

Committee: Security Council

Issue: The Question of Myanmar

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Introduction

There are currently over one million Rohingya people in the Myanmar Rakhine state, and they are a Muslim ethnic group who claimed to have lived in the land for generations. As the majority of the Myanmar's population, as well as the top officials in the Myanmar's military, are Buddhist – the issue of religion has caused conflict between the two groups. The Rohingya people have in many occasions stated that they were oppressed and treated poorly by their own military for many years. As a response, the tension has caused the Rohingya people to retaliate towards the military which often results in the form of violence. Opposite to the claim made by the Rohingya people, the Myanmar government says that the Rohingya people are illegal immigrants from the country of Bangladesh who unfortunately do not belong in their country. The situation recently worsened last year. According to a charity called Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF), more than 640,000 Rohingya people from the Myanmar are now fleeing from their homes into Bangladesh due to the state of the conflict being too violent. Based on surveys conducted towards to the refugees of Myanmar, MSF has stated that at least 6,700 Rohingya people died in September, the month in which the violence happened.

The people of Rohingya is currently not recognised as a proper citizen by not only other inhabitants but also by the governments in the country and due to this reason, they do not receive the same education, medical treatment as well as basic services similar those who live there. As described by the United Nations, the Rohingya people are the world's most persecuted people because of their race, political beliefs and religion. On the 25th of August, conflict broke out in Rakhine, a state between the Rohingya fighters and the Myanmar military after the Rohingya fighters intentionally attacked the government and the police. In response, the military fought back which lead to the death of hundreds of people with an addition of ten thousand people having to flee from their home. Many would argue it is only right and natural that the military force reacted in such ways, however, the United Nation's top human rights official said that it was "clearly disproportionate", meaning that it was not fair for the military to react to the attack of the Rohingya people.

Definition of Key Terms

Myanmar (formerly Burma)

Myanmar is located in Southeast Asia, bordering with India, Bangladesh, China, Laos and Thailand and made up with over 100 ethnic groups. Over the past four decades, the issue of Rohingya refugees being declined with citizenship loss of human rights and access to basic service to life is still an uproaring matter to the nation. Riots between Buddhist and Muslim extremist are also a significant threat to the security and growth of Myanmar, a country of Buddhist majority population.



Figure #1. Map of Myanmar

The Rohingya

The Rohingya refers to the Muslims ethnic minority who have been living in Burma - Myanmar since the 9th century, The Rohingya people, else known as Akranese Indians, is an ethnic group in which the majority lives in the Rakhine State of Myanmar. Originated from East Bengal region

in the fourth century, currently parts of the Rakhine State of Myanmar and Bangladesh. By the ninth century, the majority of the Rohingya people have converted to Islam. They then migrated to parts of India and west Bangladesh in the fifteenth century due to tribal conflicts. This ignites many problems to the country due to the religious difference between the Rohingya Muslims and Myanmar Buddhist, most notably the Rakhine Buddhist.

Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army

Previously known as Faith Movement, the group is a Rohingya insurgent group which still today is active in the Northern Rakhine State of Myanmar.

Ethnic cleansing

The mass killing or of members of an unwanted religion or ethnic group in a society.

Theravada Buddhism

This type of buddhism is different from the one which people around the world are more familiar with. They do recognised Dalai Lama but instead this type is much more militant, it believes that all other religions regardless of how important they are to other people must be suppressed in order for Buddhism to strive forward.

Background Information

Description of issue

According to a charity called Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) Currently, more than 640,000 Rohingya people from the Myanmar are now fleeing from their homes into Bangladesh due to the state of the conflict being too violent. Based on surveys conducted towards to the refugees of Myanmar, MSF has stated that at least 6,700 Rohingya people died in September, the month in which the violence happened. The United Nations has stated that it has received reports calling our the unlawful and violent actions of the Myanmar military towards the Rohingya people. Human rights official in an interview says that the Rohingya people have been treated shows that the Myanmar military and government are trying to get rid of them from Myanmar. In addition, this is not the first time that the Myanmar government are trying to do so. In response, the Myanmar government has in many occasions denied the what it is trying to do, they have also that the fighting is specifically towards the Rohingya soldiers and not ordinary citizens.

