

Rohingya Refugee Crisis: A Looming Threat for Regional and Global Security

Md Aminul Akbar Khan¹

¹Dean, Faculty of Business Studies, Bangladesh University of Professionals, Mirpur Cantonment, Dhaka-1216, Bangladesh, Email: aak1349@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

The Rohingya people are stateless Indo-Aryan-speaking Muslim minority people who reside in North Rakhine State in western Myanmar or Burma. 'Rohingya Refugee Crisis' is a glaring example of how a minuscule factional rivalry can synthesize into a credible threat to regional and global stability, peace, and security. State-sponsored persecution of the Rohingya minority by the Myanmar military in collaboration with the extremist Buddhists has made a huge number of Rohingya people stateless. Furthermore, the persuasion of the respective interests in Myanmar by international actors like China, Russia, and India has added fuel to the fire. The huge number of persecuted, illiterate, underemployed, and poor Rohingya people concentrated within a small peninsula of Bangladesh, bordering to Myanmar, has become susceptible to extremism with possible linkage to international terrorism. Consequently, they are likely to cause an immense threat to regional and global stability, peace, and security if a credible solution cannot be attained before it is too late. The core of the solution to the crisis lies in the creation of a conducive environment in Rakhine state that can encourage volunteer and sustainable repatriation. Democratization of the rogue state Myanmar is the prerequisite for a sustainable solution of Rohingya Refugee Crisis.

Key Words:- Rohingya, persecution, terrorism, repatriation, democratization of Myanmar.

Introduction

'Rohingya Refugee Crisis' is a glaring example of how a minuscule factional rivalry can synthesize into a credible threat to regional and global stability, peace, and security. The seed of mistrust and disharmony between the Rohingya Muslims and the Buddhist community of Arakan of Burma (now Myanmar) was sown during WW II. The factional rivalry spawned out of supporting either the Japanese Imperial force or the British Commonwealth Forces in the Burma front has been gradually transformed into a catastrophic humanitarian crisis over the course of numerous incidents in the last seven decades. State-sponsored persecution of the Rohingya minority by the Myanmar military in collaboration with the extremist Buddhists has made a huge number of Rohingya people stateless. Furthermore, the persuasion of the respective interests in Myanmar by international actors like China, Russia, and India has added fuel to the fire. The huge number of persecuted, illiterate, underemployed, and poor Rohingya people concentrated within a small peninsula of Bangladesh. Consequently, they are likely to cause an immense threat to regional and global stability, peace, and security if a credible solution cannot be attained before it is too late.

An Overview of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis

Who are 'Rohingyas'?

The Rohingyas are stateless Indo-Aryan-speaking Muslim minority people who reside in North Rakhine State, known as Arakan State before the 1990s, in western Myanmar or Burma (before 1989). They were described by the United Nations in 2013 as one of the most persecuted minorities in the world. The term 'Rohingya' is generally used to refer to an ethnic group who practice a Sufi-inflected variation of Sunni Islam, who have lived for centuries

in north-western part of Rakhine State in the Buddhist majority Myanmar.¹ This area is also called the Mayu region, which is adjacent to the Naaf River as the boundary with Bangladesh. The Rohingyas diverge from Myanmar's dominant Buddhist groups (predominantly Bamar, Shan, Rakhine, etc) ethnically, linguistically, and religiously.² The Rohingya speak 'Rohingya' or 'Ruainga', a dialect that is distinct to others spoken throughout Myanmar. They are not considered one of the country's 135 official ethnic groups and have been stripped of citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless.³ There are an estimated 3.5 million Rohingya dispersed worldwide. Before August 2017, the majority of the estimated one million Rohingya used to reside in Rakhine State in Myanmar. These 'Rohingya' people have suffered prolonged violence, discrimination, and persecution since the independence of Myanmar in 1948. They are one of the largest stateless populations in the world now. The United Nations has described the 'Rohingya' as "the most persecuted minority in the world."⁴

Genesis of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis

The seeds of mistrust between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists (Maugh) ethnicity were sown during World War II when almost all of Burma (present Myanmar), as a British Colony, was occupied by Japanese forces. The ethnic groups of Burma became divided into factions, with some supporting the Allied Forces and others backing the Japanese Forces. In fact, the Rakhine Buddhists (Arakanese) viewed the Japanese invasion as a getaway to independence from the British. 'Thirty Comrades' including General Aung San formed the Burmese Independence Army (BIA) to assist the Japanese against the British allies which was subsequently reformed as Burma Defense Army (BDA) and then Burma National Army (BNA).⁵ Moreover, under the leadership of U Pinnyathiha and U Seinda, two prominent and politically active Buddhist monks, a guerrilla force of 400 to 500 men was raised and aided the Japanese forces in occupying the northern Rakhine. Throughout the Japanese invasion, these forces were involved in attacks and torture of minority populations like Karens and Rohingyas.⁶ On the other hand, being frightened by all these movements of the Rakhine Buddhists, the Rohingyas campaigned for the British, rallying under the British "V Force" or "Volunteer Force" with the hope of a separate land for them. Consequently, both Buddhist and Muslim communities formed respective armed units to fight each other and suffered widespread mutual fierceness and massacre.

In the wake of the independence of Burma (Myanmar) in 1946-47, most of the Rohingyas felt an overwhelming sagacity of communal identity based on Islam as their religion and the cultural and ethnic differences of their community from the Burmese and Rakhine Buddhists. In 1946 the Rohingyas even sent a delegation to Karachi to be part of Bangladesh (then East Pakistan) during the process of discussion before the British left the Indo-Burma sub-continent. Even they endeavored under the leader of the "Mujahid Party", Mr. Zaffar Kawal to establish a separate area between the west bank of Kaladan River and the east bank of Naaf River as the National Home of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar (Burma). At the same time, the Rakhine Buddhists became more and more concerned with their racial security and ethnic survival in view of the increasingly predominant Rohingya Muslim population in the Rakhine State.⁷ Thus, the communal disenchantment formed during, and post-World War II era had malformed Rakhine State to be one of the worst areas of communal disharmony, conflict, and violence on earth.

Gradual Escalation of the Crisis Leading to the Present Impasse

The ethnic-politico rivalry of the pre-independence era between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists had taken the shape of a military-backed 'State' versus 'Rohingya' conflict a couple of years after the succeeding

¹ Eline Chan, "Rohingya," Encyclopedia Britannica, Last Updated: Mar 5, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Rohingya>

² Eleanor Albert and Lindsay Maizland, The Rohingya Crisis, Council on Foreign Relations, January 23, 2020, <https://www.cfr.org/backgrounder/rohingya-crisis> (Council on Foreign Relation)

³ Al Jazeera Staff, "Who are the Rohingyas?" 18 Apr 2018, <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2018/4/18/who-are-the-rohingya>

⁴ UNHCR, Rohingya Refugee Crisis, <https://www.unrefugees.org/emergencies/rohingya/>

⁵ Wikipedia, "Burma Independence Army," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma_Independence_Army#cite_ref-28

⁶ Wikipedia, "Burma Independence Army," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burma_Independence_Army#cite_ref-28

⁷ Aye Chan, "The Development of a Muslim Enclave in Arakan (Rakhine) State of Burma (Myanmar)", Kanda University of International Studies, SOAS Bulletin of Burma Research, Vol. 3, No. 2, Autumn 2005, ISSN 1479-8484, <https://www.soas.ac.uk/sbbr/editions/file64388.pdf> Accessed on January 05, 2022.

independence of Burma. This was vivid especially after Tatmadaw chief Gen Ne Win's Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) sieged power in 1962. The socialist government of Ne Win methodically thawed all sorts of political and social organizations of Rohingyas. Moreover, the constitution enacted by General Ne Win in 1974, listed 135 "national ethnic races" - including the Bamar, Karen, Shan, and Kachin - while excluding Rohingya.⁸ On 6 February 1978, a military operation titled 'Operation Dragon King' was launched by the Tatmadaw (Myanmar Military) and immigration officials in Rakhine. Although the proclaimed purpose of that operation was to register "original" citizens while exiling "foreigners" from the area prior to a national census, the implicit heinous purpose was to evict Rohingya villagers forcibly through coercion, murder, intimidation, and rape.⁹ This state-sponsored violence, biased ethno-politico climate, and the mischievous policy of the military junta had fueled the already prevailing mistrust and fear between the two ethnic groups. Thus, a synergistic cohabitation had become implausible resulting in a widespread sequence of recurrent communal clashes in the Rakhine State of Myanmar.¹⁰ 'Operation Dragon King' compelled around 300,000 Rohingyas exodus into neighboring Bangladesh. However, most of them were repatriated in 1979 through a bilateral settlement.

From the 1980s onward, Myanmar's military and authoritarian state governments have described Rohingyas as a political and demographic threat and have increasingly deprived Rohingyas of their civic rights.¹¹ The Rohingyas were not considered one of the country's 135 official ethnic groups and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless.

