

ISSUE 12

DECEMBER 2024



ARAKAN

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)



Photo courtesy: UN Women/Allison Joyce



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Editorial

Human Trafficking of Rohingyas: A Financial Boon and a Tool for Ethnic Cleansing in Arakan

Human trafficking is a persistent and harrowing issue worldwide, but in Myanmar, it has taken on a distinctly political and strategic dimension. The plight of the Rohingya people, who have faced systematic persecution, statelessness, and forced displacement for decades, has now been exacerbated by the insidious nexus of trafficking networks, military interests, and political maneuvering. It has become a grim lifeline for many displaced Rohingyas, driven by desperation to escape persecution in Myanmar's Arakan (Rakhine) State. However, this exodus is not just a humanitarian tragedy but a complex scheme benefitting powerful stakeholders. Both the Myanmar military and the Arakan Army (AA) exploit human trafficking networks, deriving financial profits while systematically working toward their shared goal: a Rohingya-free Arakan. The trafficking route, especially by sea, is fraught with dangers, turning a human rights crisis into a lucrative and deadly industry.





A Calculated Strategy of Displacement

The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim minority, have been subjected to decades of institutional discrimination, violence, and forced displacement. Stripped of citizenship under Myanmar's 1982 nationality law, they have become one of the world's most vulnerable populations. The military's brutal campaigns, particularly the 2017 "clearance operations," drove hundreds of thousands of Rohingya into neighboring Bangladesh and other countries. This exodus created fertile ground for human trafficking networks.

This forced displacement is part of a broader strategy to ethnically cleanse Arakan State. By erasing the Rohingya population through violence and coercion, the military ensures that the region becomes dominated by the Rakhine Buddhist majority, securing control over land and resources while reducing international pressure to reintegrate the displaced population. Desperate for safety, livelihoods, or reunification with family members, Rohingya refugees often fall prey to traffickers promising safe passage to other countries.

Human Trafficking as a Financial Windfall

The trafficking networks preying on Rohingyas are not merely criminal enterprises but are often complicit with state and non-state actors. The Myanmar military profits directly from these operations, taking bribes and fees from traffickers to facilitate movement across borders or through checkpoints. Reports from survivors indicate that traffickers often operate with the tacit approval of military officials, who profit from the desperation of stateless people.

Similarly, the Arakan Army has been accused of benefiting financially from trafficking routes.

While the AA claims to fight for the autonomy of the Rakhine people, its interests align with the military when it comes to excluding Rohingyas from the region. By taxing traffickers or directly participating in smuggling operations, the AA secures funds for its insurgency while contributing to the removal of Rohingyas from its envisioned ethno-nationalist state.

The Military's Role in Weaponizing Trafficking

The Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) has long viewed the Rohingya as a demographic and cultural threat to the Buddhist-majority nation. By fostering conditions that push Rohingyas to flee, the military indirectly facilitates human trafficking. Reports suggest that military officials themselves profit from these networks, taking bribes to allow trafficking routes to operate unimpeded. Beyond financial gain, the military benefits strategically: every Rohingya trafficked out of Myanmar represents one less individual contesting the region's demographic makeup or asserting claims to land and resources. This tactic aligns with the military's broader goal of altering the ethnic composition of the region. By depopulating areas historically inhabited by Rohingyas, the military effectively erases their presence and reduces international pressure to grant them citizenship or rights to return.



The Arakan Army's Complicity

While the Arakan Army (AA) initially emerged as a Rakhine nationalist force resisting the Myanmar military, its role in the Rohingya crisis is more complex. The AA seeks greater autonomy for the Rakhine people and control over Arakan State, but its vision does not include coexistence with the Rohingyas. The AA has been accused of participating in campaigns of intimidation against Rohingyas and turning a blind eye to trafficking activities in areas under its control. For the AA, the trafficking of Rohingyas serves multiple purposes. It aligns with their objective of establishing an ethnically Rakhine state, free of the Rohingya presence. Additionally, the profits from trafficking networks can fund their insurgency, helping them sustain their fight against the Tatmadaw while consolidating local control.