Additionally, it is to note the military's profound escalation of violence which include firing on citizens, incinerating villages has spurred the United Nations high commissioner for human rights to call its latest campaign a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing". In summary, the heart of the matter lies in the 1982 Citizenship Law which Rohingya people were stripped of their nationality. Under international law, it is illegal to make somebody stateless, this law has to be reversed and is the heart of the problem. However, on a long term note, the difficulty now is that the Myanmar government has almost succeeded in cleansing the entire population of the Rohingya people which is a catastrophe. As a response to the issue, the Myanmar government has admitted to no wrongdoing and in many occasion has stated that it hasn't taken any action against the Rohingya people, and is in addition inquiring into the reasons and explanation towards why the Rohingya are leaving the country. Bangladesh hosts most of the 550,000 refugees that fled Myanmar and now is planning to move most of the Rohingya to an isolated island called Thengar Char Island to free, open up space in Bangladesh. There are over 250,000 Rohingya living there already. It is critical to note that this is a problem due to the fact that the island is underwater during monsoon season (which is from June to September) and doesn't have roads. In addition to this relocating the Rohingya people, the United Nation Refugee Agency and the Human Rights Watch have expressed their concerns that this was indeed not a sustainable and safe place to house the Rohingya people. India, being one of the hosts, is also trying to kick the Rohingya out of the country and accusation of them being terrorists. This is because of the conflict between Hindus and Muslims that is ongoing in India.



Figure #2. Myanmar lies on the east of India and Bangladesh

The Rohingya refugee now camps in Bangladesh are unsanitary and lack many basic hygiene and medical supplies. The government of Bangladesh and other humanitarian aid groups have had a hard time reaching all the camps and distributing adequate aid.

History of the issue of Myanmar

During the Second World War, Burma - Myanmar today was under the control of the British colonial rule. When Burma was invaded by the Japanese, the majority of the Buddhist population sided with Japanese invaders, that including the father of the current leader named Aung San Su. He is commonly known as General Aung San, one of the founders of Myanmar. With the belief that the Japanese would be victorious in the war, one of their goal was to firstly join the Japanese and overthrow, expel the British colonial masters. On the other hand, the Rohingya people remained loyal to their British colonial masters and as time goes by when the war was over, the British were victorious and the Rohingya were seen as the enemy from that day onwards. In 1948, as Myanmar became independent the British colonial left. Myanmar had a relatively peaceful decade until the year 1962. In the year 1962 there was a military coup from General Ne Win. He has implemented "The Burmese Road to Socialism" which essentially is a communist manifesto. The rising of General Ne Win has lead to an economic disaster. As a response he did what a lot of other military dictator did; using that situation, he blamed the economic failure by using a scapegoat.

The Rohingya people were the choice for this scapegoat. Being the largest minority group in Myanmar, the Rohingya have different features such as their different skin color, their languages as well as their religion. Therefore, with their past in combination with their differences, they had already been scapegoated as an enemy, now the entire country could blame all of the thing that went wrong In the society to them. On top of that, General Ne Win then did what can be seen in a lot of Middle Eastern dictators do in the modern days, he puts on the cloak of religiosity, this means that when things things going the wrong way, not only the general but the military and their people start becoming more religious. General Ne Win started to become much more overtly Buddhist. Therefore, under such influence, the military started fulfilling the obligations called Theravada Buddhism, the religion in which Burma (now Myanmar) follows.

Additionally, it is to note the military's profound escalation of violence which include firing on citizens, incinerating villages has spurred the United Nations high commissioner for human rights to call its latest campaign a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing". In summary, the heart of the matter lies in the 1982 Citizenship Law which Rohingya people were stripped of their nationality. Under international law, it is illegal to make somebody stateless, this law has to be reversed and is the heart of the problem.

