



ARAKAN

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)



Photo courtesy: CWBUK/Edward Morgan



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Lost Futures: The Desperation of Rohingya Youth in a Cycle of Hopelessness

The plight of the Rohingya community remains one of the most pressing humanitarian crises of our time. Among this beleaguered population, the youth—caught in a vortex of statelessness, poverty, and discrimination bear the heaviest burden. Deprived of education, basic rights, and meaningful opportunities, their lives are often marked by despair, forcing many to adopt desperate measures in search of a future that remains tragically out of reach. In the sprawling refugee camps of Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, the air is heavy with a sense of limbo. For the Rohingya youth, the future feels like a distant mirage visible yet unattainable. Their voices, often drowned out by the overwhelming challenges of their community, tell stories of dreams deferred, ambitions thwarted, and lives overshadowed by despair.



Statelessness: The Core of the Crisis

The root of the Rohingya youth's predicament lies in their statelessness. Stripped of citizenship under Myanmar's 1982 nationality law, the Rohingya are rendered invisible legally and socially in their own homeland. This denial of identity deprives them of access to education, healthcare, and employment opportunities. For young Rohingya, the absence of legal recognition is not just an abstract injustice but a tangible barrier that stunts their development and potential. Since fleeing the violence and persecution in Myanmar, the Rohingya have endured an existence marked by uncertainty and deprivation. The young grapple with a profound sense of hopelessness as they face barriers to education, employment, and self-actualization. In the overcrowded refugee camps of Bangladesh, where over a million Rohingya reside, the situation is no better.



These camps, while offering sanctuary from persecution, are far from conducive to fostering hope. Schools are inadequate, underfunded, opportunities for higher education are virtually nonexistent, and employment prospects are limited by legal and societal constraints. Youth grow up in an environment where dreams are often deferred indefinitely. For many Rohingya youth, the lack of legal recognition compounds their struggles. Statelessness strips them of their rights and renders them invisible to the systems that might offer opportunities. This legal limbo not only stifles.

The Vicious Cycle of Poverty and Exploitation

Without education or job opportunities, many Rohingya youth are trapped in a cycle of poverty that perpetuates their marginalization. Unable to envision a future beyond the confines of their camps, some fall prey to exploitative labor practices, while others are lured by the false promises of human traffickers. These desperate paths often lead to further victimization, as they face abuse, imprisonment, or death. The stories of Rohingya youth are marked by unfulfilled potential. Take Amina, a 17-year-old who dreamed of becoming a doctor. Back in her village in Myanmar, she was an eager student, excelling in her classes. But life in the refugee camp has halted her aspirations. Without access to higher education or professional training, Amina now spends her days assisting her family with household chores and wondering if her dreams were nothing more than illusions. Similarly, Karim, a 19-year-old, expresses frustration at the lack of opportunities. "We want to work; we want to contribute. But we are not allowed to do anything. It feels like we are just waiting to die," he says. For youth like Karim, the inability to engage in meaningful activities fosters a sense of futility and despair. Moreover, the psychological toll of such a bleak existence cannot be

overstated. The constant threat of violence, coupled with the lack of stability and resources, fuels mental health issues among Rohingya youth. Depression, anxiety, and hopelessness are pervasive, yet mental health support remains almost nonexistent within the camps.

The Pull of Dangerous Alternatives

In this vacuum of hope, many Rohingya youth are drawn to dangerous alternatives. Human trafficking networks prey on their desperation, promising jobs and a way out of the camps. Some youth, disillusioned by the lack of progress, are vulnerable to recruitment by extremist groups that exploit their frustration. These paths not only jeopardize their safety but also perpetuate cycles of violence and instability within the region. The desperation of Rohingya youth is a stark reminder of the consequences of neglecting a vulnerable population. Yet, their resilience and determination to survive against all odds also signify untapped potential. With the right support, this generation can transform from victims of circumstance to agents of change. The question remains: Will the world step up to provide the opportunities these young people so desperately need? Or will the cycle of hopelessness continue, ensuring that

another generation of Rohingya is lost to despair? The answer lies in our collective will to act decisively and compassionately.

Breaking the Cycle of Hopelessness

The desperation of Rohingya youth is a stark reminder of the consequences of neglecting a vulnerable population. Yet, their resilience and determination to survive against all odds also signify untapped potential. With the right support, this generation can transform from victims of circumstance to agents of change. The question remains: Will the world step up to provide the opportunities these young people so desperately need? Or will the cycle of hopelessness continue, ensuring that another generation of Rohingya is lost to despair? The answer lies in our collective will to act decisively and compassionately. Addressing the despair among Rohingya youth requires a multifaceted approach. The international community, host governments, and humanitarian organizations must work together to create sustainable solutions. Key measures include:

1.Education and Vocational Training: Establishing comprehensive educational programs that offer accredited certifications, and vocational training

can provide youth with skills to build their futures. Digital learning platforms and partnerships with global educational institutions can bridge the resource gap.

2.Legal and Social Recognition:

Efforts must be made to address the statelessness of the Rohingya population. Providing legal documentation and pathways to citizenship or residency will empower youth to access opportunities and participate meaningfully in society.

3.Mental Health Support: The psychological toll of displacement and deprivation is immense. Counseling services, support groups, and recreational activities can help youth process their experiences and build resilience.

4.Economic Opportunities: Host countries and international donors must invest in livelihood programs that allow Rohingya youth to earn a dignified living. Initiatives such as small business grants and partnerships with local industries can open doors for economic participation.

Rohingya youth are not mere victims; they are individuals with aspirations, ideas, and a desire to contribute to their communities. Platforms must be created to amplify their voices, allowing them to advocate for their rights and participate in shaping

solutions to their challenges. As the world grapples with one of the most protracted refugee crises in history, it is crucial to remember that the future of the Rohingya community hinges on its youth. If we fail to address their despair and provide them with the tools to build a better tomorrow, we risk losing an entire generation to hopelessness. The voices of despair must become voices of resilience, courage, and change. This transformation, however, requires the collective effort and unwavering commitment of the global community.



Photo courtesy: Mohammad Ponir Hossain

THE ENDURING MARGINALIZATION OF WOMEN IN WAR-TORN MYANMAR

Myanmar has long been plagued by internal conflicts, ethnic strife, and military rule, with women bearing the brunt of these hostilities. Despite global calls for gender equality, women—especially those from marginalized communities such as the Rohingya—continue to suffer from systemic oppression, violence, and lack of representation in decision-making processes. In war-torn regions, the situation is exacerbated by conflict-related sexual violence and displacement.