The Deadly Peril of Sea Trafficking

The sea trafficking of Rohingya refugees poses deadly perils, marked by frequent capsizing and drowning, exploitation and abuse, and prolonged stranding at sea. Fleeing persecution in Myanmar, many Rohingya embark on treacherous journeys aboard overcrowded, rickety boats prone to capsizing, leading to countless deaths by drowning. Traffickers and smugglers often subject them to brutal exploitation and abuse, including extortion, forced labor, and violence, further compounding their suffering. For those who survive, the nightmare continues as they are frequently stranded at sea for weeks or months, abandoned without adequate food, water, or medical care. This maritime crisis underscores the urgent need for coordinated regional and international action to protect the Rohingya and address the root causes of their perilous flight.



The Role of Trafficking in Ethnic Cleansing

Trafficking plays a sinister role in ethnic cleansing and genocide, functioning as a mechanism for population reduction, economic exploitation, and international deflection. By forcibly relocating or displacing targeted groups, trafficking reduces their numbers in contested regions, erasing their presence and severing ties to ancestral lands. This systematic removal disrupts community cohesion, aiding the broader goals of ethnic cleansing. Economically, trafficked individuals are exploited for forced labor, sexual exploitation, or organ trade, generating illicit profits that can fund further atrocities or sustain oppressive regimes. On the global stage, trafficking often shifts international focus from the deliberate nature of ethnic cleansing or genocide to the humanitarian crisis it creates. This deflection reframes these crimes as migration or trafficking issues, obscuring their genocidal intent and complicating efforts for accountability and intervention.

A Call for Accountability and Action

The intertwined crises of human trafficking and ethnic cleansing in Arakan demand **urgent international action. Key measures include:**

1. Crackdown on Trafficking Networks: The crackdown on trafficking networks is a critical effort to combat the exploitation of vulnerable Rohingyas fleeing persecution and dire living conditions in Myanmar and neighboring regions. These networks often prey on Rohingya refugees, promising safe passage to other countries but subjecting them to human trafficking, forced labor, and abuse. Governments and international organizations need to intensify efforts to dismantle these criminal operations by enhancing border security, conducting joint investigations, and prosecuting traffickers.

2. Humanitarian Aid and Protection: Tackling the human trafficking of Rohingyas requires a comprehensive approach that combines stringent law enforcement with robust humanitarian aid and protection measures. To combat this, governments and international agencies must strengthen border controls, prosecute traffickers, and dismantle trafficking networks. Equally crucial is the provision of humanitarian aid that addresses the root causes of vulnerability, such as poverty, lack of education, and limited access to basic services. Protection measures, including safe shelter, psychosocial support, and legal assistance for survivors, are vital for their recovery and reintegration.

3. Addressing Root Causes: Addressing the root causes is essential to effectively combat the human trafficking of Rohingyas, as it targets the underlying vulnerabilities that traffickers exploit. The systemic persecution, statelessness, and lack of basic rights force many Rohingyas to seek unsafe migration routes, leaving them susceptible to exploitation. Efforts to reduce trafficking must begin with addressing these structural issues, including recognizing their ethnic and citizenship rights, ensuring their safety, and providing access to education, healthcare, and livelihoods. Regional cooperation is also crucial to create safe and legal migration pathways while supporting communities. By tackling the socio-political and economic drivers of Rohingya displacement, the cycle of exploitation can be broken, offering sustainable solutions and reducing the dangerous, irregular migration routes.



Photo courtesy: Ruben Flamarique/Austcare

4. Justice for Detained Rohingya: The plight of Rohingya victims languishing in jails across Myanmar, India, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Malaysia underscores the urgent need for justice and humanitarian intervention. Many of these individuals are criminalized for seeking refuge or are detained indefinitely due to their stateless status. Detained Rohingyas often endure overcrowded and inhumane conditions, deprived of legal representation, medical care, and contact with their families. To address this, governments must reevaluate detention policies, ensuring that asylum seekers are treated in accordance with international human rights standards. Legal frameworks should facilitate the identification and release of victims of trafficking and persecution while offering alternatives to detention, such as community-based housing. Advocacy efforts should also focus on securing diplomatic and regional commitments to uphold the dignity and rights of detained Rohingyas, paving the way for their reintegration into society or safe resettlement. Advocacy efforts should also focus on securing diplomatic and regional commitments to uphold the dignity and rights of detained Rohingyas, paving the way for their reintegration into society or safe resettlement.

