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2018

**GA 4– The position of the Rohingya
people**

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EMUN 2018 GA4 - The position of the Rohingya people

Forum: GA 4

Issue: The position of the rohingya

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Introduction

Myanmar is one of most ethnically diverse countries in Asia, it has a population of an estimated 90 per cent of the population are Buddhists, 4 percent Muslims, 4 percent Christians and under 2 percent Hindus. The Rohingya people are a mostly muslim ethnic minority that inhabits the costal Rakhine State. Rohingya Muslims make the largest percentage of muslims in Myanmar. They are not recognized by myanmar as one of its 135 ethnic groups and have not been granted the status of citizens since 1982. They have been often called “the world’s most persecuted minority”.

At least 700,000 Rohingyas have seeked refuge in Bangladesh, Thailand, Indonesia and Malaysia. The have been fleeing from brutal oppression from the military, which has lot of power and is quite independent in Myanmar. The Rohingyas have been slaughtered, sexually abused and have had their villages set on fire by the military. Such brutality has been denied by both military and civilian officials, among them, Aung San Suu Kyi, Myanmar’s de facto ruler and Nobel Peace Prize laureate.

Definition of key-terms

Ethnic minority

Ethnicity means relating large groups of people classed according to common racial, national, tribal, religious, linguistic, or cultural origin or background. An ethnic minority is a group of people of a particular ethnicity living in a country or area where most people belong to a different ethnic group.

Ethnic cleansing

The expulsion, imprisonment, or killing of an ethnic minority by a dominant majority in order to achieve ethnic homogeneity.

Rohingya

A member of a group of mostly Muslim people who live in, but are not citizens of Myanmar.

Asylum seeker

Someone who leaves their own country, often for political reasons or because of war, and who travels to another country hoping that the government will protect them and allow them to live there.

De facto

This phrase is used to characterize an officer, a government, a past action, or a state of affairs that must be accepted for all practical purposes, but is illegal or illegitimate.

Prosecution

Prosecution is the action of charging someone with a crime and putting them on trial.

Persecution

A program or campaign to exterminate, drive away, or subjugate people based on their membership in a religious, ethnic, social, or racial group.

General Overview

Rohingya people during British colonial rule

The British administered India, Bangladesh and Burma (today's Myanmar) as one colony from the start of their rule (1824) until 1937 when they separated the British Burma from the British India. During all those years there was extensive labor migration from what is now India and Bangladesh to Burma, at the time this was internal migration, but they were viewed very negatively by the majority of the local population. Furthermore, during the second world war, the buddhists supported the Japanese invaders, hoping that they would free Burma from the British rule after the War, while the Rohingyas supported the British rulers. Therefore, tension between the Rohingya and the buddhist majorities date way back.

1982 citizenship law

In 1982 a new citizenship law was created which recognized a total of 135 ethnic groups, but not the Rohingyas. The historic tensions and discrimination against the Rohingyas have turned them into a stateless people. This basically legalized their prosecution. The official reason for them to not be recognized is that they are now seen as illegal immigrants from India and Bangladesh.

Recent violence

After the citizenship act the first large act of violence against the Rohingya was a military operation called "Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation" in which 250,000 Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh. In 2012, buddhists along with security forces attacked muslim neighbourhoods in Rakhine after four muslim men were accused of raping and killing a buddhist woman. Those attacks left tens of thousands fleeing for their lives. This was called an ethnic cleansing campaign by Human Rights Watch. In 2016 the "Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army" started carrying out small attacks against border police stations. In August 2017 they killed twelve police officers, which was enough for the army to start the most brutal wave of

oppression that the Rohingya have ever gone through. It has been called “the fastest growing humanitarian crisis in recent years” (UNHCR, 2017).

Hundreds of their villages have been burnt to the ground.

Nobel Peace Prize Laureate, Aung San Suu Kyi, stated:

“more than 50 percent of the muslim villages are still intact, they are as they were before the attacks took place” (Aung San Suu Kyi, 2017, speech),

meaning that about 50 percent of the villages have been burned down, and it has increased during the last months. This shows the contrast between the position of the government and the international community.

Furthermore, military officers hold 25% of Myanmar's parliament (which means that to have a supermajority their support is needed) and control the ministries of Border Affairs, Home Affairs and Defense. Therefore, in order to remove the military officers from their positions in governments, their own support is needed.



Migrant crisis

671,000 Rohingyas have fled to Bangladesh alone, 168,000 live in Thailand, 62,000 live in Malaysia and India panned to deport 40,000 from their country. Bangladesh has also been pushing them back into Myanmar. Not only the Rohingyas have not been welcome in some

of their destinations, but Myanmar has placed landmines to prevent them from going back. Furthermore, they are hosted in precarious camps, which will become a massive problem when the typhoon season hits Bangladesh.