Photo courtesy: K M Asad

The Plight of Rohingya Women

The Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim ethnic group, have been subjected to severe persecution by the Myanmar military and nationalist forces. Women from this community have suffered disproportionately, facing mass displacement, statelessness, and gender-based violence. Reports from international organizations have documented widespread sexual violence against Rohingya women, often used as a weapon of war. Rape, forced pregnancies, and human trafficking have been reported extensively, with little to no justice for the victims.

Gender Inequality in Myanmar's Conflict Zones

Women across Myanmar's conflict zones—Rakhine, Kachin, Shan, and Karen states—face severe marginalization. Traditional patriarchal structures, compounded by decades of

militarization, have left women with minimal political power. Although Myanmar has seen some progress in women's representation in politics, grassroots efforts to include women in peace negotiations and governance structures have been largely ignored.

Sexual Violence as a Weapon of War

Both the Myanmar military (Tatmadaw) and ethnic armed groups, including the Arakan Army (AA), have been accused of using sexual violence against women as a tool of intimidation and control. Human rights groups have recorded instances where Rohingya and other ethnic minority women were subjected to rape, forced marriages, and other forms of gender-based violence. The military's longstanding culture of impunity has prevented any significant legal action against perpetrators, leaving victims without justice or reparations.

The Role of the Arakan Army

While the Arakan Army presents itself as a revolutionary force fighting for the rights of the Rakhine people, it too has been implicated in human rights abuses. Reports indicate that Rohingya women have faced violence at the hands of AA militants, further highlighting the complexity of the conflict and the dangers faced by women in Myanmar. As the group gains territorial control, concerns are mounting over how it treats minority populations, particularly Rohingya women.

International Response and the Need for Justice

The international community has repeatedly condemned the atrocities committed against women in Myanmar, with calls for accountability from the International Criminal Court (ICC) and the United Nations (UN). However, justice remains elusive. While some international bodies have imposed sanctions on Myanmar's military leaders, concrete actions to protect women and deliver justice to victims remain inadequate.



Photo courtesy: Mamunur Rashid

The Path Forward: Ensuring Gender Equality

To address the continued marginalization of women in Myanmar, especially in conflict zones, a multi-faceted approach is necessary:

1. **Justice and Accountability:** Perpetrators of sexual violence must be held accountable through international and national legal mechanisms.
2. **Women's Political Participation:** Increased representation of women in peace negotiations, governance, and decision-making is crucial.
3. **Support for Survivors:** Comprehensive psychological, medical, and legal aid must be provided to victims of war crimes and gender-based violence.
4. **International Intervention:** The global community must take stronger measures to pressure the Myanmar government and armed groups to end violence against women and ensure gender equality.

Myanmar's ongoing conflicts continue to disproportionately affect women, particularly those from marginalized communities like the Rohingya. Without justice, accountability, and inclusive peace processes, women in Myanmar will remain victims of systemic oppression and violence. The world must not turn a blind eye to their suffering but rather amplify their voices and demand meaningful change.



Photo courtesy: ANN WANG



Photo courtesy: NyoTwanAwng

The ongoing conflict between the Arakan Army (AA) and the Myanmar military in Rakhine State has placed the Rohingya community in an increasingly precarious position. While the Rohingya have long been victims of systemic persecution and displacement, the recent escalation of violence between these two powerful forces has further exacerbated their plight.

Beyond the humanitarian crisis, the rise of the Arakan Army and its cross-border ties with ethnic groups in Bangladesh's Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT) have raised serious concerns about regional stability and Bangladesh's national security.

Rohingyas Caught Between Arakan Army and Myanmar Military: Implications for Bangladesh's Security and Regional Stability

The Arakan Army's Growing Influence

The Arakan Army, an ethnic armed group fighting for greater autonomy for the Rakhine people, has emerged as a formidable force in Myanmar's complex civil war. Over the past few years, the AA has gained significant control over large parts of Rakhine State, challenging the Myanmar military's authority. While the AA's primary focus is on Rakhine autonomy, its activities have increasingly spilled over into neighboring Bangladesh, particularly through its alleged connections with ethnic insurgent groups in the CHT. The CHT, home to several indigenous communities, has long been a region of political unrest due to historical grievances and demands for greater autonomy. Reports suggest that the Arakan Army has established cross-border ties with some of these groups, leveraging shared ethnic and cultural affinities. These connections have raised alarms in Dhaka, as they could potentially destabilize the already fragile security situation in the CHT and beyond.

Cross-Border Ties and Bangladesh's Security Concerns

Bangladesh, which already hosts over a million Rohingya refugees, is now facing a dual challenge: managing the humanitarian crisis while addressing the security threats posed by the Arakan Army's cross-border activities. The Chittagong Hill Tracts (CHT), which share deep ethnic and historical ties with Rakhine State, have witnessed increasing interactions between armed groups and insurgent factions. The cross-border linkages between Rakhine-based ethnic armed fractions like, Kuki-Chin National Front (KNF), Jana Samhati Samiti (JSS), United People's Democratic Front (UPDF) and UPDF (Democratic) operating within Bangladesh's hilly border regions raise fears of instability and potential security breaches. Recent reports indicate that arms trafficking, illicit trade, and the movement of non-state actors have intensified along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. The Arakan Army's growing influence in Rakhine has emboldened allied ethnic groups in CHT, further complicating the security landscape for Bangladesh. The Bangladeshi government has expressed concerns that the AA's presence near its border could embolden ethnic insurgent groups in the CHT, reigniting old conflicts and undermining efforts to maintain peace in the region. Additionally, the influx of Rohingya refugees has strained Bangladesh's resources and heightened tensions in border areas, creating a volatile environment that could be exploited by armed groups.

Regional Stability and Geopolitical Implications

The expansion of the Arakan Army's control in Rakhine has broader implications for regional stability. Myanmar's prolonged internal strife has already affected neighboring countries, particularly India, China, and Thailand, each of which has distinct strategic interests in the conflict. Bangladesh faces the dual challenge of managing its Rohingya refugee population while preventing its border regions from becoming a theater for foreign insurgencies. The increasing autonomy of the Arakan Army raises concerns over whether Rakhine could become a hub for armed insurgencies with transnational links. If left unchecked, the fluid nature of cross-border militant networks could destabilize South Asia's security architecture. Furthermore, with major regional powers such as China maintaining economic and political interests in Rakhine's strategic coastline, any escalation could draw external actors into the conflict, altering power dynamics across the Bay of Bengal region. Bangladesh has called for a coordinated regional response to address the crisis, emphasizing the need for dialogue between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar government. However, the Myanmar military's reluctance to engage in meaningful negotiations and the AA's determination to achieve its goals through armed struggle have left little room for a peaceful resolution.