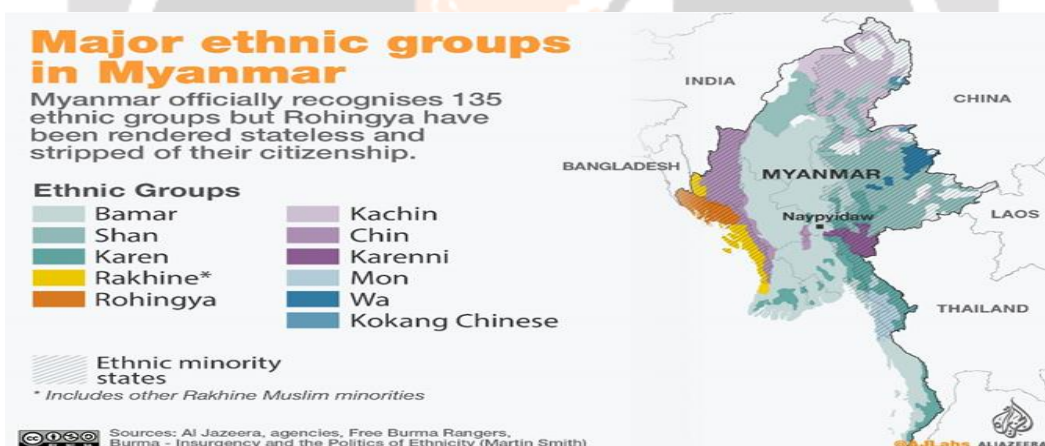


Figure-1: Major Ethnic Groups of Myanmar

'The Citizenship Law-1982' of the military junta had stripped the Rohingyas of their citizenship, officially declaring them 'strangers' in their native land. Gradually they were banned from the legitimate right to own property, they were confined inside their villages by imposing travel restrictions outside, were forbidden to repair the mosques, deprived of receiving education, or even needed to seek the government's prior permission to marry and have children. But all these permissions used to be granted rarely. Besides, severely restricting freedom of movement, the Rohingyas were also subjected to various forms of extortion and arbitrary taxation, land confiscation, forced eviction from their own house including destruction, forcible relocation with no compensation, torture, ill-treatment, extrajudicial

⁸ <https://www.thenewhumanitarian.org/feature/2013/05/03/activists-call-review-myanmar-s-citizenship-law>.

⁹ Smith, Martin (1991). *Burma: Insurgency and the politics of ethnicity* (2. impr. ed.). London: Zed Books. p. 241. ISBN 0862328683.

¹⁰ "Why is there communal violence in Myanmar"? BBC News, July 3, 2014, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-18395788>, Accessed on January 13, 2022.

¹¹ Leider, Jacques Pierre, (January 2018), *Oxford Research Encyclopedia, Asian History* (asianhistory.oxfordre.com). Oxford University Press USA, 2016. Rohingya: The History of a Muslim Identity in Myanmar

executions, etc. Rohingyas were regularly used as forced laborers for constructing roads and at military camps.¹² Because of the state-sponsored abuse and systematic cleansing drive for more than four decades in Burma, hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas have fled Burma to seek sanctuary mostly in neighboring Bangladesh and a few other countries from 1978 till date.



Figure-2: Bangladesh is the Immediate Safe Heaven for Rohingyas

The campaign against the Rohingyas and Muslims in Myanmar is spearheaded by controversial monk Ashin Wirathu in collaboration with Myanmar military. Once referred to as the “Burmese bin Laden,” he is the leader of an ultranationalist Buddhist fundamentalist group widely known as ‘969,’ which has been found associated to all communal disharmony with Muslim Rohingyas in Myanmar. He was jailed in 2003 for inciting hatred and stirring sectarian clashes and released in 2010.¹³

A general election was held in Burma in 1990 where the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Aung San Suu Kyi achieved victory. Unfortunately, General Saw Maung under the banner of the State Law and Order Restoration Council (SLORC) did not hand over power to Ms. Suu Kyi rather she was forced to spend nearly 15 years in detention between 1989 and 2010.¹⁴ With effect from 1995, the junta began issuing the “white cards” called Temporary Residency Cards (TRC) to the Rohingyas which conferred limited rights but were not recognized as proof of citizenship.¹⁵ In early 2015, the government invalidated all TRCs and the constitutional tribunal passed a rule declaring all TRC holders to be ineligible to vote in the elections. In 2014, the Myanmar government conducted its first-ever census but excluded the Rohingyas, as usual.¹⁶ Consequently, in the national election held in November 2015, Rohingyas or people from the Muslim faith were neither allowed to participate as candidates, nor as voters, unlike in all previous elections since independence in 1948. In 2015, through a landslide victory in the national election, NLD under Aung San Suu Kyi, the long-term political prisoner, formed the government of Myanmar. But even an elected political party led by the Noble Peace Prize Laureate of 1991, Aung San Suu Kyi attaining national power had no impact on the alleviation of the miseries of the Rohingyas. The reason seems obvious, the enigmatic shadow of the ‘anti-Rohingya’ atrocious military junta had never remained away from the national power game of Myanmar since the coup of 1962 till today.

¹² Amnesty International, "Myanmar - The Rohingyas Minority: Fundamental Rights Denied," Index Number: ASA 16/005/2004, May 18, 2004, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/005/2004/en/>. Retrieved 2023-02-08.

¹³ Usaid Siddiqui, Myanmar's Buddhist terrorism problem, Aljazeera America, February 18, 2015, <http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2015/2/myanmars-buddhist-terrorism-problem.html>

¹⁴ Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar democracy icon who fell from grace, bbc, 6 December 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11685977>

¹⁵ <https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>.

¹⁶ Persio, S.L. (2017, September 15). Why Myanmar Hates the Rohingyas. Newsweek. Retrieved from <https://www.newsweek.com/why-myanmar-hates-rohingya-665883>

Recent Rohingya Massacre on 25 August 2017

On 25th August 2017, the report by the Kofi Annan Commission was declared for the social progress, security, and citizenship rights of the people of Rakhine state. In that report majority of Buddhists were criticized for provoking the illegal migration of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh. The Commission advised the Government of Myanmar to solve the Rohingya crisis by providing citizenship, issuing national registration cards, limiting conflict, and settling through discussion between the communities.¹⁷ Just a few hours after the declaration of the report by the Kofi Annan Commission, an all-out cleansing operation against Rohingyas was initiated Rakhine state of Myanmar by the security forces in collaboration with the Buddhist fanatics. This crackdown was carried out to retaliate the claimed deadly attacks on more than 30 police posts in Myanmar by the Rohingya militants named “Arakan Rohingya Solidarity Army” (ARSA).¹⁸ At least 6,700 Rohingyas, including at least 730 children under the age of five, were killed in the month after the violence broke out, according to medical charity Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF). Amnesty International says the Myanmar military also raped and abused Rohingya women and girls. According to the analysis of satellite imagery by Human Rights Watch (HRW), at least 288 villages were partially or fully destroyed in northern Rakhine state after the military crackdown in August 2017.¹⁹ Consequently, a mass exodus of Rohingyas to neighboring Bangladesh took place again, and by December 2017, the total number of exodus Rohingyas refugees exceeded a million.²⁰ An study by Harvard University estimated that in the same period, 24,000 Rohingyas had been killed, 18,000 Rohingya women and girls had been raped, 116,000 Rohingyas had been beaten, and 36,000 Rohingyas had been victims of arson.²¹ According to a BBC report in 2019, the government demolished entire Muslim Rohingya villages in Myanmar and replaced them with police barracks, government buildings, and refugee relocation camps.²²

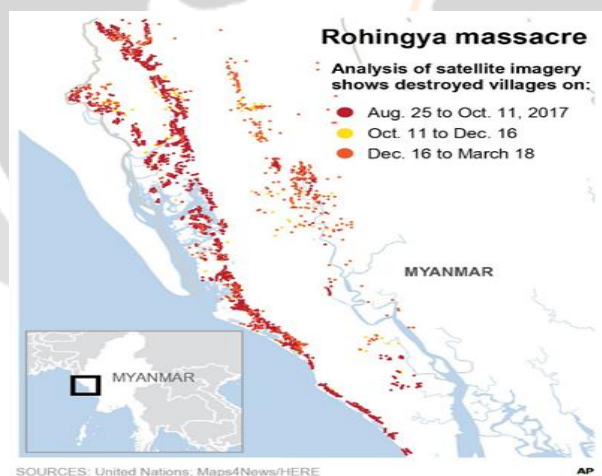


Figure-3: Image of Destroyed Rohingya Villages in Myanmar from August 2017 to March 2018.²³

¹⁷ Myanmar tensions: Annan warns on Rakhine 'Radicalization', 24 August 2017, BBC News, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41020738>

¹⁸ “Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis”, BBC, 23 January 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>

¹⁹ “Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis”, BBC, 23 January 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>

²⁰ “Burma: US Should Promote Justice for Rohingya: State Department Report Finds Atrocities, but Silent on Policy Response,” (September 25, 2018), linked from the *Human Rights Watch Home Page* at “News,” <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/25/burma-us-should-promote-justice-rohingya> (accessed February 11, 2023).