The Human Cost and International Implications

The Rohingya are caught in a vicious cycle. Traffickers exploit their desperation, while the military and AA benefit from their displacement. Those who survive trafficking often end up in precarious situations—imprisoned, forced into labor, or trapped in exploitative conditions in foreign countries. Meanwhile, the international community struggles to address the root causes of their plight, focusing instead on temporary relief measures in refugee camps or resettlement programs. The complicity of state and non-state actors in trafficking raises urgent questions about accountability. The failure to address these issues enables the ongoing marginalization of the Rohingyas, further entrenching their statelessness and eroding their prospects for justice or return.



Photo courtesy: UN Women/Allison Joyce

The trafficking of Rohingyas is not merely a criminal enterprise but a calculated component of a broader strategy to erase their identity and claim over Arakan. It is a tragedy of human lives commodified and exploited, with the complicity of those in power. Addressing this issue is not only a moral imperative but also a crucial step in ensuring peace and stability in Myanmar's Arakan region. Only by acknowledging and confronting the intertwined roles of trafficking, military interests, and political agendas can the international community hope to reverse the systematic marginalization of the Rohingya.



WOMEN, PEACE, AND SECURITY AGENDA



What is the WPS Agenda?

The UN Security Council first adopted resolution 1325 on Women Peace and Security in 2000. This resolution focused on the impact of conflict on women and the contribution women make to conflict resolution and sustainable peace.

Resolution 1325 has four pillars:

The role of women in conflict prevention

Women's participation in peacebuilding

Protection of women and girls during and after conflict

Women's specific needs during repatriation, resettlement, and for rehabilitation, reintegration and post-conflict reconstruction.

After resolution 1325 there have been many other resolutions which have passed focusing on peacebuilding and peacemaking and another set of resolutions have passed which focus on conflict-related sexual violence. [You can learn more about Women, Peace and Security here: <https://dppa.un.org/en/women-peace-and-security>].

Why should Rohingya people pay attention to the WPS Agenda?

Given the high levels of violence perpetrated by different actor's which women and girls in the Rohingya community face and given the high volumes of violence throughout Myanmar among other ethnic communities, the WPS Agenda has a critical role to play. As a result of the violence and in order to protect future generations from harm, it is important that Rohingya women are brought in at all stages of peacebuilding and peacemaking so that they can ensure solid futures for the Rohingya community.

Rohingya leaders such as Razia Sultana, has created programs within the Rohingya community to assist and help women heal from their traumatic experiences, but she has also been recognized for her work around the world in raising women leaders within the Rohingya community.



Razia Sultana receives International Women of Courage Award from US State Department

What is being done with the WPS agenda in Myanmar?

Organizations such as the Women's League of Burma continue to raise awareness on the importance of the WPS Agenda throughout Myanmar. In 2021 WLB held a campaign WLB to end the "nationwide pattern of sexual violence in conflict and to hold military junta accountable for sexual violence in conflict." At a UN meeting in November 2024, Moon Nay Li of the WLB gave a statement on the WPS Agenda, where she stated, "In 2023, we have an opportunity to develop a comprehensive WPS framework for Burma (by bottom-up approach method). The objective of the framework is to ensure clear guidelines for all democratic stakeholders to address WPS during the revolution and the interim period; a framework to collectively assess the women peace and security situation in Burma/Myanmar, including the opportunities, threats and implications. It also called for inclusive and meaningful participation of women." Thanks to the tremendous efforts of organizations such as WLB, the WPS agenda continues to be a focal point in Myanmar.

[Learn more here:
<https://www.womenofburma.org/statements/panel-advancing-women-peace-and-security-agenda-asia-pacific-region>].