The Rohingya Predicament in the Conflict

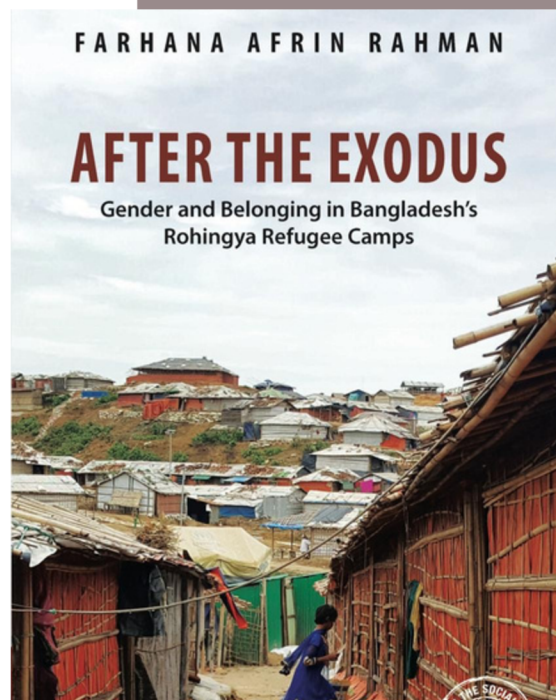
Caught in the crossfire between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar military, the Rohingya community faces renewed threats to their safety and survival. While the Tatmadaw has historically subjected the Rohingya to brutal military campaigns, the Arakan Army's stance on the Rohingya remains complex. The AA has sought to position itself as a protector of all ethnic groups in Rakhine, its primary allegiance lies with the Rakhine people. This has left the Rohingya in a vulnerable position, with neither side fully committed to their protection. As other ethnic groups in Myanmar, including the Arakan Army, have formed their own armed factions to protect their communities, the Rohingya remain one of the few unarmed ethnic groups vulnerable to attacks from multiple sides. The lack of an organized self-defense force has left them exposed to repeated cycles of violence. In Myanmar's complex political landscape, ethnic armed organizations have historically played a significant role in negotiations and peace processes. Groups with armed resistance have been included in

ceasefire agreements, autonomy negotiations, and broader political discussions. Without a self-defense force, the Rohingya risk being sidelined from Myanmar's evolving political structure. A well-organized resistance force could not only protect their community but also strengthen their position in future political negotiations, ensuring they have a voice in shaping Myanmar's governance. The ongoing conflict has also hindered efforts to repatriate Rohingya refugees to Myanmar. Despite agreements between Bangladesh and Myanmar, the lack of a safe and conducive environment in Rakhine State has made repatriation impossible. The international community's failure to hold the Myanmar military accountable for its atrocities has further compounded the crisis, leaving the Rohingya with no viable path to justice or return.

Conclusion

The ongoing conflict in Rakhine State places the Rohingya in an increasingly vulnerable position, with neither the Myanmar military nor the Arakan Army offering them a clear future. The rise of the Arakan Army and its cross-border ties with ethnic groups in Bangladesh's CHT have added a new dimension to the Rohingya crisis, with far-reaching implications for Bangladesh's security and regional stability. As the conflict in Rakhine State continues to escalate, the international community must step up its efforts to address the root causes of the crisis and support a peaceful resolution. As Myanmar's internal war continues, its ripple effects will likely shape the strategic calculus of the region for years to come, making it imperative for regional players to engage in proactive diplomacy and conflict resolution efforts. Without a concerted and coordinated response, the region risks descending into further chaos, with devastating consequences for all involved.

In Conversation with Dr. Farhana Afrin Rahman



Dr. Farhana Afrin Rahman is a Leverhulme Early Career Fellow and Isaac Newton Trust Fellow at the Department of Politics and International Studies, University of Cambridge, as well as a Junior Research Fellow at Wolfson College Cambridge. Prior to this, she was a JSPS Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Tokyo, a Non-Residential Fellow at the Centre for Asia Pacific Refugee Studies at the University of Auckland, and a Fellow at the Harvard University Asia Center. Farhana received her PhD in 2021 from the University of Cambridge's Centre for Gender Studies. Her PhD dissertation was shortlisted for the 2023 ICAS Best Dissertation Prize, and received the accolade for "Most Accessible and Captivating Work for the Non-Specialist Reader". She also holds an MPhil in Multi-Disciplinary Gender Studies from the University of Cambridge (2014), and an Honours Bachelor of Arts in Peace and Conflict Studies, International Relations, and Arabic from the University of Toronto (2011).

Farhana's first book, "After the Exodus: Gender and Belonging in Bangladesh's Rohingya Refugee Camps", was published in November 2024 with Cambridge University Press. Her peer-reviewed articles and chapters have been published in various journals and edited volumes, including Journal of Refugee Studies, Feminist Review, and Journal of International Women's Studies.

Farhana is a recipient of the UNESCO Silk Roads Research Grant 2023 where she is currently conducting a project titled "Gendered Fields of Red Gold: Women and Saffron Along the Silk Road". She is also co-founder of Silkpath Relief Organization (silkpathrelief.org), a non-profit providing humanitarian assistance to individuals devastated by calamities – in Afghanistan, and with Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh and Malaysia. In 2015, she helped to establish the first academic program in gender studies in Afghanistan, based at the American University of Afghanistan in Kabul, where she was a lecturer. Since 2014, Farhana has worked as a consultant providing technical expertise and trainings on gender equality, social policy, and human rights for various projects across the globe. For her extensive research and work contributions to the field of gender and development, Farhana was the 2021 recipient of the Paula Kantor Award from the International Center for Research on Women (ICRW).

1. What motivated you to write and examine the Rohingya genocide, with a focus on gender in the refugee camps?

The majority of discussion surrounding the Rohingya has focused primarily on Myanmar and the larger structural needs of refugees instead of the Rohingyas' particular lived experiences and how they have been affected by genocide and the subsequent forced migration to Bangladesh. My goal with this research was to fill this specific gap in the literature. Discussions of power relations and the reproduction of power asymmetries are often neglected in the dominant literature on refugee women's everyday subjectivities. The narratives of Rohingya women's perception of their own lives and the ways in which they negotiate, navigate, contest, and adjust to their surroundings are vital for understanding how these women forge kinship networks and learn to make a life in their new surroundings. The effects of forced migration on subjectivity are profound – understanding the lived experiences of women and their narratives of change can yield important insights into refugee women's notions about their self, their community, and their gendered bodies.

2. What new information did you learn about the Rohingya people that you did not know before through your research and interviews?