²¹ Habib, Mohshin; Jubb, Christine; Ahmad, Salahuddin; Rahman, Masudur; Pallard, Henri (18 July 2018). "Forced migration of Rohingya: the untold experience". Ontario International Development Agency, Canada.

²² Head, Jonathan (10 August 2019). "Rohingya crisis: Villages destroyed for government facilities". BBC.

²³ https://www.google.com/search?q=ethnicity+in+myanmar+rakhine&sxsrf=AOaemvJSjinSRU_KboSzW3gFV5M6yyKFJQ:1641627402303&source=lnms&tbm=isch&sa=X&ved=2ahUKEwj5pavR0qH1AhXcT2wGH



Figure-4: Satellite Image of Destroyed Rohingya Villages in Myanmar in August 2017.²⁴

Imagery analysis from August 30 to October 23, 2017, indicates that more than 38,000 buildings were destroyed by fire, significantly more than the estimated 1,500 observed in October and November 2016. Most villages where burning occurred were totally destroyed.²⁵

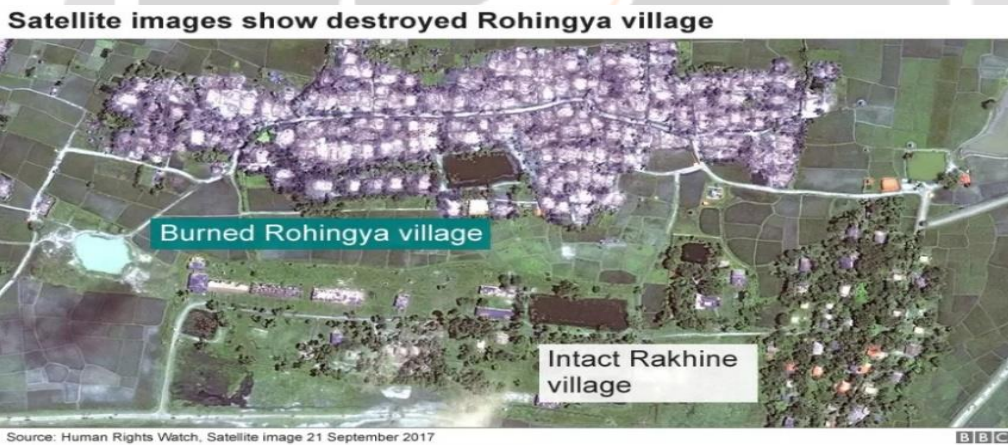


Figure-5: Satellite Image of a Burned Rohingya Village beside an Intact Buddhist Village in Rakhine, Myanmar.²⁶

a5KC64Q_AUoAXoECAEQAw&biw=1366&bih=568&dpr=1#imgcr=nXqv9x2e2S33PM&imgdii=sZirW_QwlrnNSM

²⁴ “Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis”, BBC, 23 January 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

²⁵ Documentation of atrocities in northern Rakhine State, US Department of State, Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor, September 24, 2018, 9. <https://2017-2021.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/documentation-of-atrocities-in-northern-rakhine-state/index.html>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

²⁶ “Myanmar Rohingya: What you need to know about the crisis”, BBC, 23 January 2020, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41566561>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

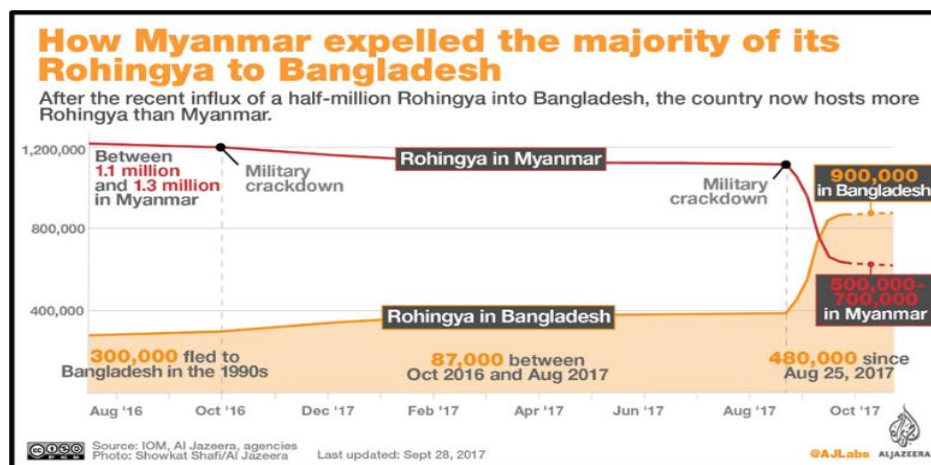


Figure-6: Comparison of Number of Rohingyas in Myanmar vis Bangladesh²⁷

In 2015, she led her National League for Democracy (NLD) to victory in Myanmar's first openly contested election in 25 years. But she was deposed by a coup in 2021 when the military took control and arrested her and the political leadership around her.²⁸

Rohingya Militancy Spawning Crime and Terrorism

Historical Preview

Several decades of struggle for existence, fear of extinction, and striving for self-defense against state-sponsored persecution have infused a sense of brutality, crime-prone mentality, and passion for violence and terrorism into the psychology of the Rohingya people. Continuous persecution and deprivation of the Rohingya people in Arakan State for about seven decades forced them to resort to violent protests under the banner of different political parties associated with armed factions. In course of time, the heritage of remaining associated with criminal activities and rebellious movements, the members of these armed factions are most likely to be converted into ferocious terrorists. To protest the Government's unruly decision and to preserve the interest of the Rohingya community, besides saving themselves from the oppressions of the military junta, the Rohingyas used to get organized under different names at various times. For example, The Mujahedeen, the Rohingya Liberation Party (RLP), the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), the Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF), Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), the Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO), the Rohingya National Army (RNA), and Harakah al-Yaqin. The list of numerous Rohingya parties operating at different time frames is shown in Table-1.²⁹

²⁷ <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2017/10/28/rohingya-crisis-explained-in-maps>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

²⁸ Aung San Suu Kyi: Myanmar democracy icon who fell from grace, bbc, 6 December 2021, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-11685977>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

²⁹ "Rohingya insurgency in Western Myanmar, Discussion in 'Central & South Asia' started by dray", February 5, 2017 <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/rohingya-insurgency-in-western-myanmar.476308/>, Accessed on February 27, 2018.

Table-1: List of Various Rohingya Parties³⁰

Year	Name of Organization	Founder/ Leader	Armed Wing
1947–1970	Mujahideen	Abdul Kassem	200-500
During 1970s	Ittehadul Muslimeen of Arakan (IMA)		
1972–1974	Rohingya Liberation Party (RLP)	Zafar Kawal	200-500
1974–1982	Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF)	Muhammad Jafar Habib	70
1980–2001	Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO)	Muhammad Yunus	170 diplomat
1986–1998	Arakan Rohingya Islamic Front (ARIF)	Nurul Islam	
1998–2001	Arakan Rohingya National Organization (ARNO)	Nurul Islam	
1998-2015	Rohingya National Army (RNA)	Mutual alliance of RSO, ARNO & ARIF	
2012-2016	Harakah al-Yaqin or Faith Movement of Arakan (FMA) or Aqa Mul Mujahidin	Ata-Ullah Abu Ammar Jununi	
Since 2016 - till date	Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA)	Ata-Ullah Abu Ammar Jununi or Hafiz Tohar	

Legacy of Involvement in Terrorist Activities

Since the participation of Rohingyas in the campaign for the British during WW II as the British Volunteer Force, maintaining an armed wing beside the political party became a habitual affiliation. The 'Mujahedeen' campaign was the first of this kind of rebellious party after the independence of Burma in 1948 to gain autonomy or to get annexed with then East Pakistan. Many of the participants were previously armed by the British Volunteer Force during World War II. In addition to performing as a quasi-political party, the armed wing of the Rohingya party used to indulge in various criminal and subversive activities for their survival. Among those parties, RSO was in close harmony with like-minded Islamic extremist groups such as Jamaat-e-Islami from Malaysia, India, and Pakistan, in addition to remaining very active in Arakan (Rakhine State).³¹ As a case study, if we contemplate the history of the transformation of RSO, the gradual tangling with terrorism activities from rebellion movements, in course of time, of all other armed factions of Rohingya political parties will be perspicuous. Beginning in the 1970s, the Myanmar Defense Services (MDS) launched an offensive in Arakan State, which led to violent clashes and resulted in the displacement of over 250,000 Rohingya refugees, who fled over the border into Bangladesh. The resulting miserable conditions for refugees generated fertile ground for nationalist groups to emerge as 'saviors.' In 1982, the RSO was one such group that emerged from the pseudo-political and moderate Rohingya Patriotic Front (RPF). RSO caused considerable damage by planting bombs in a few buildings in Maungdaw town of Arakan State in April 1994. Consequently, the RSO was classified as a terrorist organization by the Myanmar government, although it pledged to

³⁰ Rohingya insurgency in Western Myanmar, Defence Pakistan, <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/rohingya-insurgency-in-western-myanmar.476308/>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

³¹ Ibid. "Rohingya insurgency in Western Myanmar, Discussion in 'Central & South Asia' started by dray", February 05, 2017, <https://defence.pk/pdf/threads/rohingya-insurgency-in-western-myanmar.476308/>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

secure greater rights for the Rohingya people within the Union.³² Similarly, Harakh-al-Yaqin, subsequently rebranded ARSA, first began organizing itself after deadly communal violence in 2012. Thus, the immediate aftermath of the long-lasting persecution, oppression, discrimination, and denial of human rights against the Rohingya population in the north of Rakhine State, was the emergence of militant groups. The members of the armed wing of Rohingya political parties gradually transformed into terrorist activities from subversion activities.