International reaction

China and India, being the regional powers, have not shown any sympathy for the Rohingya. China has vetoed a Security Council resolution that would have addressed Myanmar's treatment of the Rohingyas. India, as mentioned previously intended to deport 40,000 Rohingyas. The west and the international community has condemned Myanmar and Aung San Suu Kyi, but action was not as widespread as condemnation. Several countries, such as Indonesia and Great Britain, have sent humanitarian relief to Bangladesh for the Rohingyas. The UK also ended its military training in Myanmar. The United States withdrew military support from Myanmar over the crisis and imposed sanctions on 53 people and entities.

Major parties involved and their views

Myanmar

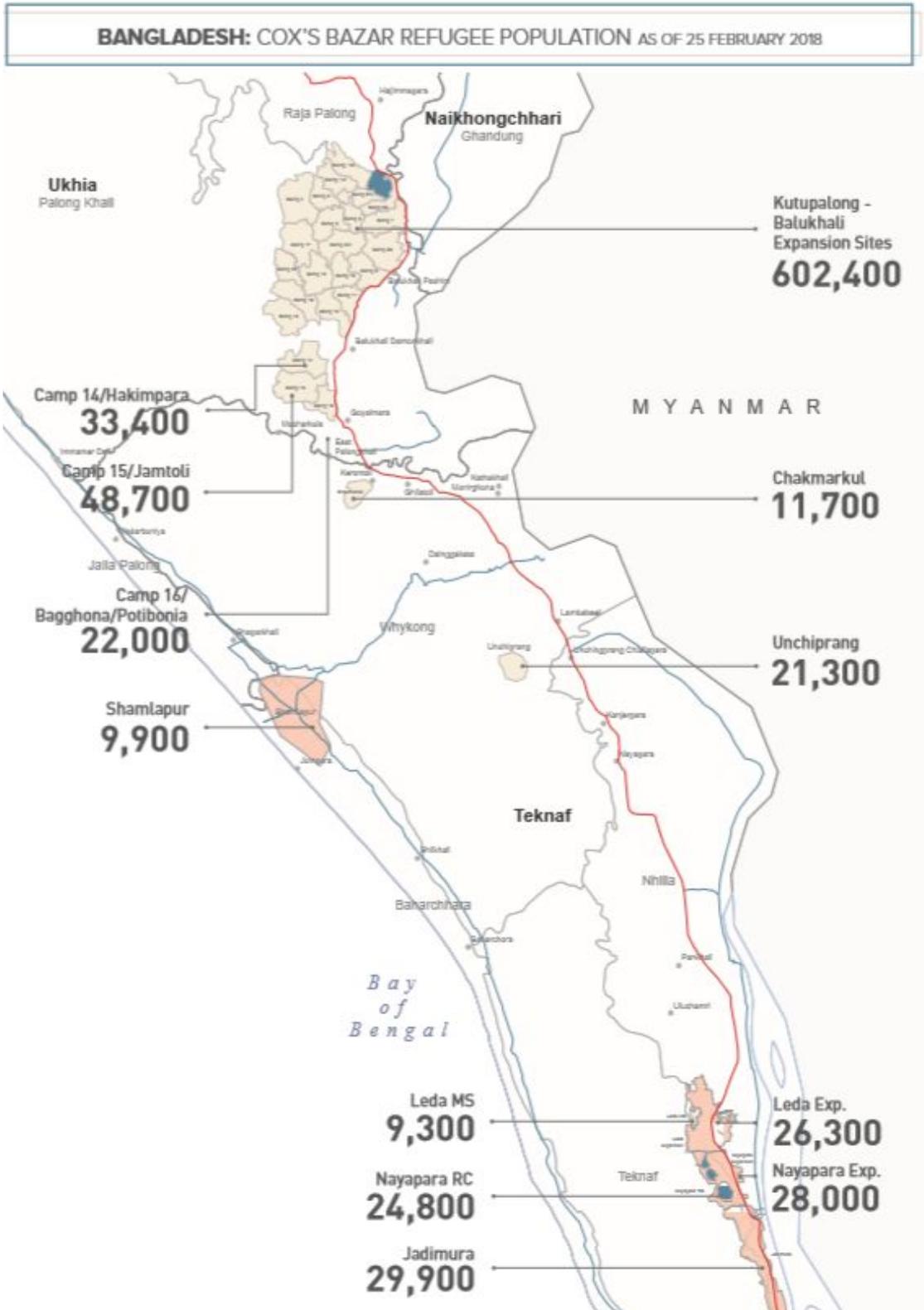
The Rohingya are reviled by many in Myanmar as illegal immigrants and they suffer from systematic discrimination. The Myanmar government treats them as stateless people, denying them citizenship. Stringent restrictions have been placed on Rohingya people's freedom of movement, access to medical assistance, education and other basic services.

Violence broke out in northern Rakhine state on 25 August of 2017, when militants attacked government forces. In response, security forces supported by Buddhist militia launched a "clearance operation" that has killed at least 1,000 people and forced more than 700,000 to flee their homes.