Refugee women are often assumed to be apolitical, disempowered, and non-agentic victims – vulnerable and dependent on men. In my research, I examined the everyday negotiations, contestations, strategies, and coping mechanisms that Rohingya women use to affirm spaces for themselves. Recognizing that they can simultaneously be victimized while remaining active agents of change in their lives provides a clearer understanding of their lives as refugees. My research reveals that Rohingya women do not fit neatly into monolithic discourses that portray them as lacking agency and unable to understand their predicament. Rather, despite their lives being marked by trauma and constraints, this book suggests that through everyday politics, Rohingya refugee women subvert, challenge, and negotiate patriarchal structures and power asymmetries, though in many ways still affirm, bargain, and work within these structures. Strategic choices and bargaining are used to reach aspirations, reclaim identity and agency, and rebuild their lives, and their everyday tactics, creativity, and contestations challenge and overturn deeply embedded gender ideologies regarding women's place in settings after forced migration.

3. Given the context of the Rohingya, how successful do you think UN initiatives like Women Peace and Security Agenda is and how effective is the implementation of programs on the ground?

Programs like the WPS agenda have a lot of work to do to ensure the specific needs of women and girls in the Rohingya refugee camps are addressed. Gender considerations and recommendations I have outlined below will be useful if we want to successfully implement programming on the ground.

4. In the course of your writing and research, how did you find women in the camps implementing programs relating to peacemaking and peacebuilding?

NGOs and other humanitarian development organizations have set up a number of “women-friendly spaces” and “multi-purpose women’s centres” with the aim of providing a safe environment where women and girls can access a variety of resources and services, such as sessions and workshops on gender-based violence and mental health support. While these spaces have all proven to be important for advancing Rohingya women’s access to resources, a significant portion of Rohingya women in the camps are not making use of these NGO-run initiatives, preferring instead to attend the taleem.

Taleem is an Arabic work that literally translates to “education”. It is commonly used by groups in South Asia and refers to gatherings for prayer and supplication. These gatherings are supplementary and not part of the obligatory prayers in Islam. In the camps, women usually attend Taleems on Fridays after Jumu’ah (Friday-afternoon congregational prayer, which in the camps are attended only by men), and generally gather in one of the women’s shelters. However, it can take place on other days as well, depending on the availability of space in one of the women’s shelters.

Taleems are religious gatherings where women come together for prayer and supplication. During the taleem the alima begins with the recitation of short prayers followed by the recitation of the Quran – first in Arabic and then translated into the Rohingya language. During these lessons the women gather together in a semi-circle to reflect on the meanings of the passages the alima has read. After at least an hour (sometimes more) of lessons, and of the women listening, learning, and reflecting on the teachings, the session turns to collective prayer where the group will raise their hands in supplication. Within this space of religious observation and reflection, the women are able to find a momentary sense of therapeutic relief in their collective prayers and tears.

Most Rohingya refugee women in the camps live with tremendous trauma and each has their own horrific experiences of the gender-based violence they faced in Myanmar. The taleem offers a space that evokes memories of positive experiences, providing a sense of belonging, community, safety, and hope that is familiar to them and their culture.

My research on the taleem at the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh reveals the significance of such spaces for Rohingya women as a semblance of home, hope, and well-being. Although the harrowing experiences of forced migration and displacement can lead to a loss of identity and social belonging for Rohingya women, the taleem creates a spiritual, psychological, and emotional haven that allows for bonds and friendships to emerge. It also serves as an important lesson for NGO initiatives that seek to create women-friendly spaces. The taleem shows that self-created spaces that reflect the culture and the experiences of the women themselves and where women have the autonomy to conduct their own activities, can sometimes have the greatest and most profound impact. The success of the taleem highlights one of the key failures of NGOs and aid agency activities.

5. What are some considerations policymakers should consider when it comes to gender among refugee populations, such as the Rohingya?

A number of policy and programming recommendations that should be considered in the implementation of NGO/development programming and policies in the Rohingya refugee camps moving forward are:

1. Make grounded research more accessible to NGOs

Grounded research can provide valuable insights into the lived experiences of people affected by any crisis that an organization is working to address. These insights, and the methodologies employed to gather information, can be used to improve programming in ways that allow for better program outcomes.

2. Recognize personal/institutional biases, and consider principles of gender theory when determining population needs, and program goals and outcomes

When conducting direct-to-user programming – especially those focusing on gendered issues – NGOs and their staff should be aware of their own personal/institutional biases and assumptions, and how this may impact the way they develop and implement programming.

3.Increase cultural understanding prior to program development

Programs must be adjusted and created in response to the specific needs and cultural contexts of the given population.

4.Increase participation of Rohingya refugee women in the design and implementation of project programming

Rohingya refugee women should be increasingly included in the day-to-day design and implementation of NGO programming where they are the intended end-users.

5.Recognize the power hierarchies that exist within the camp

While NGOs seek to provide services in the form of empowerment trainings and resources for women, their efforts may affect and be affected by existing power hierarchies in the camps in unexpected ways. My research revealed how NGO activities are often conducted under the auspices of the patriarchal system of power in the camp.

6.Consider power differentials in programmes that address gender inequality

NGOs with programs that promote gender equality, whether through workshops, trainings, or otherwise, must be mindful of the way power hierarchies operate in the community. Rohingya cultural norms are structured to perpetuate patriarchal hierarchies.