Evident Track Record of Terrorist Activities by Rohingya Armed Faction

In the process of struggling violently for their rights since 1948, in course of time, the Rohingya armed factions got entangled in terrorist activities as a natural progression. The ARSA, which was accused by the Myanmar Military of flaring up the “August 2017 massacre,” launched its initial coordinated assaults on the Border Guard Police (BGP) headquarters of northern Rakhine and two other bases on 9 October 2016. Previous armed militant groups had been based in the hills e.g., in the 1950s the Arakan Mujahidin, or used to launch hit-and-run guerrilla attacks from hidden places e.g., in the 1990s the RSO. In contrast, ARSA launched operations from within Rohingya villages, using bladed weapons, improvised explosive devices (IEDs), and a few firearms. Table-2 depicts the track record of the terrorist activities of ARSA from 2016 to January 2018.³³ All these activities of ARSA resemble that of an international nonstate actor like ISIS or Al Qaeda.

Table-2: The Track Record of The Terrorist Activities of ARSA³⁴

Date	Place	Incident
October 2016	Northern Rakhine	At least 40 people were killed in clashes between Myanmar security forces and ARSA. ARSA could take away a good number of weapons and ammunition from the border posts. ³⁵
May 4, 2017	Kyaung Taung, north Buthidaung	An accidental detonation of an IED killed seven ARSA activists and one Pakistani instructor and injured at least five others during their training on IEDs.
May 7, 2017	Kyaung Taung village tract, Buthidaung	Myanmar security forces discovered proof of the IED training camp and bomb-making materials. Six days later, the government announced it had found the bodies of five victims including two foreigners buried nearby.
June 20-21, 2017	South Buthidaung	The Myanmar government claimed that security forces had killed three men while clearing a likely ARSA training camp in the mountains near Sein Hnyin Pyar village tract.
June 24, 2017	North Maungdaw	Four Rakhine Buddhist villagers found bomb-making material while foraging in Kyun Pauk Pyu Su village tract. ARSA members killed two of them dead; the two others, one of whom was injured, fled and alerted authorities.
August 01, 2017	Maungdaw	An IED accidentally exploded and later on, Myanmar security forces recovered IED-preparing materials in Pan Taw Pyin village tract in a house that Myanmar security forces claimed to be an ARSA safe house,
August 16, 2017	Northern Rakhine State	ARSA uploaded a video resembling international non-state actors where ARSA leader Mr. Ata Ullah, flanked by armed fighters, asked the Myanmar

³² Elliot Brennan & Christopher O'Hara, *The Rohingya and Islamic Extremism: A Convenient Myth*, Institute for Development and Security Policy, No. 181, June 29, 2015, <https://www.isdp.eu/publication/rohingya-islamic-extremism-convenient-myth-2/>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

³³ “Myanmar’s Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase”, International Crisis Group, December 07, 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/292-myanmars-rohingya-crisis-enters-dangerous-new-phase>, Accessed on 01 March, 2023.

³⁴ “Myanmar’s Rohingya Crisis Enters a Dangerous New Phase,” International Crisis Group, December 07, 2017, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/292-myanmars-rohingya-crisis-enters-dangerous-new-phase>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

³⁵ “Myanmar policemen killed in Rakhine border attack”, BBC News, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-37601928>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

		military to leave northern Rakhine and stop oppression against the Rohingya people. ³⁶
August 25, 2017	Northern Rakhine State	ARSA initiated the attacks via a WhatsApp audio message, akin to ISIS/Al-Qaeda, delivered shortly after 8 pm on August 24, 2017. In the early hours from 1 am until dawn, ARSA, armed with farm tools as well as some hand-held and remote-detonated IEDs, launched attacks on some 30 BGP posts and a Myanmar Army base. The official death toll was 14 members of the security forces, one government official, and 371 people the government characterized as Rohingya militants.

The Surge of Crime in the Rohingya Refugee Camps Forecasts Linkage to Terrorism

Psychological Alignment

The huge number of Rohingya refugees residing in the refugee camps in Bangladesh have experienced struggles, oppression, and subversion throughout their entire span of life. Hence, resorting to terrorism, armed clashes, and regular inter-faction brutal rattles have become part of their lives. There are also residual psychological impacts on their minds of the ruthless persecutions they experienced before they fled from Myanmar in August 2017 or even earlier. The Bureau of Intelligence and Research (INR), with funding support from the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor (DRL), conducted a survey in the spring of 2018 of the firsthand experiences of 1,024 Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar District, Bangladesh. The goal of the survey was to document atrocities committed against residents in Burma's northern Rakhine State during continued violence in the previous two years.³⁷ Among the surveyed refugees, 82% witnessed the killing of their loved ones, 45% witnessed women and girls being raped, and 20% witnessed gang rapes. More witnessed some form of sexual violence, including forced stripping of clothing, touching of women's breasts or genitals, and sexual assault. Many of them witnessed the throwing of innocent kids into the fire or on the open bayonets.³⁸ Therefore, it can be extrapolated that all these horrendous experiences transformed them to be psychopaths who are prone to resort to violent terrorist acts, as a logical aftershock effect.

³⁶ "ARSA Commander Addresses Rohingya diaspora & the world; Warns Myanmar military," <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NJoWeV1DlFM> , Accessed on March 01, 2023.

³⁷ Documentation of atrocities in northern Rakhine State, US Department of State, Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor, September 24, 2018, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/documentation-of-atrocities-in-northern-rakhine-state/index.html>

³⁸ Documentation of atrocities in northern Rakhine State, US Department of State, Bureau Of Democracy, Human Rights, And Labor, September 24, 2018, 14, <https://2017-2021.state.gov/reports-bureau-of-democracy-human-rights-and-labor/documentation-of-atrocities-in-northern-rakhine-state/index.html>

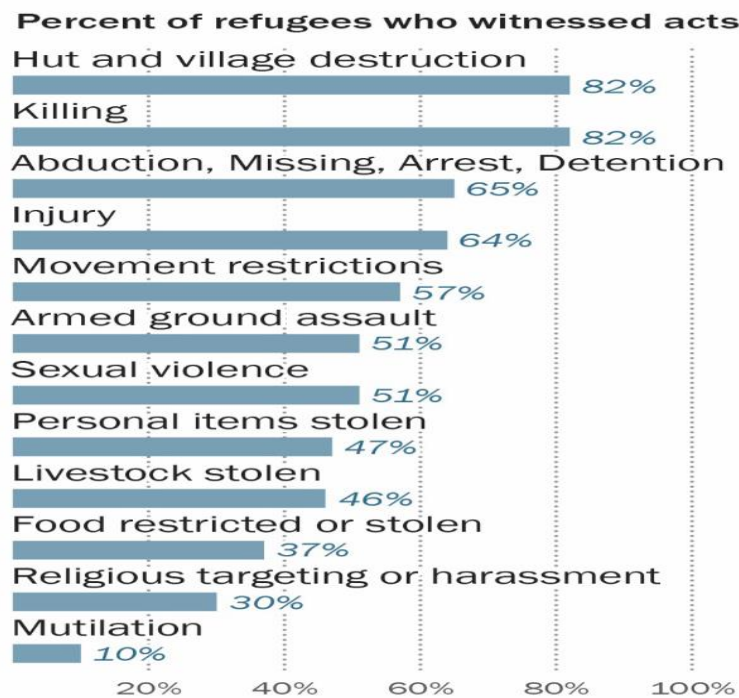


Figure-7: Percentage of Rohingyas Witnessed Persecution³⁹

Moreover, 90% of the refugees, most of whom are youth, have had literally nothing to do in the camps for the last five years – no job, no education but receiving food free of cost.⁴⁰ They neither can go back to their home country nor have viable opportunities to lead a dignified life here. The result of all this growing frustration and uncertainty among the jobless Rohingya people, particularly the youth, lures them to get involved in internal disputes, armed clashes, dacoity, terrorism, and numerous anti-social criminal activities.