However, on a long term note, the difficulty now is that the Myanmar government has almost succeeded in cleansing the entire population of the Rohingya people which is a catastrophe.

Violation against the Universal Human Rights

The conflict has worsened in the past few years. In 2015, the Myanmar government has stripped the Rohingya people of more of their rights, such as the right to employment, education and freedom of movement, as well as land ownership. This has caused the Rohingya to flee to Bangladesh and other neighbouring region which then caused a minor refugee crisis. Even though some Rohingya started that they do indeed receive basic rights, which can be regarded as the ability to go to school, they still could not run for office and were jailed if they attempt to do so. Frustrated with their current situation, some of the Rohingya people became militant and attacked other governmental organizations and soldiers. There has continued to be a conflict between the Myanmar government and the Rohingya people for the past decades. Additionally, the government of Myanmar did not recognize the Rohingya people as citizens, and therefore did not provide them with have basic human rights. This is mainly due to the fact that the Rohingya are seen as illegal immigrants that should have settled in the region that they originate from, which in this case is Bangladesh in the eyes of Myanmar nationalists.

Division amongst the P5 members

China offers support towards the Myanmar government at the United Nation amid the Rohingya crisis. Having allied with Myanmar, China supports efforts made by the Myanmar government to protect its national security and strongly oppose the recent attacks in the country's Rakhine state. Additionally, China and Myanmar has close diplomatic ties however China has stated that if the current government continues to defy democratisation and expectations in the forma Myanmar could lead to the weakening in relations between the two countries. Both France and United Kingdom demands an end to the action of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Myanmar government on the Rohingya people. The United States of America also demands an end to the action of ethnic cleansing carried out by the Myanmar government on the Rohingya people however at the same time thinks that diplomatic conversations will not work anymore and that other actions against the Myanmar government is needed. Lastly, as a supporter of Southeast Asia's government countries such as Myanmar, Russia supports Myanmar in their method of tackling the crisis.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
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1962 - 1977	The Rohingya loses citizenship in Burma and is forced to flee to Bangladesh. Most claimed to encounter army abuses, however the military disregards any allegations.
1978	Many Rohingya refugees returns from Bangladesh to their originated country after UN negotiations.
1982	A new immigration law under the British rule in Burma is introduced, where any displaced individual is identified as “illegal immigrant”.
1989	The country changes its name from Burma to Myanmar.
June 2012	Religious rampage between Rohingya Muslims and Rakhine Buddhists kills at least 80 with over 100 000 displaced.
Dec 2012	UN General Assembly adopts resolution 67/233 to accelerate government’s effort on protecting the rights of ethnic minorities and addressing discrimination and violence between Rakhine Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims.
Mar 2013	UN Human Rights Council approves resolution 22/20 on humanitarian aids for Rohingya refugees.
Aug 2013	Buddhist rioters burns down Muslim households, escalating national tension once again.
2016	The militant group Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army attacks border guards forces in Myanmar, resulting in 9 deaths and over 150 000 Rohingya Muslims fleeing to Bangladesh.

Treaties and Events, UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions

Overall, the issue of Myanmar not only concerns the habitants of Myanmar but also the P5 members and the United Nations in general. Many meetings were held specifically in the United Nations

Human Rights Council and the Security Council to tackle the issue of Myanmar. On a short term solution that is to reduce the outflow of the refugees by building camps and proper sanitation at the borders of country that neighbors Myanmar. These camps should establish Myanmar for the Rohingya people and stabilize the region. On a long term, the Rakhine state can be separated into a country with a predominant Muslim population governed by their own laws.

S/RES/45	The resolution recommended Burma (Myanmar) for UN membership.
A/67/457/Add.3 and Corr.1	Progress report of the issue of human rights in Myanmar.
A/HRC/13/48	Progress report of the issue of human rights in Myanmar.
A/65/368*	Report of the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar.
S/PV.8060	UN Secretary-General António Guterres briefed the Council on the crisis in Myanmar at the request of Egypt, France, Kazakhstan, Senegal, Sweden, the United Kingdom and the United States.

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