

## MYANMAR: A People Facing Buddhist Violence

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Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) has a population of 48 million, 15 percent of whom are Muslims. Most of the rest are Buddhists. The Muslims live in the Arakan region of the country.

Arakan is the country's richest region in terms of oil and natural gas deposits, and its people first came to Islam by means of Arab merchants. This turning towards Islam culminated with the establishment of an Islamic state in 1430. This state survived for 350 years, until the Buddhists put an end to it by conquering Arakan.

Immediately after the Muslims lost political power in 1783, the Burmese Buddhists embarked on a policy of oppressing and even physically eliminating them. The country was then colonized by the British towards the end of the nineteenth century.

The anti-Muslim campaign waged by the Buddhists gained momentum in the twentieth century, and there was a terrible massacre in Arakan in 1942 which resulted in the deaths of 100,000 Muslims, and left hundreds of thousands either crippled or forced to flee their land.

The military regime in Myanmar began a full-scale war against the Muslims, with mosques, imams and devout believers particularly singled out for attack. Muslim students were forced to receive Buddhist education in the capital of Arakan. Muslim women were taken to camps, under the pretext of being given "professional training," and were then raped. Those who became pregnant were forced to marry members of the Buddhist security force. Villages were destroyed, houses turned into police stations, and those who were thus left homeless faced hunger and poverty.

Burma gained independence in 1948 with the end of British rule. Yet, the new rulers made life even more intolerable for Muslims. The communist general Ne Win, who came to power in a military coup in 1948, mobilized all the forces of the state to wipe out the Muslims. The "Burmese Socialist Party Program" aimed at using all possible means to turn Muslims away from their religion.

This meant Muslims being stripped of all their political rights. All Islamic educational facilities, mosques and similar places were also closed down. Mosques were turned into places of entertainment or Buddhist temples. Going on the pilgrimage (hajj), sacrificing animals, group prayer and other such forms of religious observance were all banned. On account of all this pressure, some of the Muslim population had to flee the country. Yet despite this emigration, the majority of the population of Arakan was still Muslim. Gen. Ne Win therefore stepped up the pressure, and turned to illegal arrests and torture towards this end. As a result of these ruthless practices, more than a million Muslims were obliged to leave Burma. In order to conceal the savagery that was being carried out, the Burmese government for many years refused to allow in foreign journalists and even tourists.

According to reports from international human rights organizations, some 20,000 Arakan Muslims were killed by this repressive regime between 1962 and 1984. Hundreds of women were raped and all the Muslims' belongings were confiscated. State communications were used to spread lies and slander about Islam. In 1978, the ravages of the army led to more than 200,000 Muslims having to flee to Bangladesh under the most difficult conditions. They returned under U.N. protection in 1979.60

In order to portray Arakan as a Buddhist province, the Ne Win government began a refugee operation under the name of "King Dragon." People living in small villages were herded into camps. Villages and mosques were destroyed, and there were many murders, rapes, arrests and incidents of torture. In 1978, some 200,000 Muslims abandoned Arakan and fled to Bangladesh. Yet the refugee camps in that country simply brought them poverty, hunger and disease. These pictures give an idea of the human suffering being lived out in the Rohingya refugee camps.

Following the resignation of Ne Win in 1988, various military and civilian administrations came and went, and more than 3,000 people were killed in the uprisings that broke out during this period. In 1992 it emerged that 700 members of the Muslim minority living by the border with Bangladesh had been drowned. More than 1,000 people were the victims of extra-judicial killings in 1994.

The rape and torture inflicted on Muslim women in Myanmar still appear in human rights reports every year. Yet for some reason, the West's response is one of silent indifference.

One of the greatest problems facing the defenseless Muslim population in Myanmar is that they are unable to communicate with the outside world to make known what is being done to them. That is because the government forbids anyone to enter the country by land, and even though one can enter it by air, many regions are closed to foreigners. It is a most difficult task to establish the details of the suffering being inflicted on the Muslims of Myanmar.

## THE DIMENSIONS OF CRUELTY

(1942-1996) SETTLEMENTS DESTROYED 10-15,000 MIGRATION AROUND 2

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DESTROYED 5,000 DISAPPEARED 50,000 UNEMPLOYED OR WITH NO

MEANS OF SUPPORT 1 MILLION Another wave of mistreatment took place in the 1990s, during which another 200,000 people had to flee to Bangladesh.<sup>61</sup> Refugees fleeing the oppression in Myanmar find themselves facing terrible human dramas. Bangladesh is a very poor Muslim nation, and finds it difficult to feed and shelter refugees from Myanmar, although it does let them in.

All Muslims must hear the cries for help rising up from Myanmar and Bangladesh. In the Qur'an, Allah commands people to help the poor, those who are driven from their homes and those in need. It is the duty of all Muslims to prepare an environment in which those forced from their countries can be made comfortable, to make sacrifices in order to help them, and to show them support and love. Examples of this are given in the Qur'an, which reveals the proper attitude to be adopted by Muslims towards those driven from their homes: It is for the poor of the emigrants who were driven from their homes and wealth desiring the favor and the pleasure of Allah and supporting Allah and His Messenger. Such people are the truly sincere. (Qur'an, 59: 8) Those who were already settled in the abode, and in belief, before they came, love those who emigrated to them and do not find in their hearts any need for what they have been given and prefer them to themselves even if they themselves are needy. It is the people who are safe-guarded from the avarice of their own selves who are successful. (Qur'an, 59: 9)

As the Qur'an reveals, believers are those who offer the hand of friendship to those whom they love. When this praiseworthy morality comes to be widely practiced throughout the world, then the poverty and other problems facing the refugees will all be solved.

Alongside the terrible poverty in the Rohingya refugee camps (below), Buddhists in Myanmar enjoy a life of plenty.

Source: <http://www.harunyahya.com/spring19.php> please buy his book. The above is taken from his book "The Winter Of Islam And The

Spring To Come" . you can buy it directly from his

website: <http://www.bookglobal.net/xcart/customer/product.php?productid=621>