Crime Pattern in the Rohingya Refugee Camps

It is a matter of great concern to realize the findings of a report placed before the parliamentary watchdog by the Bangladesh Defense Ministry on 15 February 2023 about the prevailing security situation in the Rohingya camps of Cox's Bazar. The report mainly highlighted the criminal activities that took place in 2021 and 2022. Reportedly, 10 terrorist and dacoit gangs including ARSA and RSO militants are active in the refugee camps and are getting engaged in all kinds of criminal activities there. The Rohingya militant faction ARSA controls most of the refugee camps, nevertheless, other groups like RSO and various armed dacoit gangs led by Master Munna, Islami Mahaj, and Nabi Hussain are also active there. These rival groups often engage in violent armed clashes and killings to establish their dominance over the camps which caused 32 incidents of murder that took place in 2022 alone.⁴¹ According to the police, crimes in the refugee camps and the number of Rohingya arrested last year were 16 times more than that in 2017. Police arrested 2,531 Rohingya and registered 1,220 cases last year, up from 1,628 arrests and 666 cases in 2021. About 90% of cases last year, and a similar proportion of arrests, involved murder, illegal use of weapons, trade in narcotics, robbery, rape, kidnapping, attacks on police, and human trafficking. The murders of 32 Rohingya marked an increase from a previous high of 27 in 2021. Related arrests reached 290, from 97 a year earlier. Drug-related cases and arrests also soared. In the recent two years reported, 2012-2022, there were incidents of 12 internal feuds, 69 shootings, 54 murders, 152 burglaries, 259 kidnappings, 123 arsons, and many more. From analyzing the report, it is

³⁹ Documentation of atrocities in northern Rakhine State, US Department of State.

⁴⁰ Ruma Paul, Sudipto Ganguly and Krishna N. Das, Surging crime, bleak future push Rohingya in Bangladesh to risk lives at sea, Reuters, January 23, 2023, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/surging-crime-bleak-future-push-rohingya-bangladesh-risk-lives-sea-2023-01-24/>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

⁴¹ Tighten Security at the Rohingya Camps, The Daily Star, 16 February 2023, Dhaka, <https://www.thedailystar.net/opinion/editorial/news/tighten-security-the-rohingya-camps-3249686>

evident that the Rohingya refugees are even committing lethal crimes against themselves frequently mostly due to their habitual affinity with terrorism.

Since the arrival of Rohingya refugees on a mass scale in the Cox’s Bazar area in August 2017, the security dynamics of that part Bangladesh had deteriorated significantly. To get a vivid picture we can analyze the record of the law enforcement agencies from 2017 to 2022 concerning the Rohingyas regarding the cases filed vis-a-vis the number of convicted criminals (Figure-8) and the number of cases filed vis-a-vis and types of crimes committed (Figure-9). There was a total of 2659 cases filed against 5880 Rohingya criminals. This huge surge in criminal activities has transformed the southeastern part of Bangladesh into a volatile and unsafe place for the host community as well as the millions of tourists who usually visit Cox’s Bazar.

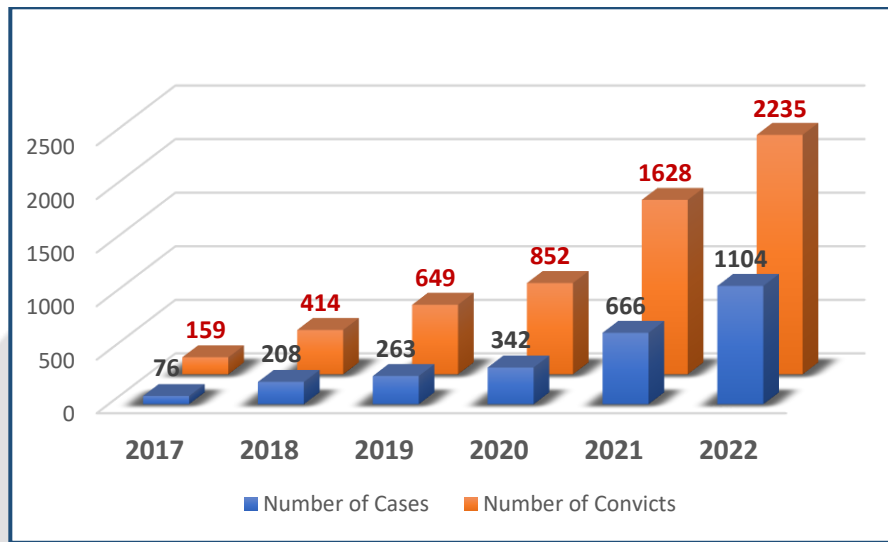


Figure-8: No. of Cases Filed vis-a-vis Convicted Criminals 2017 to 2022.
(Source: Researcher’s construct based on Police Record)

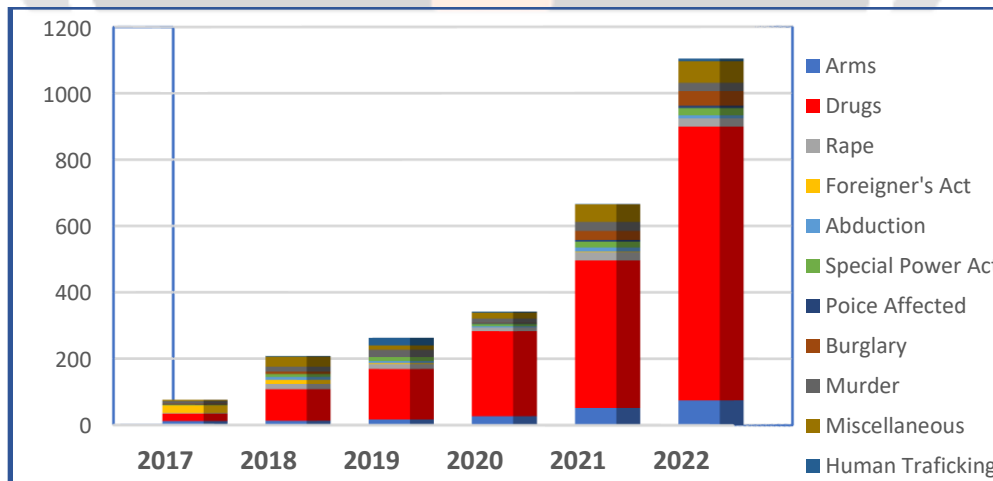


Figure-9: No. of Cases Filed vis-a-vis Types of Crime 2017 to 2022.
(Source: Researcher’s construct based on Police Record)

All these statistics are evidence of the sharp rise of criminal activities by the persistently increasing number of Rohingya refugees. This also highlights the association and close bonding of a seamless number of criminal Rohingya refugees to armed factions like ARSA and RSO. All these are indications of their affinity and nature depicting the possibility of spawning to be engaged in terrorism – local, regional, or international.

Illegal Drugs Trafficking

Although Bangladesh does not even produce narcotics but faces a serious threat due to its geographical proximity to Asia's main drug trafficking region, namely the "Golden Triangle" which comprises the borders of Myanmar, Laos, and Thailand. Of those countries, Bangladesh shares a border with Myanmar only. Drug production in the Golden Triangle region is run by Asian crime gangs in partnership with armed factions from some of Myanmar's ethnic minorities.⁴² Jeremy Douglas, the UNODC's regional representative in Southeast Asia, told Reuters correctly, "Drugs and conflict remain inseparable in Myanmar, one feeding the other. Chaos and instability work for traffickers."⁴³ Likewise, the contemporary political turmoil and instability unleashed in Myanmar had been 'blessings' for the rion's drug dealers with narcotics production and trafficking, according to the U.N. Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC).⁴⁴ This has further been substantiated by the incident that the authorities in Laos, Thailand, and Myanmar seized an eye-popping 90 million methamphetamine tablets and 4.4 tons of crystal methamphetamine in January 2022 alone, most of it manufactured in remote regions of Myanmar's Shan State.⁴⁵ Again, all the Rohingya refugee camps are located in the Bangladesh-Myanmar bordering areas and even some of the refugees reside on no man's land. This enables them to trespass the porous border easily. The drug lords are utilizing the impoverished Rohingya refugees for trafficking and transporting drugs across the border. Resultantly, a surge in the apprehension of the drugs named 'Yaba' or methamphetamine tablets (Figure-10), crystal methamphetamine (Figure-11) and Opium (Figure-12) can be observed in the refugee-infested Cox's Bazar area, since the mass exodus of refugees in August 2017.



Figure-10: Yaba Recovered in Rohingya Infested Cox's Bazar Region: 2017-2022
(Source: Researcher's construct based on Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) Records)

⁴² Panu Wongcha-um and Tom Allard, Drug trafficking surging in year since Myanmar coup, Reuters, February 2, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/drug-trafficking-surgin-year-since-myanmar-coup-2022-02-01/>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

⁴³ Panu Wongcha-um and Tom Allard, Drug trafficking surging in year since Myanmar coup, Reuters, February 2, 2022, <https://www.reuters.com/world/asia-pacific/drug-trafficking-surgin-year-since-myanmar-coup-2022-02-01/>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

⁴⁴ Sebastian Strangio, Illicit Drug Production Has Surged Since Myanmar's Coup, The Diplomat, South East asia, February 02, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/02/illicit-drug-production-has-surged-since-myanmars-coup/>

⁴⁵ Sebastian Strangio, Illicit Drug Production, Diplomat, February 02, 2022.