7.Include men in gender-based programming

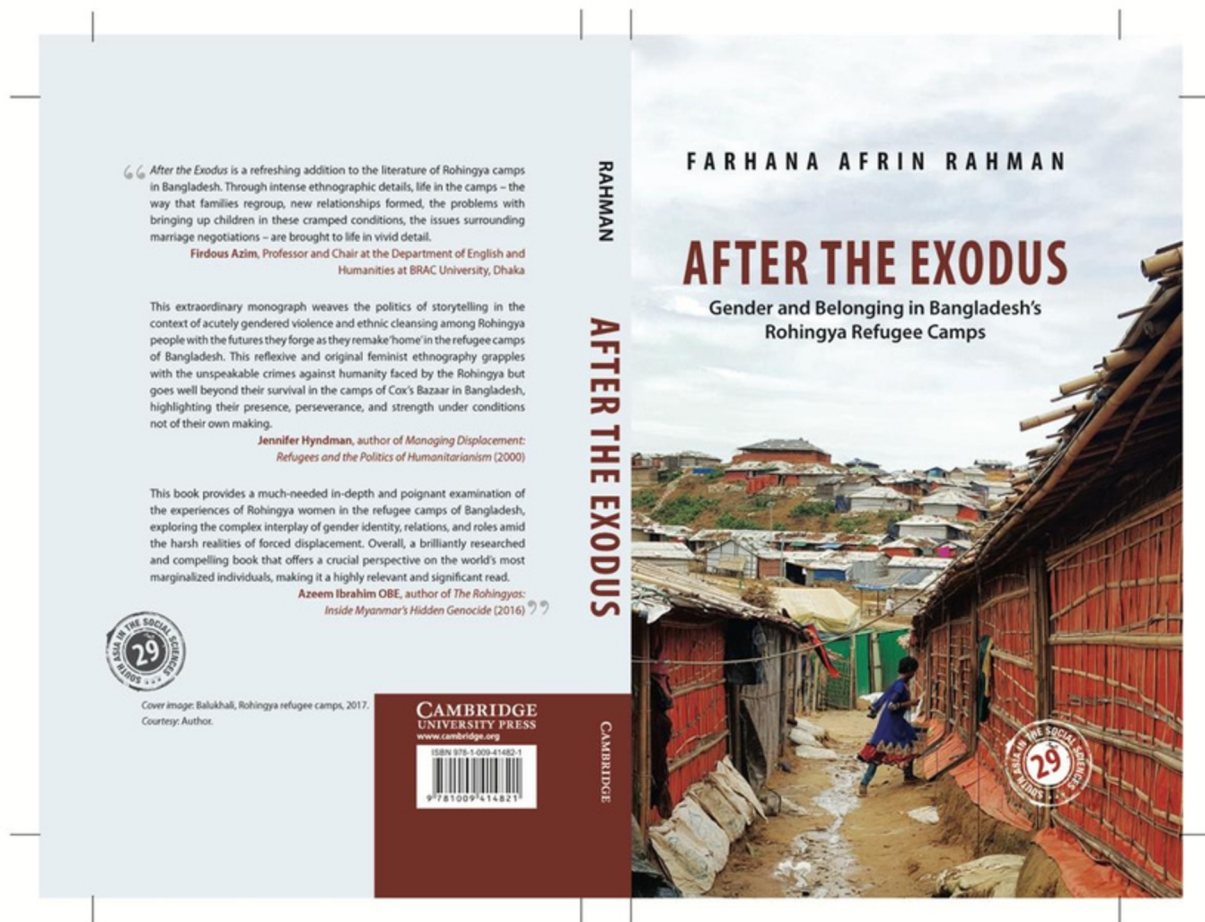
My research found that men's participation in gender-based programming is often limited. Men must be included in some gender-based programming, particularly those related to the promotion of gender equality.

8.Employment opportunities for women must take place alongside the creation of similar opportunities for men

To avoid potential backlash from men, awareness initiatives must stress the importance of employment for both men and women.

6. What tips do you have for activists and scholars in the Rohingya community who want to move conversations about gender forward?

The biggest tip I can offer for activists and scholars in the Rohingya community is to keep using your voice to share your story. Your voices have the power to change hearts and minds and it's important that you are driving force behind the narratives that are shared about your people!



Building Bridges in Southeast Asia:

ARNA's Recent Engagement in Malaysia and Indonesia



By Ronnie

The **Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA)**—a coalition of Rohingya organizations and community leaders — recently completed a series of visits to **Malaysia and Indonesia**. The trip, which took place between **19 February and 1 March 2025**, marked a considered effort to engage with policymakers, academics, and refugee communities within Southeast Asia.

Rather than grandstanding or protesting from the margins, ARNA approached the trip with a focus on institutional dialogue, quiet diplomacy, and community cohesion.



Kuala Lumpur: Bridging Regional Actions and Global Advocacy



The Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA) was a co-organizer of a high-level conference titled “The Rohingya Crisis – Regional Actions and Global Advocacy” held in Kuala Lumpur on February 23, 2025. The venue was the International Islamic University Malaysia (IIUM) in the Ibn Taimiyyah Conference Room at IIUM’s Kulliyah of Economics. This conference brought together international experts, diplomats, and humanitarian leaders to discuss regional strategies and global advocacy for the Rohingya crisis. The Deputy Rector of IIUM, Prof. Dato’ Dr. Mohamad Fauzan Nordin, opened the event with welcome remarks. Key speakers at the Kuala Lumpur conference included ARNA’s chair Nurul Islam, former Malaysian Foreign Minister Tan Sri Dr. Syed Hamid Albar, and Dato’ Ahmad Azam Ab. Rahman (a Malaysian human rights activist serving as a Commissioner on the OIC’s Independent Permanent Human Rights Commission).



These figures addressed topics such as ASEAN’s role, the OIC’s efforts, challenges in Rohingya repatriation, and legal protections for the Rohingya. In addition, a panel of experts from across Asia discussed humanitarian, educational, and legal perspectives – among them Prof. Sheikh Tawfique M. Haque (Bangladesh), Dr. Ahmad El-Muhammady (Malaysia), Dr. Jufitri bin Joha (Malaysia, Chairman of Global Peace Mission), Datin Nur Azlina Abdul Aziz

(Malaysia, on refugee education), Nezamul Hasan (ARNA representative), and Prof. Dr. Salawati Mat Basir (Malaysia, legal scholar). The conference concluded with a call for stronger regional collaboration and a networking session to plan follow-up actions.

The conference adopted a detailed resolution calling for ASEAN leadership in diplomatic efforts, legal accountability for crimes against the Rohingya, and improved humanitarian and educational support. **A significant outcome was the conference's recognition of ARNA as the legitimate representative body for Rohingya affairs.**

Conference Outcome: Recommendations for Action

The Kuala Lumpur conference concluded with a set of recommendations centered on the following themes:

- **Protection and Rights:** An immediate end to violence and the restoration of ethnic rights and full citizenship for the Rohingya, with support for international accountability efforts.
- **Humanitarian Assistance:** Improved delivery and oversight of aid in refugee settings, expanded educational opportunities, and increased involvement of Rohingya women in community projects.
- **Economic Inclusion:** Enhanced access to formal and vocational education, support for entrepreneurship, and advocacy for the right to work.
- **Diplomatic Engagement:** Greater involvement of ASEAN and the wider international community in efforts to resolve the crisis, including political participation for Rohingya representatives.
- **Legal Safeguards:** The development of stronger legal frameworks to protect stateless persons and ensure justice for survivors of rights violations.
- **Community Representation:** Acknowledgment of ARNA's role as a representative body for the Rohingya, with calls for its inclusion in diplomatic, humanitarian, and policy discussions.



