenship of Suu Kyi as per the investigation report by the UN.

The World community pointed out and showed concern and their anger to protect the arrested journalists in prison since last December by revealing the massacre. The press freedom advocate marked the first anniversary of the arrest of two Reuters journalists who were still in state prison for seven years. This shows the brutality of the democratically elected Suu government and the army's role in delivering justice.

As per the understanding, the Muslim World, even organization like OIC is not so concerned in solving this problem using other channels to pressure Myanmar through China or economic sanction. The Arab world is busy with their own differences and rhetoric. They hardly had the political sincerity to solve their own issues like Saudi-Qatar issue, Iran-Saudi and Yamen crisis, which is so old. How did the world expect from them in the case of Rohingya, because they all are fragmented? However, within the Islamic World, some countries are concerned about Rohingya, like Turkey, which could do further to give them some hope with the help of other like-minded countries.

The regional power and one of the P5 members (China) have their own economic interests in Myanmar. China was involved in Vietnam War, but helped the Myanmar government by providing arms and ammunition, boosts the violent state behaviour. It seems to be true that many countries and even the United Nations, the European Union and other countries, including Australia, Canada and world superpower the US, did nothing much for the Rohingya people.

In conclusion, it can be said that despite the democratic government coming to power under San Suu Kyi, the situation of Rohingya hardly changed. They have even gone to a worse level in the last four years, even during the Covid-19 epidemic. The apparent questions around the world are the key issues that are a must for a viable solution to this crisis. Second, what fundamental complexities arise that make it difficult to solve? The third and final question is about the issues that divide international opinion on the Rohingya crisis. Now the question is, who is doing such an act against Rohingya and why not the government acted upon it? The UN and other international power players do not pressurize them against Iraq, Syria, and Afghanistan's Taliban regime. The silent attitude of the World power America is also apparent because it does not want to handle this issue through force as they did in South Sudan and East Timor; the reason is to avoid tussle with China. If such a situation prevails, what are the use of having prestigious UN and other international organizations, and regional powers? Apart from that, many groups were looking at the casualties silently like ASIAN, G-7, G-20 and BRICS etc. and did nothing concrete due to their own political framework for democracy. They may set up for economic purposes but they must understand the human rights issue and to spread peace in the region and minimize the human casualty in the name of creed, religion, race and color. It should also take stern action against aggressor to protect people in the arms conflict and restore peace in the conflict zone, and all players are abided to work as per Geneva Convention of 1949.

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