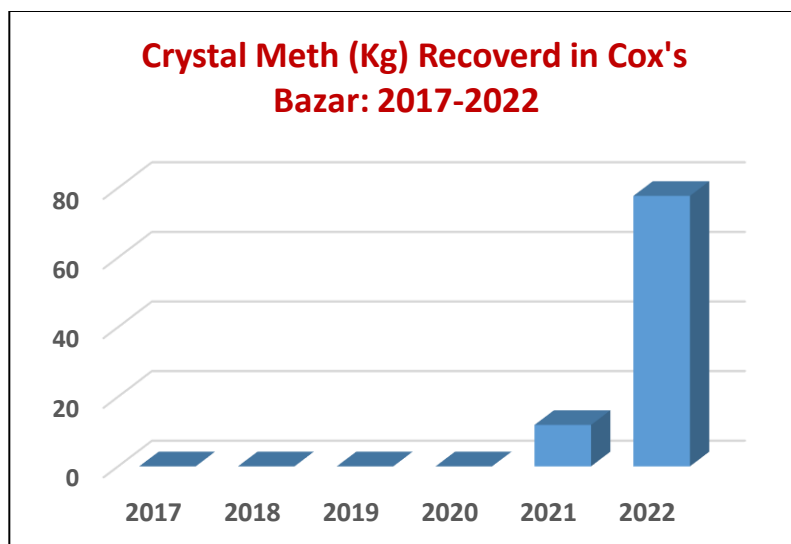


Figure-11: Crystal Meth Recovered in Rohingya Infested Cox’s Bazar Region: 2017-2022
 (Source: Researcher’s construct based on Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) Records)

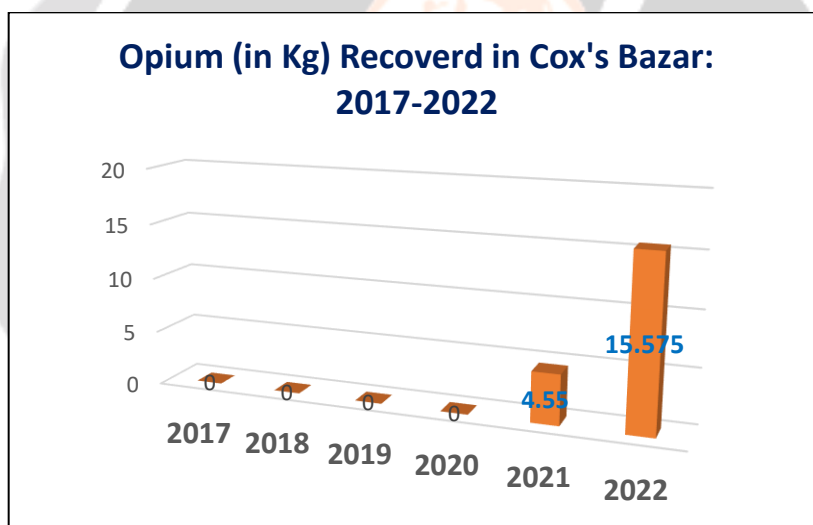


Figure-12: Opium Recovered in Rohingya Infested Cox’s Bazar Region: 2017-2022
 (Source: Researcher’s construct based on Border Guards Bangladesh (BGB) Records)

The statistics shown in the above three Tables are the amount the law enforcement agencies could apprehend only. It can be inferred that the actual amount would be many times more than that could be apprehended. This terrifying state poses threat to the socio-economic wellbeing of the host nation besides threatening the national security of Bangladesh. There could be number of convincing reasons behind the massive involvement of the Rohingya refugees in drugs trafficking e.g., statelessness, hopelessness, unemployment, or restricted camps life etc. but there is darker side of this venture. There is always a linkage between terrorist organizations and illegal drug trafficking because of the lucrative monetary benefits that can easily be derived from this illegal business. Therefore, the accelerated involvement of the Rohingya refugees in drugs trafficking might pave the way for opening a new avenue to get entangled with the transnational terrorism.

Possible Linkage to Transnational Terrorism and Impacts on Global Security

The most discussed Rohingya armed group, ARSA, whom Myanmar Government has declared as a ‘terrorist organization’ has all the motives, capability, and endeavor to attract the Rohingya male population of the refugee camps to join them.⁴⁶ Various statements of the leaders of ARSA in the social media indicates about their ambition to do all out for the betterment of the Rohingya community. More so, linking through ARSA, different regional and global terrorist organizations including non-state actors might take advantage of this distressed community in provoking them to work for their cause. There are good chances for this stateless Rohingya community whose vision of hope have gone blurred might join them in search of new hopes of life and immediate security. Moreover, Al-Qaeda, IS-Khorasan, TTP or any other regional terrorist groups might take entry into the Rohingya refugee community through their sympathizers without involving ARSA, portraying the common religious heredity. Nonetheless, the continued oppression of Myanmar military junta might also compel ARSA also to take support of the regional or global terrorist groups at some point of time in future. Though the Rohingya based militant organization ARSA has denied any kind of connection with regional or global terrorist groups but there are circumstantial evidence which indicate their mutual connection.

Highlights on the Linkage with Al Qaeda

Although ARSA has denied their connection with any of the global terrorist organizations, ‘Al-Qaeda’ has expressed their support for the people of Rohingya at different times. Especially, after the massacre on Rohingya people on 25 August 2017 by the Myanmar security forces in retaliation to ARSA’s attack on them, many senior leaders of Al-Qaeda expressed their deep concern to provide support for the cause of Rohingyas. For example, on 27 October 2017, Abu Syed al-Ansari, one of the prominent Al-Qaeda leaders of Indian Subcontinent, reiterated the calls for a ‘jihad’ in support of the Rohingya against Myanmar government.⁴⁷ In addition, in a video message released by al Qaeda’s al-Malahem media foundation, Khaled Batarfi of Qaeda’s Yemeni branch called on Muslims in Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, and Malaysia to support their Rohingya Muslim brethren against the “enemies of Allah.”⁴⁸ Moreover, according to Site Intelligence Group, Al-Qaeda Central (AQC) urged Muslims around the world and especially those in Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, and the Philippines to support their Rohingya brethren in Myanmar financially, militarily, and physically through its As-Sahab media channel on Telegram. Similarly, another Al-Qaeda-backed Ansar Ghazwatul Hind (previously Hizbul Mujahideen), urged Muslims to show the Buddhists how a Muslim can protect another Muslim proclaiming revenge for attacking the Rohingyas.⁴⁹ All these sympathetic responses of the Al-Qaeda leaders from different parts of the world resemble deep-rooted interest of this global terrorist organization in Rohingya affairs and affiliation with ARSA too. On the other hand, there are historical evidence of Al-Qaeda focusing interest on the Rohingya issue during the 1980s and 1990s. To be candid, the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) also had limited ties to al-Qaeda and affiliated charities. Even it was heard that the top leadership of Al-Qaeda took initiative to bring RSO within a unified coalition, ‘Rabitatul Mujahedeen’ along with other similar minded groups at that time.⁵⁰ There are evidence of training the Rohingya militants of Myanmar

⁴⁶ “Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) Declared as Terrorist Group”, Submitted by cwmsco2 on Sun, 08/27/2017 - 23:17, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar, Anti-terrorism Central Committee, Order No. 1/20171379 MY 4 Waxing Day of Tawthalin, 25 August 2017.

⁴⁷ Zachary Abuza, “Myanmar’s Tatmadaw and the Making of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army”, Publication: Terrorism Monitor, Volume: 15 Issue: 21, November 10, 2017, <https://jamestown.org/program/myanmars-tatmadaw-making-arakan-rohingya-salvation-army/>, Accessed on on March 03, 2023.

⁴⁸ “Yemeni al Qaeda leader calls for attacks in support of Myanmar’s Rohingya”, Reuters, Dubai, September 2, 2017, <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-alqaeda/yemeni-al-qaeda-leader-calls-for-attacks-in-support-of-myanmars-rohingya-idUSKCN1BD0U8> Accessed on on March 03, 2023.

⁴⁹ “Al-Qaeda calls on followers to support Rohingyas”, Dhaka Tribune, September 13, 2017, <http://www.dhakatribune.com/world/south-asia/2017/09/13/al-qaeda-rohingya-crisis/> Accessed on March 03, 2023.