Bangladesh

Since 25 August 2017, more than 671,000 Rohingya refugees have fled Myanmar and sought safety in Cox's Bazar. The Government sprang into action, assisted by humanitarian actors, all of whom have stepped in to offer their support and expertise. The government has afforded the Rohingya refugees temporary shelter, including almost 6,000 acres of land.



Malaysia

More than 62,000 Rohingya live in Malaysia. Some have been there for years. Many end up here because there are several entry points into Malaysia from Thailand, which is often part of the transit route from Myanmar.

Thailand

During the last five years, more than 168,000 Rohingya have arrived at Bangkok in order to escape from Myanmar.

India

India's government is looking to deport an estimated 40,000 Rohingya Muslims back to Myanmar, including those registered with the UN refugee agency.

China

At a joint press conference with Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi outlined a three-point solution that would allow Myanmar and Bangladesh to resolve the situation. The steps included a cease-fire, repatriation of refugees and talks on a long-term solution.

The United States of America (USA)

The US has withdrawn military assistance units from Myanmar over the country's treatment of its Rohingya Muslim minority in Rakhine state. The state department said it

had also dropped travel waivers for Myanmar military officials, and was considering economic sanctions.

The United Kingdom (UK)

The United Kingdom (UK) has pledged £59m in aid to support those fleeing to Bangladesh. UK Prime Minister Theresa May also said the military action in Rakhine had to stop. The UK has suspended training courses for the Myanmar military.

Timeline of important events/Documents

1824-1937	British colonial rule with India, Bangladesh and Myanmar as one colony, which allowed massive internal migration into the current Myanmar
1941-1945	Second World War with Japan fighting against the western powers, Rohingyas supported the British and the Buddhists supported Japan
1982	Citizenship law makes Rohingyas stateless
1991	Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation, 200,000 were displaced
8 June 2012- 14 June 2012	Riots sparked by the rape and murder of a buddhist woman, 80 people were killed, 90,000 were displaced and 2500 homes were burnt
August 2017	Attacks of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army on police stations and a military base spark largest wave of ethnic cleansing against the Rohingya

UN involvement

The United Nations initially appealed for US\$77 million to deliver life-saving assistance to more than 300,000 Rohingya refugees. This plan is being revised upwards as more refugees arrive and humanitarian needs continue to increase.

The UN Refugee Agency (UNHCR)

Since August 25, UNHCR has airlifted 1,500 metric tons of emergency life-saving aid to Bangladesh to assist 250,000 refugees. More aid is being moved by sea. They are also helping the government to develop Kutupalong Extension, a new site near Kutupalong refugee camp.

As a measure against health problems such as acute watery diarrhoea, they are in the process of constructing a total of 8,000 latrines for the refugees. Already, UNHCR and partners have installed nearly 500 latrines, 51 shallow tube wells and 8 deep tube wells to ensure access to drinkable water.

Together with the Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission, we are conducting family counting in the Kutupalong and Balukhali extension sites. The data collected on family profiles and vulnerabilities will help to improve aid delivery and plan for solutions in the future.

The urgent humanitarian needs of the Rohingya refugees and their host communities in Cox's Bazar had to be addressed as soon as possible. To do so in a coordinated manner, under the leadership of the Government of Bangladesh, the humanitarian community has engaged in multi-sectoral needs assessments, consultations and strategic planning, which has culminated in the `2018 Joint Response Plan for Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis – March-December 2018`. This Joint Response lays out a vision for a coordinated response to address the immediate needs of the refugees and mitigate the impacts on affected host communities.

United Nations Partnerships for SDGs

The Rohingya Football Club was created, which is a United Nations Partnership for SDGs. The program aims to enable the community of Rohingya refugees in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, to achieve greater interaction with non-Rohingya communities and to generate a community focal point for Rohingya refugees. The program uses football/soccer as the tool – embodied in The Rohingya Football Club (RFC) – and centres on promoting and supporting the club and its activities.

Possible Solutions

The current position of the Rohingya people should be addressed in several fronts. First, there are clearly several desperately needed changes to Myanmar's legislation. Their laws should be brought up to international standards in human rights and their refusal to protect part of their population should be amended. In a resolution the international community cannot change Myanmar's laws, but they can keep on deploring Myanmar's actions. Furthermore, the international community must keep on insisting for Myanmar to let reporters and human rights organizations into the Rakhine state.

Another part of this issue that needs urgent addressing, and is perhaps simpler to address, is the migration crisis. The international community should cooperate to further assist the countries with lots of Rohingya refugees, to provide all kinds of aid that are necessary and to prepare places like Cox's Bazar with the necessary precautions and for an immediate response for the typhoon season, which will potentially cause a lot of damage and, if not properly prepared, deaths. This can be done by encouraging the provision of medical assistance, clothing, better sanitary conditions and food.

Moreover, cooperation with the recipients of refugees needs to take place for them to continue to humanely host refugees and not deport them. Finally, the Rohingyas must be integrated into their new communities in ways such as, as mentioned in the UN involvement, sport.

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