Further, it is important to stress that the last UN Special Envoy for Myanmar, Noeleen Heyzer and the new Envoy, Julie Bishop have both continued to emphasize the importance of the WPS Agenda.

What can Rohingya community do to elevate the WPS Agenda?

It is important that any time any advocacy is done on behalf of Rohingya issues that women are included in the process and that women participate in large issue impacting the entire Rohingya community such as repatriation and justice and accountability.

It is important to foster programs that strive for peacemaking and peacebuilding, particularly among ethnic groups within Myanmar. Fostering such relationships and starting dialogue not only helps to advance the WPS Agenda, but it also helps to dispel myths that surround the Rohingya community.



Cautious Optimism Marked by Concern at New Bangladesh Diplomacy

Whether Bangladesh will change its failed approach towards the Rohingya crisis is a quiet topic of discussion in the refugee camps nowadays. The chatter has grown louder in recent months after a new foreign adviser Touhid Hossein confessed previous policy failures and the Chief Adviser opened a new high ranking position solely dedicated to deal with the Rohingya crisis. Khalilur Rahman, a career diplomat, was appointed as the 'High Representative on Rohingya Problem and Priority Issues Affairs' to chief adviser professor Muhammad Yunus.

In the first days of the refugee crisis it seemed that Bangladesh and Rohingya would stand together to fight a common fight against the genocidal forces of ethnic nationalism and Buddhist extremism. Rohingya refugee population were moved to tears when former Prime Minister

Shiekh Hasina visited the camps in 2017. This was followed by her declaration at the United Nations General Assembly that Bangladesh would support the creation of safe zones inside the Arakan. Such hopes were soon dashed.



Support from Bangladesh is coveted among the Rohingya. As a majority Muslim country and the only nation bordering Arakan, Bangladesh has long been seen as a place of refuge and support for the Rohingya. No other nation in the world is considered as important as Bangladesh.

Optimism regarding Bangladesh was short lived. Very soon the former government forgot Rohingyas. The ethnic minority quickly went from oppressed Muslims to unwanted guests. Bangladesh seconded its Myanmar policy to superpower China. The world's second most powerful nation has excellent relations with many of the ethnic groups fighting to overthrow half a century of oppressive rule by the Tatmadaw. However, unlike other ethnic groups, China had never approached the Rohingya. In recent years, the land inhabited by the Rohingyas were reportedly being considered important from a resource centric approach by China. There have been suspicions among the Rohingya that China was more comfortable with the absence of the Rohingyas from these lands.

Such absence was assured by the riots of 2012 and the clearance operation of 2017. The Rohingya suspected that China had no interest in their return to North Arakan as it would be detrimental for their commercial prospects. While Chinese support in the 2017 genocide is unproven, many Rohingyas nevertheless have deep suspicions regarding the superpower neighbour, a feeling common in other parts of Myanmar.

In the next few years talks of repatriation involving China yielded no results. By then the Rohingyas were more or less assured that Chinese involvement had killed chances of a cooperative approach from the then Bangladesh government.

The Rohingya were too occupied with events of Arakan to focus on changes in Bangladesh government. The period of street protests that brought down 16 year rule of Sheikh Hasina coincided with a significant spike of violence in Northern Arakan especially in the Maungdaw township. July and August were two of the bloodiest months for Rohingya since 2017 with hundreds being killed, often by AA combat drones firing at civilian areas without any provocation. Killings reached a peak on August 5 when more than 300 people were bombed from the air as they tried to make their way through the Naaf river for safety in Bangladesh.

Yet many Rohingyas were cautiously pleased when a new government with notable faces from the Bangladesh civil society was formed. Such figures are generally considered to be more friendly to Rohingyas than hard nosed politicians of the previous regime. Subsequent diplomatic initiatives have brought some hope to a Rohingya community depressed by the slow pace of affairs that have been the hallmark after the flurry of 2017.

But if Bangladesh diplomacy is dependent on the whims of the Arakan Army, an entity that is deemed as dangerous as the Tatmadaw, there will be few takers in the refugee community. Not a single Rohingya will consider any zone in Arakan safe as long as safety guarantees are given by the Arakan Army. This will lead to a huge communication gap between the refugees and the Bangladesh government in future.