Meetings with Malaysian Officials and Community Leaders

Beyond the conference, the delegation met with a number of officials and parliamentarians, including **Dato Ahmad Azam**, Special Advisor to the Foreign Minister. Discussions focused on regional cooperation, the role of ASEAN, and the challenges of long-term refugee presence in Malaysia.

In parallel, ARNA held closed-door meetings with over **20 Rohingya organization representatives** based in the country. These conversations touched on sensitive internal issues, such as coordination, advocacy gaps, and the need for a unified approach to Rohingya concerns within Malaysia.

Jakarta and Medan: Listening and Learning

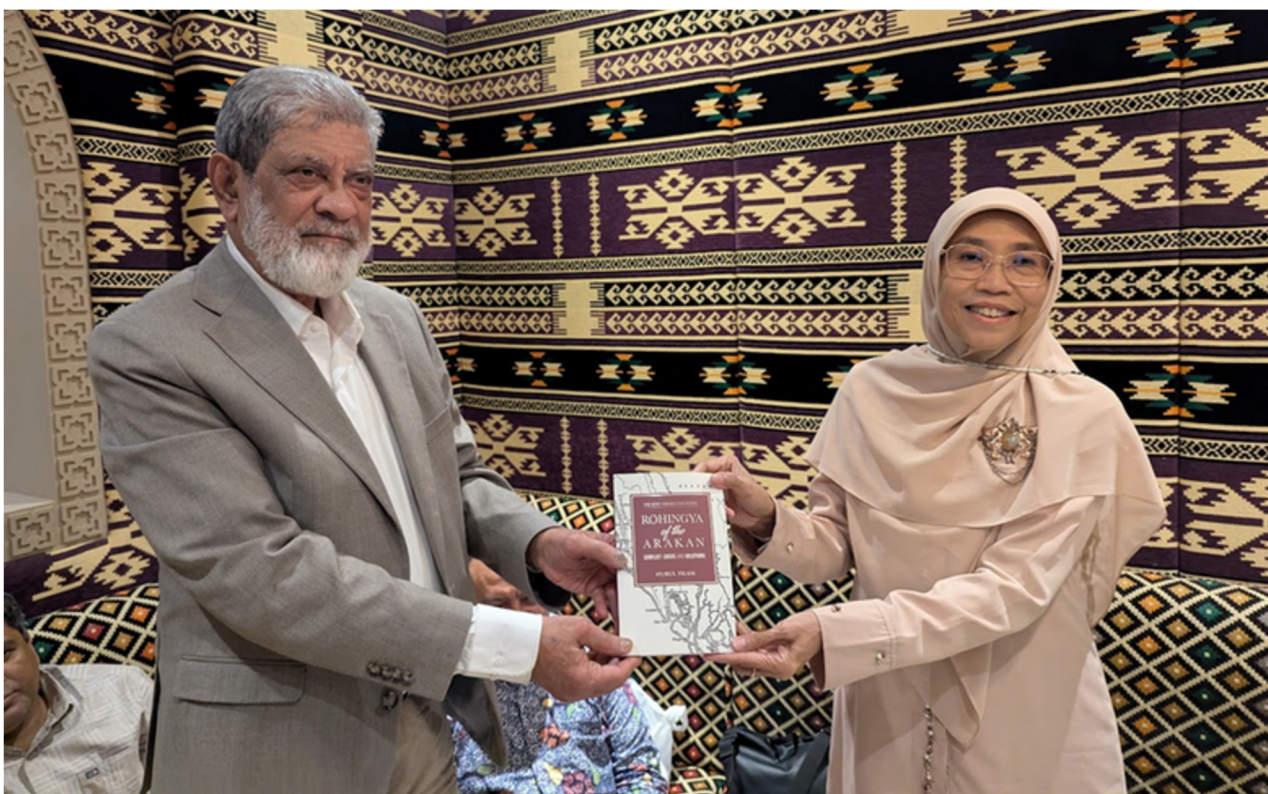
Following the Malaysia conference, the ARNA delegation traveled to Indonesia for advocacy meetings. On **February 25, 2025**, ARNA representatives (led by Nurul Islam) paid an official visit to the **Majelis Ulama Indonesia (MUI)** in Jakarta. The MUI, Indonesia's top Islamic scholars council, received the ARNA delegation through its Commission on Foreign Relations and International Cooperation. ARNA, which is based in London and led by Nurul Islam, expressed gratitude to the Indonesian people and authorities for their compassionate reception of Rohingya refugees arriving in Indonesia. In this meeting, Nurul Islam thanked Indonesian people and the government for assisting Rohingya who fled by boat to Aceh and North Sumatra, and he appealed for continued support of the Rohingya's struggle for citizenship and safety in Myanmar. The ARNA delegation sought both moral support and guidance from MUI on how to strengthen their organizational coalition.



On **February 26, 2025**, ARNA participated in an international seminar hosted at **UIN Syarif Hidayatullah Jakarta** (the State Islamic University in Ciputat, Jakarta). The seminar, titled *"Forgotten Muslim Minority: Unclear Protection to Rohingya Refugees in Indonesia and Beyond,"* featured Nurul Islam alongside Indonesian and international experts. Speakers included **Prof. Heru Susetyo** (Professor of Law at University of Indonesia), **Razia Sultana** (lawyer and founder of Rohingya Women Welfare Society), **Dr. Mahbubul Haque** (academic from UNISZA), Nezamul Hasan (ARNA Executive member) and faculty from UIN Jakarta. Nurul Islam used this platform to highlight the ongoing plight of the Rohingya and urged that international law and Muslim communities not ignore the crisis. He stressed that while Rohingya refugees do not wish to remain displaced, returning home is impossible under current conditions, calling on Indonesia and the global community to protect Rohingya lives and rights. Indonesian attendees, including Prof. Heru acknowledged Indonesia's generally welcoming stance toward Rohingya refugees and discussed challenges as local communities face "refugee fatigue" over time. These engagements in Indonesia were aimed at rallying support from Indonesian civil society and religious leaders for the Rohingya cause.



The delegation also met with **MP Netty Prasetiyani** as well as NGOs working on issues of displacement and humanitarian work.



From there, the team travelled to **Medan**, where they visited Rohingya refugees and held a seminar at **Universitas Sumatera Utara**. While conditions for the refugees vary, many continue to face legal uncertainty, limited access to services, and restricted mobility.

Launching a Research Initiative

During the Indonesia segment of the tour, ARNA initiated a research project aimed at documenting the lived experiences, resilience, and challenges faced by Rohingya refugees in Aceh and Medan. This project, to be completed over six months, seeks to offer actionable recommendations for policy makers and humanitarian organizations within ASEAN.