⁵⁰ Zachary Abuza, “Myanmar’s Tatmadaw and the Making of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army”, Publication: Terrorism Monitor Volume: 15 Issue: 21, November 10, 2017,

conducted by Al-Qaeda in Afghanistan on the art of guerrilla warfare. It is also heard that some Mujahedeens from Myanmar visited Pakistan for collecting donations and for undergoing some kind of guerrilla military training.⁵¹ On the other hand, Mr. Ata-Ullah, the leader of ARSA, was born in around 1960s in Karachi of Pakistan, although his father was a Rohingya from Rakhine state of Myanmar. Mr. Ata-Ullah along with his family stayed in Saudi Arabia during his early life for Islamic learning and initial education. He disappeared from Saudi Arabia shortly after violence erupted in Rakhine State in 2012. Though not confirmed, there are indications he went to Pakistan, Libya and Afghanistan and possibly were trained under Taliban for six months on practical details of modern guerrilla warfare.⁵² It can be inferred that the ARSA leader might have developed strong affiliation with Al-Qaeda and other terrorist groups during his visit. It is logical that after being wiped out from Afghanistan by the US and NATO forces, Al-Qaeda might be looking for the opportunities to expand its activities in the South-Asian region. Mr. Ata-Ullah was infamously successful in proving his credibility of leading a terrorist group named ARSA amid sheer unfavorable conditions in Myanmar. Therefore, it is most likely that the regional and global terrorist groups like Al-Qaeda and ISIS might have picked up Mr. Ata-Ullah and his Rohingya militant group ARSA as a collaborator capitalizing on the Rohingya refugee crisis. This will offer the expansion of Al-Qaeda and ISIS in the South-Asian region besides acceleration of both extraction and recruitment of the

Persuasion of Interests by International Actors Resulting in Aggrandizing the Risk of Global Terrorism

Influential international actors like China, Russia, and India have deep-rooted interests in Myanmar. Both China and India have invested billions of dollars in the Rakhine State of Myanmar which was the residence of the Rohingya people before their exodus from Myanmar. China has established 771 km Crude Pipeline (32") connecting Kunming, 2806 km Gas Pipeline (40") up to Guangxi) through Rakhine, Myanmar expecting to supply 12 million tons of crude oil per year 12 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year. This project has also been supplemented by a 1215 km Railway project connecting China to the Indian Ocean avoiding Malacca strait.⁵³

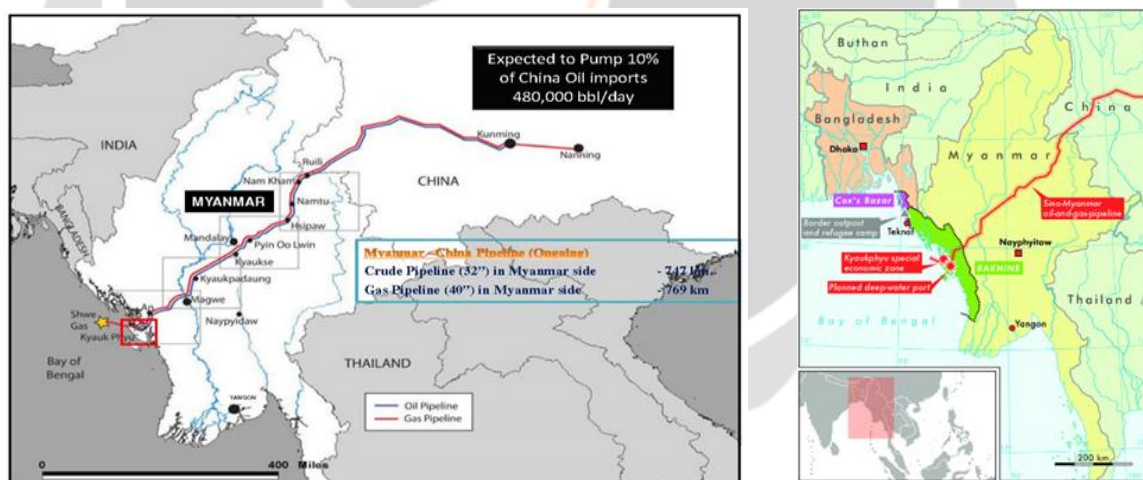


Figure-13: Sino-Myanmar pipelines

<https://jamestown.org/program/myanmars-tatmadaw-making-arakan-rohingya-salvation-army/>, Accessed on March 03, 2023.

⁵¹ Pepe Escobar, "Jihad: 'The ultimate thermonuclear bomb'", Asia Times, Islamabad, October 10, 2001, <https://asiatimes.com/2001/10/jihad-the-ultimate-thermonuclear-bomb/>, Accessed on March 4, 2023.

⁵² "Myanmar: A New Muslim Insurgency in Rakhine State", International Crisis Group, Yangon/Brussels, 15 December 2016, <https://www.crisisgroup.org/asia/south-east-asia/myanmar/283-myanmar-new-muslim-insurgency-rakhine-state>, Accessed on March 04, 2023.

⁵³ Sino-Myanmar pipelines, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sino-Myanmar_pipelines

On the other hand, India has implemented is a US \$ 484 million project titled ‘Kaladan Road Project’ connecting her eastern seven provinces to Indian seaport of Kolkata through Sittwe seaport in Rakhine State, Myanmar by sea.⁵⁴

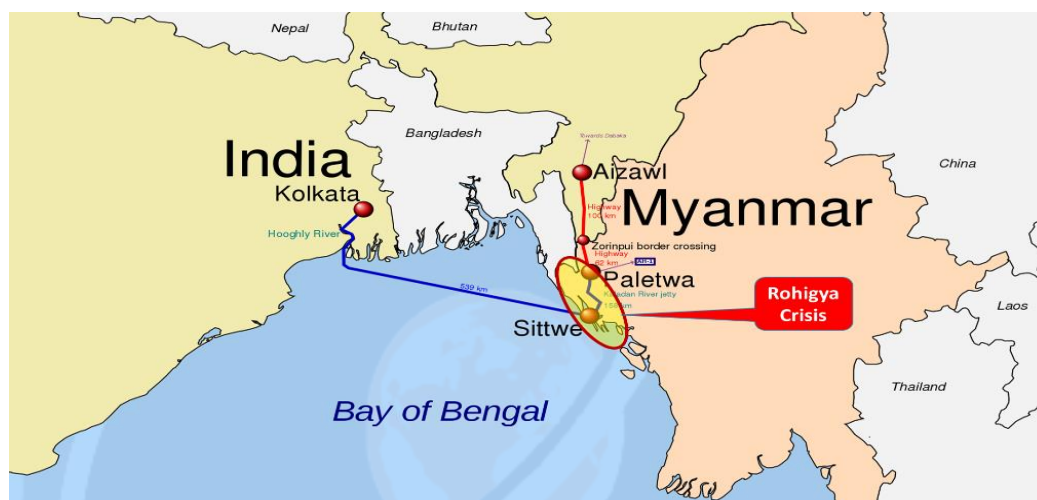


Figure-14: Kaladan Multimodal Project of India through Myanmar

Consequently, China and Russia opposed the UN resolution against Myanmar on the Rohingya issue in UN General Assembly. India’s abstaining from voting went in Myanmar’s favor. This is enhancing the nexus among those countries expanding the boundless influence of China in the Indian Sea area. The backing of these countries is facilitating Myanmar Janta to refrain from taking effective steps in solving the Rohingya issue. The resultant delay in repatriation of the refugees forces them to become terrorists threatening regional stability, peace, and security.

Ways Forward

Unconditional Sustainable Immediate Repatriation

It’s a historically evidenced inference that oppressions create ‘rebellion’ and subsequently ‘terrorism’ if conducive environment sustain or appropriate remedial measures cannot be implemented. Myanmar military instigated the oppressions against minority Rohingya Muslims since 1962 and had been being nourishing it for last seven decades to conserve its military rulings deceiving the majority Buddhists. As such, capitalizing on the Rohingyas’ difference in religion and physical appearance, they have often become convenient scapegoats for Burma’s military government to rally the public against, whenever that country has been hit by an economic or political crisis.⁵⁵ Resultantly, for deriving heinous political benefits Myanmar junta refrained from cooperating with any sustain solutions for the Rohingya refugee crisis. Following the 2017 massacre, Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a repatriation agreement on 23 November 2017 in Naypyitaw. The arrangement stipulated that the return should commence within two months and repatriation will be concluded in a speedy manner.⁵⁶ But the irony of fact that Myanmar authority, backed by the indulgence of the vested global powers, failed to create a conducive environment in Rakhine that could encourage the refugees’ volunteer repatriation. Conversely, the remnant Rohingyas in Rakhine State are subject to government persecution and violence, confined to camps and villages without freedom of

⁵⁴ Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kaladan_Multi-Modal_Transit_Transport_Project, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

⁵⁵ Bertil Lintner, Bangladesh Extremist Islamist Consolidation, South Asia Terrorism Portal, 2001, <https://www.satp.org/satporgtp/publication/faultlines/volume14/Article1.htm>, Accessed on March 01, 2023.