After seven years of the refugee crisis, Rohingya is grateful to Bangladesh for the shelter it provides when the forces of Buddhist nationalism wants to erase Muslim existence in Arakan. However, for long term survival, the Rohingya looks at the diplomacy of Bangladesh, rather than its humanitarian objectives, though there is no doubt that the people and government of Bangladesh provide a vital lifeline for the beleaguered population. While there is some hope that Bangladesh diplomacy might address the interests of the Rohingya refugee population, optimism is not a luxury that Rohingyas can afford.

China calls the shots in Shan, less so in Arakan



Photo courtesy: Free Malaysia Today

The last week of October 2023 will probably be remembered in Myanmar for a long time. On 27th October last year, the Three Brotherhood Alliance consisting of three powerful EAOs conducted Operation 1027. In the next few weeks, the military rulers of Myanmar suffered defeat after defeat losing vast swathes of territory in Northern Shan state along the Chinese border and received a blow to their morale from which they are unlikely to recover.

There is little doubt the operations turned the tables on the Junta. The Three Brotherhood armies made up of the Myanmar National Democratic Alliance Army (the Kokang army which is the de facto leader of the entire Brotherhood Alliance), the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and Arakan Army planned and executed the most decisive military victory over the Tatmadaw. The military operation had a ripple in different ethnic areas. The latest blow to the Junta took place at the end of December this year with the liberation of southern Chin state. Although the resistance movement of Chin state that had fought a brave but hard war against the Tatmadaw in the West were not part of the Three Brotherhood, they were surely spurred on by the regime's defeat in the Northern theatre of war. Of course for the Rohingyas, much more striking is the change of ownership of Maungdaw town and all frontier areas from the dreaded Tatmadaw to the equally feared Arakan Army.



Photo courtesy: Free Malaysia Today

One of the prevailing strategic factors marking the success of Operation 1027 is the support provided by China. The world's second most powerful nation has provided tacit support in this regard, and most analysts say that was key to the success of the rebels. Yet in December this year, Chinese pressure persuaded the Ta'ang National Liberation Army and the MNDAA to agree to ceasefires with the Junta forces. China is seen to play a balancing game in Myanmar with support for the Tatmadaw as well as powerful EAOs fighting the regime.

Yet, Chinese influence does not seem to have worked in the western regions of the country. The Arakan Army, long seen to have been running on Chinese influence has not stopped its offensive while the liberation forces of the Chin state have announced major battlefield victories. Not that China does not consider Arakan important. The Kyaukphyu seaport especially has the potential to be a geostrategic game changer for China.

The issue of Rohingya repatriation in Bangladesh has long been taken to the arena of Chinese diplomacy. Dhaka had previously hoped that China would pressure 'ally' Myanmar to accept Rohingyas. Yet Chinese influence is not as strong in the western regions of the country as in the North. Even in those areas, China was not able to pressure the Myanmar regime to stop its criminal enterprises which in turn persuaded China to support the Brotherhood EAOs in their 1027 Operation that has wrecked the very foundations of the Tatmadaw.

The ground realities in the Western part of the nation were very different. Unlike China, Myanmar's western neighbours have always been less involved in the affairs of Myanmar. Yet the state of affairs of Myanmar have a huge impact on both India and Bangladesh, especially the latter which has housed more than a million Rohingya refugees since 2017. Bangladesh, which has good relations with China, tried to make it work by depending on their giant friend. But Bangladesh's previous government probably miscalculated the deeply complicated relationship between China and Myanmar (as well as China's interests in Arakan). Also, China's influence on the North and West of Myanmar is not the same. In fact, it is Bangladesh that has a distinct geographical proximity to Arakan which no other nation can match. Despite this geographical reality, all affairs on Rohingya repatriation were ceded to China. The result has been predictable, not a single Rohingya has been persuaded to return under these negotiations. The new government of Bangladesh has signaled a change in track but whether they can figure out the complicated realities of a fractured Myanmar remains to be seen.