Building Long-Term ASEAN Engagement

A significant diplomatic outcome was ARNA's establishment of communication channels with the ASEAN officials. This connection is viewed as crucial for advancing a constructive dialogue and ensuring ASEAN remains actively engaged with the Rohingya issue.

ARNA's regional activities demonstrate a practical approach towards advocacy: focusing on diplomatic engagement, unity among diaspora communities, and fostering regional solidarity. Rather than simply highlighting challenges, ARNA's strategy emphasizes collaboration and actionable solutions.

Moving Forward

While immediate results remain to be seen, ARNA's February 2025 diplomatic outreach signifies an important shift in the Rohingya advocacy landscape. By placing itself at the intersection of regional dialogue, ARNA continues its mission to transform awareness into effective regional action, ultimately aiming for a sustainable resolution to the Rohingya crisis.

ARNA's Visit Coverage in Local Newspapers

<https://wadah.org.my/wadah-teraju-advokasi-global-krisis-rohingya/#:~:text=Kuala%20Lumpur%2C%2023%20Februari%202025,ARNA>

<https://fsh.uinjkt.ac.id/en/international-seminar-forgotten-muslim-minority-unclear-protection-to-rohingya-refugees-in-indonesia-and-beyond#:~:text=FSH%20News%2C%202nd%20floor%20theater,Wednesday%2C%2026%2F02%2F2025>

<https://www.mui.or.id/baca/berita/mui-terima-kunjungan-alian-si-organisasi-rohingya-dunia#:~:text=Pada%20kesempatan%20yang%20sama%2C%20seorang,dukungan%20terhadap%20perjuangan%20orang%20Rohingya>

<https://khazanah.republika.co.id/berita/sscgdb451/ri-kedatangan-empat-aktivis-rohingya-untuk-meminta-dukungan-part3>

Flyers of the events

KL CONFERENCE: **THE ROHINGYA CRISIS - REGIONAL ACTIONS AND GLOBAL ADVOCACY**

Ibnu Taymiyyah Conference Room, IIUM
23rd February 2025 (Sunday)
09.00am - 02.30pm

Distinguished speakers



**Dato' Ahmad Azam
Ab Rahman**
Commissioner of
IPHRC OIC



**Tan Sri Dr. Syed
Hamid Albar**
Former Foreign Minister
of Malaysia



Nurul Islam
Chair, Arakan Rohingya
National Alliance

Welcome Address

Prof Dato' Dr. Mohamad Fauzan Nordin
Deputy Rector Rector IIUM
(Student Development & Engagement)



“REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ADVOCACY FOR THE ROHINGYA CRISIS”

Panelists



Prof. Sk Tawfique M. Haque
Bangladesh Perspective



Datin Nur Azlina binti Abdul Aziz
(JREC) – Malaysia Education for Rohingya



Dr Ahmad El-Muhammady
(ISTAC IIUM) – ASEAN Perspective



Nezamul Hasan
(ARNA) – Rohingya Crisis



Dr. Jufitri bin Joha
Chairman of GPM – Humanitarian Perspective



Prof. Dr. Salawati Mat Basir
(UKM) – Legal Perspective

Moderator

Dr. Md. Mahbubul Haque
Human Rights For Non-Citizens, International
Humanitarian Law And Security



Organized by:




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DISKUSI PUBLIK INTERNASIONAL

Advokasi Terhadap Pelanggaran HAM *dalam* Kasus Minoritas Etnis Rohingya di Dunia Internasional



Prof. Heru Susetyo, S.H., M.Si., M.Ag., LL.M

Professor/Guru Besar Hukum
dan Kesejahteraan Sosial
Fakultas Hukum Universitas
Indonesia

Dekan Fakultas Hukum
Universitas
Sumatera Utara



Dr. Mahmul Siregar, S.H., M.Hum



Dr. Rosmalinda, S.H., LL.M

Akademisi Fakultas Hukum
Universitas Sumatera
Utara

Lawyer / Founder of Rohingya
Women Welfare
Society



Razia Sulthana, B.A., LL.B



Dr. Mahbubul Haque

Senior Lecturer of Faculty of Law
and International Relations
Universiti Sultan Zainal Abidin
Terengganu Malaysia

Executive Board of Arakan
Rohingya National
Alliance



Nezamul Hasan




Nurul Islam

Chairman of ARNA (Arakan
Rohingya
National Alliance)

Tersedia
SERTIFIKAT
+62 822-6709-5009

 **Kamis, 27 Februari 2025**

 **16.00 WIB s/d 18.00**

 **Ruangan DPF Fakultas Hukum Universitas Sumatera Utara**



ARNO Calls for Justice and Action on the Fourth Anniversary of Myanmar's Military Coup

Feb 1, 2025 | ARNO Press Release

Four years ago today, the military junta overthrew the peaceful elections which had taken place, and began a crackdown on civil liberties, human rights, and human dignity which continues until today. The Myanmar military, has ignored repeated calls to stop violence and has continued to tear the fabric of the country of Myanmar, from north to south, in order to hold on to power because it is clear that the people of Burma are seeking democratic change.

The Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) recognizes the efforts made by Burmese civil society, across all ethnic groups, to combat and dismantle the horrible policies of the military junta and to secure freedom and democracy. Over the course of the last four years, the behavior of the military junta has only helped to bring the people of Burma together under a common banner, instead of keeping us divided and separated by malicious propaganda.

ARNO welcomes the joint statement by Australia, Canada, EU, South Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, UK, and US on the fourth year of the military coup. We encourage the international community to continue to demand a total ceasefire in Burma, at the same time, continuing funding of all humanitarian programs for internally displaced people and refugees across Asia. Further, we call upon ASEAN to put a stringent plan of action in place to enforce the 5 point consensus. We call upon all companies to remember that human rights obligations also apply to them in the Myanmar context.

ARNO calls upon the UN Security Council to refer the matter of Myanmar to the International Criminal Court so that decades of impunity can finally end.

Resolution from KL Conference: The Rohingya Crisis – Regional Actions and Global Advocacy

We are pleased to share with you the **Resolution of the KL Conference: The Rohingya Crisis – Regional Actions and Global Advocacy**, adopted on **February 23, 2025, in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia**.