⁵⁶ OCHA, “Bangladesh and Myanmar conclude ‘Arrangement’ on Return of displaced persons from Rakhine State,” BD Govt. Press Release, November 23, 2017, <https://reliefweb.int/report/bangladesh/bangladesh-and-myanmar-conclude-arrangement-return-displaced-persons-rakhine-state>, Accessed on March 03, 2023.

movement, and cut off from access to adequate food, health care, education, and livelihoods.⁵⁷ The 600,000 Rohingya remaining inside Myanmar still face systematic persecution and live under the threat of genocide, the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar says in a new report in October 2019.⁵⁸ Consequently, the volunteer repatriation still remains a far reaching milestone due to lack of conducive and dignified environment in Rakhine.

The core of the solution to the crisis lies in the creation of a conducive environment in Rakhine state that can encourage volunteer and sustainable repatriation. The rejuvenated civilized life of Rohingyas will certainly reduce the likelihood of spawning terrorism now prevailing in the refugee camp area. But for a sustainable solution, a whole-hearted commitment by the highest Myanmar national level is a prerequisite. Rohingyas should be rehabilitated and resettled to their original homes and properties immediately. They should be free from persecution, allowed freedom of movement, access to civic rights/facilities, and participation in elections to choose their own representatives. Or else, to counterbalances and for survival, the Rohingya militant groups may also flourish equally.

Train and Employ the Refugees for Productive Works

A huge concentration of the uneducated, unemployed, traumatized, and frustrated population is an obvious source of crime and terrorism. Moreover, unemployment trigger frustrations and encourages subversions and perverts.

Until a credible repatriation can be materialized, endeavor should aim at arranging productive employment for the refugees within the camp area. For this, practical oriented technical training can be organized which will persist benefiting them to earn their livelihood even after their repatriation. These may include tailoring, craftsmanship, handicrafts, motor mechanics, mechanical cultivation, poultry farming, ranching, fish farming, and basic education in English and Burmese language. INGOs, in coordination with Bangladesh government, may establish small factories within refugee infested area like readymade garments, ranches, fishing, and poultry farms etc., the earnings of which may be expended for their community wellbeing.

Strict Supervision in Camp Area by Law Enforcement Agency (LEA)

Effective monitoring and intelligence gathering of the refugee camp area should be enhanced at any cost besides augmenting counter terrorism endeavors. The contentions with probable regional and transnational non-state actors should be identified, restrained and the perpetrators should be taken into charge by the LEAs. To curb radicalization, polarization, and terrorist recruitment, the Rohingya refugees' camps should be kept isolated from intruding by any exotic group, terrorists, vested clerics, including dubious droners, NGOs or INGOs. The ability of ARSA to spread its message through numerous online platforms such as YouTube and Facebook shows its technical proficiency, adaptability, and the success of its outreach, not just only in South/Southeast Asia but also worldwide targeting Rohingya diaspora, sympathizers, and collaborators.⁵⁹ To safeguard against digital subversions, cyberspace and cellphone network should be supervised continuously. Countries who are technologically advanced and experienced in counter terrorism like USA may collaborate Bangladesh in this regard.

Curtailling Illegal Money Laundering in Rohingya Refugee Camps

In addition to fundamentalism, radicalization, and ideological clashes, illegal money laundering is another most important factor of thriving global terrorism. Being located at the junction point of the 'Golden Triangle' of illegal drug trafficking, the Rohingya refugees and ARSA have got deeply entangled in drug trafficking. Enormous illegitimate financial transaction centering drug smuggling is likely to boost up the insurrection of terrorism in the Rohingya refugee infested area, besides supporting the global terrorist organizations financially. This financial

⁵⁷ Burma: US Should Promote Justice for Rohingya, Human Right Watch, September 25, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/25/burma-us-should-promote-justice-rohingya>, Accessed on March 03, 2023.

⁵⁸ "Myanmar's Rohingya Persecuted, Living under Threat of Genocide, UN Experts Say," Press Releases, UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, Geneva, 16 September 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/09/myanmars-rohingya-persecuted-living-under-threat-genocide-un-experts-say?LangID=E&NewsID=24991>, Accessed on March 03, 2023.

⁵⁹ Jasmin Singh and J. Fernando, Rohingya Militant Group Targeting Malaysia-Based Refugees with Online Campaign, Diplomat, April 13, 2022, <https://thediplomat.com/2022/04/rohingya-militant-group-targeting-malaysia-based-refugees-with-online-campaign/>, Accessed on March 04, 2023.

transaction and interdependency might strengthen the relationships among the Rohingya militants and the transnational non-state actors. Thus, the Rohingya refugee camp area might turn into a safe-haven and 'profit generation place of interest' for the international terrorists. Therefore, all out efforts should be taken to stop involvement of Rohingya refugees in drug smuggling by severing their financial connections with drug cartels, transnational non-state actors or global terrorist organizations.

Democratization of Myanmar

To achieve a sustainable solution of the rise of terrorism in the Rohingya refugee infested area the first and foremost step ahead should be democratization of Myanmar. Absence of democracy, freedom of expression and prevalence of rule of law in Myanmar since 1962 might be the root of all catastrophic problems in Myanmar. On September 24, 2018, the US State Department issued a report documenting Burmese security force atrocities against the Rohingya, including murder, rape, and mass arson. The report determined that the violence was "extreme, large-scale, widespread."⁶⁰ The US State Department Counsellor Derek Chollet's opines that the US also believes that addressing the problem involves restoration of Myanmar's democracy. Washington is increasingly engaged with Dhaka after the US Senate passed the Burma Unified through Rigorous Military Accountability (BURMA) Act on December 15, 2022, which was also included in the National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA)-2023.⁶¹ The BURMA Act provides additional tools to the US government for increasing humanitarian aid, support for the democracy movement, and sanctions against those funding the Myanmar junta, which snatched power of the country on February 1, 2021. The restoration of democracy in Myanmar may be achieved through patronizing the civilian groups fighting for democracy including the National Unity Government (NUG) of Myanmar.

Furthermore, mere sanctions against a few perpetrators of Myanmar military cannot solve the deep-rooted crisis. Boots on ground under UNPKO Chapter VII or international coalition may only bring about a positive outcome. Hence, SAARC, ASEAN, ICC, ICJ, UN, and all other international coalitions should come forward to solve this most complex humanitarian crisis of the century.

Conclusion

Lack of democracy and over influence of the Myanmar armed forces, the Tatmadaw on the internal politics and power game of Myanmar since 1962 resulted in marginalization, discrimination, brutality, and oppressions of most of the 136 ethnic people of Myanmar. The state-sponsored persecution, genocidal and "clearance operations" by Myanmar Security Forces in August 2017 killed thousands of Rohingyas and caused more than 740,000 Rohingya to flee for their lives to neighboring Bangladesh.⁶² Added up with the previous 500,000, who fled at different times since 1982 total of about 1.4 million refugees is residing inhumanly in the world's largest refugee settlement in the southeastern part of Bangladesh. The UN GS Antonio Guterres termed it, "The textbook example of ethnic cleansing". The whole world sympathizes but no strong action against the perpetrators could be taken so far, thus no repatriation to date leading to a greater humanitarian crisis day by day. Impunity of Myanmar continuously aggravates the humanitarian situation.

State-sponsored persecution of the Rohingya minority by the Myanmar military in collaboration with the extremist Buddhists has made a huge number of Rohingya people stateless. Furthermore, the persuasion of the respective interests in Myanmar by international actors like China, Russia, and India has added fuel to the fire. The huge number of persecuted, illiterate, underemployed, and poor Rohingya people concentrated within a small peninsula of Bangladesh, bordering to Myanmar, has become susceptible to extremism with possible linkage to international terrorism. Consequently, they are likely to cause an immense threat to regional and global stability, peace, and security if a credible solution cannot be attained before it is too late.

⁶⁰ Burma: US Should Promote Justice for Rohingya, Human Right Watch, September 25, 2018, <https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/09/25/burma-us-should-promote-justice-rohingya>, Accessed on March 05, 2023.

⁶¹ Porimol Palma, Democracy in Myanmar: Washington wants Dhaka on its side, Daily Star, Dhaka, 17 February 2023, <https://www.thedailystar.net/news/bangladesh/diplomacy/news/democracy-myanmar-washington-wants-dhaka-its-side-3249921>, Accessed on March 05, 2023.

⁶² "Myanmar's Rohingya Persecuted, Living under Threat of Genocide, UN Experts Say", UN OHCHR, 16 September 2019, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2019/09/myanmars-rohingya-persecuted-living-under-threat-genocide-un-experts-say?LangID=E&NewsID=24991>, Accessed on March 05, 2023.

The core of the solution to the crisis lies in the creation of a conducive environment in Rakhine state that can encourage volunteer and sustainable repatriation. Rohingyas should be rehabilitated and resettled to their original homes and properties immediately. They should be free from persecution, allowed freedom of movement, access to civic rights/facilities, and participation in elections to choose their own representatives. Otherwise, to counterbalances and for survival, the Rohingya militant group possibly flourish equally.