Photo courtesy: Free Malaysia Today

Myanmar Changes, But Rohingya Genocide Continues As Usual

Unexpected changes are expected in Myanmar. It wasn't very long ago the military rulers acquitted Aung San Suu Kyi and other political prisoners from prison, embarking on a process of dramatic political reform. Very soon a dream was born where the once hated enemies of [1] democracy would help bring change in a nation that was once mentioned in the same breath as North Korea.

Then in February 2021, the dream ended abruptly (as many had warned it would) when the Tatmadaw cancelled the country's second 'democratic era' elections and threw Suu Kyi back in custody. Along with Suu Kyi went all hopes of the 'peaceful democratic transition'.

But what happened next was stunning. As the Tatmadaw-led forces cracked down on unarmed protesters, the people decided to change that. They armed themselves and started what became known as the Spring revolution.

The war is proving as unpredictable as Myanmar itself. Few expected the ragtag People's Defense Forces to make much headway against the Tatmadaw, at least in the early years of the war. The Tatmadaw was a force steeped in counterinsurgency operations and most analysts agreed it was a battle-hardened efficient entity. Against the calculations, the tide turned against the Tatmadaw with numerous EAOs and PDFs taking control of vast swathes of country.

But for one group of people, it is business as usual. The country's long-suffering Rohingya Muslims remain stuck in a foreign country as refugees.

They have not been able to start protests against their oppressors, let



Photo courtesy: Wikimedia Commons

along any war. The Spring revolution is Rohingya free.

The scenario of the Rohingya population remains static even as the political landscape of their homeland changes at lightning speed with the feared Arakan Army ousting the genocidal Junta forces from their hometown of Maungdaw. As always, everything significant has been a very un-Rohingya affair, with the Rohingya Muslim population looking, running and dying as two opposing forces fought each other.

The world might have been surprised when they saw hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims crossing the border in 2017 from their invisible homeland into Bangladesh. But for Rohingya as well as for Myanmar, it was the sum total of a genocidal process that had been going on for half a century. The fact that it came as a surprise for the rest of the world was surprising for many Rohingyas who had cried out about genocide for many years. The build up to 2017 was not hidden very well from the international community and even former president Thein Sein had openly said Rohingyas should be expelled to Bangladesh or other nations. This meant killing a large number of them and there was no secrecy involved, rather it was a populist cry against Muslims. Among many things unexpected happening in Myanmar, the calculation of Rohingya genocide was so expected that it might seem morbidly comforting to many Burma watchers who are always hit with a flurry of unexpected events.

Equally expected is the reaction to the latest reports involving the Rohingya. This year, Rohingyas are saying at least 3,000 of their people have been killed by the Arakan Army, with hundreds being killed in the Shahpuri Channel near Bangladesh waters on August 5 by combat drones. The reaction is one of disbelief and downplay, similar to what took place when Rohingya Muslims first complained of genocide by Burmese forces.



Photo courtesy: Free Malaysia Today

Arakan Army's Atrocities Spark Mass Rohingya Exodus: Reports KPN

A new report by Kaladan Press Network, titled *Unravelling the Maungdaw Exodus*, describes the struggles of the Rohingya people in Maungdaw, Northern Rakhine State, during violent events in 2024. The report shares details of widespread displacement, attacks on civilians, and human rights abuses caused mainly by the Arakan Army (AA).



Rohingya Forced from Their Homes

The report shows that thousands of Rohingya were forced to leave Maungdaw town under the claim of ensuring their safety during clashes between the AA and the State Administration Council (SAC). Villages were emptied, and residents were moved to areas controlled by the AA, where they received no food, water, or medical help. Many fled to Bangladesh to escape these harsh conditions. One of the most shocking incidents was the August 5 attack on the Naf River shore. Drone bombings and artillery shelling by the AA killed or injured hundreds of civilians. Witnesses said the attacks came from areas controlled by the AA, rejecting the group's denials.

Exploitation and Abuse

The displaced Rohingya also faced forced recruitment by both the AA and the SAC's armed allies. Those fleeing to Bangladesh were exploited by armed groups and boatmen who stole their belongings and abused them.

Fabrication and Manipulation

The report disputes the AA's claim that Rohingya armed groups like the Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO) and the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) used civilians as shields and blocked them from fleeing. Testimonies in the report show these groups had limited presence but were used as a pretext to justify expelling civilians.

Response from Rohingya Leadership

Nurul Islam, President of the Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA), welcomed the report, saying: "This report is important in showing the reality on the ground and the cruelty Rohingya face. It is urgently needed for violations of Rohingya human rights to be documented and reported."

Call for Urgent Action

The Kaladan Press Network calls for international help to provide humanitarian aid to Rohingya still in Northern Rakhine State.

The findings show the urgent need for global efforts to ensure justice and support for the Rohingya, who remain one of the most vulnerable communities in the region.



Photo courtesy: MD Jamal Photography

Read the full report: <https://kaladanpress.org/unravelling-the-maungdaw-exodus-new-report-sheds-light-on-factors-driving-large-scale-rohingya-displacement-in-maungdaw/>

Desperate Journeys: The Perilous Smuggling of Rohingya Refugees

A harrowing new report by Kaladan Press Network sheds light on the distressing realities faced by Rohingya refugees who, driven by desperation, turn to smugglers and traffickers in search of safety and better lives. Titled *Nightmare Passage*, the report details the brutal conditions experienced by Rohingya attempting to flee oppression in Myanmar and dire circumstances in Bangladeshi refugee camps.

The Path to Peril

The majority of the 61 survivors interviewed for the report had attempted to reach Malaysia via overland smuggling routes through Myanmar. This route, favored for its year-round viability, is rife with dangers, including extortion, sexual violence, starvation, and fatal conditions.



Photo courtesy: MD Jamal Photography

Women and girls made up the majority of travelers, with many driven to migrate for marriage due to poverty and the exploitative dowry system in Rohingya communities. Men, too, cited survival and the need to escape escalating violence in refugee camps as primary motivators.

Shocking Patterns of Abuse

The report outlines horrifying abuses perpetrated by smugglers and authorities. Survivors recounted severe mistreatment, such as starvation, physical violence, and sexual abuse. In some cases, travelers were crammed into trucks under suffocating conditions or left without food and water for days. Arrest by Myanmar authorities added another layer of trauma, with many detainees facing harsh imprisonment and discrimination.

Failed Promises and Deception

Some survivors were intercepted before reaching their destinations. Women were often tricked into sexual captivity or abducted for ransom. In one case, a refugee was sold to traffickers at the start of her journey. Others faced arrests in India, Saudi Arabia, or Turkey, often enduring severe abuse in detention.

Root Causes and Calls for Action

The report highlights that ongoing statelessness, lack of citizenship rights, and apartheid conditions in Myanmar are at the heart of the Rohingya crisis. The authors stress that until full citizenship and the right to return to their homeland are restored, the cycle of unsafe migration will persist.

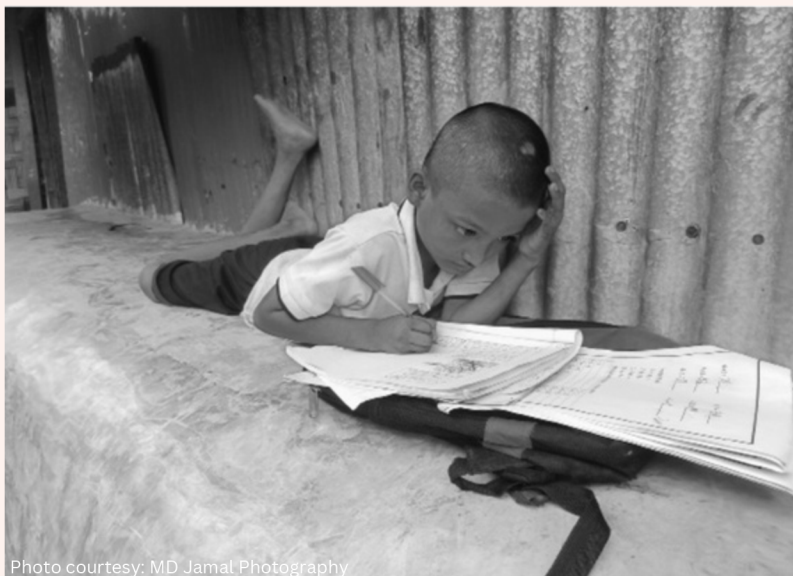


Photo courtesy: MD Jamal Photography

Nurul Islam, the leader of the Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA), welcomed the report, calling it a “vital document that amplifies the voices of the Rohingya and exposes the brutal realities they face.” He emphasized that “restoring full citizenship rights and ensuring a safe return to Myanmar are non-negotiable steps for addressing this ongoing crisis. This report underscores the urgency for the international community to intervene and hold Myanmar accountable.”

Kaladan Press Network has called on the Bangladeshi government to ease restrictions on education and livelihoods for refugees, while urging international donors to provide more support to overcrowded camps.

This report serves as a sobering reminder of the dire situation faced by one of the world’s most persecuted communities and the urgent need for global action to protect their rights and dignity.

For more insights, visit [Kaladan Press Network](#).

ARNA Welcomes Adoption of the Third Committee Resolution on Rohingya Rights

December 2, 2024

The **Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA)** warmly welcomes the adoption of the **Third Committee Resolution** under Agenda Item 71(c) on the *Promotion and Protection of Human Rights*, specifically addressing the *Situation of Human Rights of Rohingya Muslims and Other Minorities in Myanmar*.

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to the **Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC)** and the **European Union (EU)** for tabling this important resolution and demonstrating unwavering commitment to addressing the plight of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar.

This resolution highlights critical priorities, including:

The organization of a **high-level conference in 2025** to develop innovative, concrete, and time-bound plans for a sustainable resolution to the Rohingya crisis. **ARNA welcomes** the focus of the conference on the Rohingya while also noting its **inclusive scope to address the rights and needs of other minorities in Myanmar**. This inclusive approach offers an important opportunity to engage meaningfully with minority groups across Myanmar. **ARNA recognizes the potential for this engagement, including with other minorities, and fully supports efforts to realize this goal.**

Strengthening the **UN's on-ground coordination** in Myanmar through the potential designation of a resident coordinator to ensure efficiency and coherence in addressing human rights challenges.

Renewed emphasis on ensuring the **voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return** of Rohingya refugees.

Regular reporting by the **Special Envoy** to ensure continued attention to the crisis and accountability for all stakeholders involved.

Enhanced Humanitarian Assistance: The resolution emphasizes the need for:

Rapid, full, safe, and unhindered access for humanitarian actors to deliver aid based on the principles of humanity, neutrality, and impartiality.

Addressing food insecurity and ensuring critical supplies reach displaced persons and those in precarious conditions to prevent hunger-induced displacement.

Comprehensive support services for vulnerable groups, including women, children, older persons, and persons with disabilities, with particular focus on victims of sexual and gender-based violence and human trafficking.

Exploring humanitarian corridors to facilitate the delivery of essential goods and services, including food, water, and medicine.

Adequate funding for humanitarian efforts, including the 2024 Joint Response Plan for the Rohingya Humanitarian Crisis.

Continued international support for Rohingya refugees, particularly in Cox's Bazar and Bhashan Char, and equitable burden-sharing through initiatives like the Global Refugee Forum.

The resolution reflects the international community's collective commitment to human rights and justice, offering hope for tangible progress toward resolving the humanitarian crisis in Myanmar.

ARNA stands ready to support the implementation of this resolution and contribute to the high-level conference and other initiatives outlined within it. We will continue to work with the United Nations, OIC, EU, and all relevant stakeholders to ensure that the aspirations and rights of the Rohingya people are upheld.

We urge the international community to sustain its solidarity and transform these commitments into actionable outcomes for the Rohingya and other affected minorities.

For further inquiries, please contact: secretariat@thearna.org



Photo courtesy: Free Malaysia Today

About ARNO

The Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) emerged in 1998 as a broad-based organisation of the Rohingya people with a pledge to promote 'Rohingya unity' and to realise the hopes and aspirations of the Rohingya people.

www.rohingya.org

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