This resolution reflects the collective commitment of experts, policymakers, activists, and humanitarian actors who convened to address the ongoing persecution, displacement, and humanitarian crisis facing the Rohingya people. The document outlines concrete recommendations across six key areas:

1. **Protection of Rohingya Rights and Prevention of Atrocities** – Urging immediate international action to stop persecution and restore Rohingya citizenship and rights.
2. **Humanitarian Assistance and Refugee Support** – Strengthening aid, healthcare, education, and economic opportunities for Rohingya refugees.
3. **Education and Economic Empowerment** – Ensuring access to education and sustainable livelihoods for Rohingya communities.
4. **Diplomatic and Political Solutions** – Calling for regional and global diplomatic efforts, particularly through ASEAN and the UN, to hold Myanmar accountable.
5. **Legal Framework and International Accountability** – Advocating for justice through international legal mechanisms, including universal jurisdiction and ASEAN-led protections.
6. **Strengthening ARNA as the Representative Rohingya Body** – Recognizing the Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA) as a legitimate voice for Rohingya representation and diplomacy.

We urge you to review this resolution and support its implementation within your networks and institutions. Immediate, coordinated action is essential to end the suffering of the Rohingya people and secure lasting solutions.

For any further engagement or discussion on the resolution, please feel free to reach out to us at contact@theARNA.org

UN Food Ration Cuts Deepen Crisis for Rohingya Refugees

The United Nations World Food Program (WFP) has announced a severe reduction in food assistance for over one million Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, citing critical funding shortages. Starting April 1, the already limited monthly food ration will be cut in half—from \$12.50 to just \$6 per person. The reduction will leave thousands of families struggling to meet their basic nutritional needs in an already fragile humanitarian crisis.

This decision comes at a time when global humanitarian aid is shrinking due to economic downturns, shifting donor priorities, and competing crises worldwide. The U.S. government's recent cuts to foreign assistance, which has historically played a key role in Rohingya support programs, have further exacerbated the funding gap. As conflicts in Ukraine, Gaza, and Sudan demand urgent global attention, funding for long-term refugee populations like the Rohingya has dwindled, leaving them at risk of starvation, disease, and deepening instability.

The reduction in food aid is expected to have catastrophic consequences, pushing an already food-insecure population closer to the brink. Previous cuts in 2023 had already left 90% of the camp population struggling to access adequate nutrition, with over 15% of children suffering from acute malnutrition, the highest levels recorded since the mass exodus from Myanmar in 2017. Now, with rations slashed even further, families will have to skip meals, sacrifice nutrition, and face an increased risk of disease and stunted development. Malnutrition among children, pregnant women, and the elderly is expected to rise sharply, potentially leading to long-term health repercussions.

Mohammed Mizanur Rahman, Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), has expressed grave concerns over the impact of these cuts. He emphasized that even the previous ration of \$12.50 per person per month was barely enough to sustain basic nutrition, and further reductions would significantly deteriorate health, security, and overall living conditions within the camps. Refugee leaders echo these concerns, warning that the situation will worsen tensions, increase desperation, and leave the community more vulnerable to exploitation.

Humanitarian organizations are sounding the alarm, urging immediate international intervention to prevent a full-scale humanitarian disaster. Refugees International has warned that the cuts will push millions to the edge of starvation, increasing their exposure to child marriage, trafficking, and gender-based violence as families struggle to survive. The WFP has called for an emergency injection of \$81 million to restore food rations and continue operations in Bangladesh. Aid groups emphasize that without these funds, the basic survival of Rohingya refugees will be in jeopardy, particularly during the upcoming holy month of Ramadan, when food insecurity is expected to be even more acute.

For the Rohingya, who have been living in overcrowded camps with no legal status, no employment opportunities, and no path to a secure future, these cuts represent another devastating setback. Since 2017, Bangladesh has sheltered over one million Rohingya refugees who fled violent persecution in Myanmar, yet sustained international support has gradually declined, placing immense pressure on aid agencies struggling to meet even the most basic needs. The latest cuts underscore a disturbing trend—as donor fatigue sets in and global crises shift priorities, some of the world's most vulnerable populations are being left behind.

The international community is now faced with a crucial decision: step up support and prevent an avoidable catastrophe or allow the Rohingya crisis to spiral further into hunger, disease, and instability. Without urgent action, the consequences of this funding shortfall will be irreversible, pushing an already marginalized population deeper into desperation and despair.

Justice for Rohingya Key to Future Peace, Says Head of Myanmar Mechanism

Justice for crimes committed against the Rohingya is essential for their return to Rakhine State and long-term peace, said Nicholas Koumjian, Head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar, at the conclusion of his January 20-24 official visit to Bangladesh.

During his visit, Koumjian met with Bangladeshi government officials and over 100 Rohingya activists in Cox's Bazar, discussing ongoing investigations, accountability efforts, and the deteriorating situation in Rakhine State. Thousands of Rohingya have recently fled to Bangladesh due to intensified fighting between the Arakan Army and Myanmar's military.

Koumjian expressed gratitude to the Bangladesh government, the Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC), and Camp in Charge (CiC) offices for their support in facilitating investigations into crimes committed during the 2017 clearance operations and ongoing violence in Rakhine. He acknowledged the frustration among Rohingya refugees, who remain unable to return home more than seven years later due to continued violence and lack of safety guarantees.

Meeting with key officials, including Dr. Khalilur Rahman, Md. Touhid Hossain, Lt. Gen. Md. Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, and Major General Mohammad Ashrafuzzaman Siddiqui, Koumjian stressed that the Mechanism investigates all perpetrators of serious crimes in Myanmar, including non-state actors. He also highlighted the importance of justice and accountability at the upcoming High-Level Conference on the Rohingya Crisis, following the 79th UN General Assembly session.

His visit comes after the International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor requested an arrest warrant in November 2024 for Myanmar's military chief, Min Aung Hlaing, on charges of crimes against humanity, including deportation and persecution of Rohingya. The move marks a significant step toward holding Myanmar's leadership accountable and ensuring justice for the Rohingya people.

Open Letter from Southeast Asian Parliamentarians and Civil Society: A Call for Inclusive and Decisive ASEAN Action on Myanmar Under Malaysia's Madani Leadership

17 February 2025

**The Honourable Dato' Seri Anwar Ibrahim
Prime Minister of Malaysia
ASEAN Chair 2025**

**Cc. The Honourable Tan Sri Othman Hashim
Special Envoy of the ASEAN Chair on Myanmar for 2025**

Your Excellency,

As the fourth anniversary of the military coup in Myanmar marks another year of hardship, we reflect on the immense suffering endured by its people and the urgent need for ASEAN to take a more principled, compassionate, and effective approach to addressing the crisis. The continued suppression of democracy by the military junta has resulted in grave human rights violations, deepened political instability, and posed a serious challenge to ASEAN's credibility as a regional body committed to peace, security, and the rule of law.

For the past four years, the people of Myanmar have faced relentless atrocities—indiscriminate airstrikes that devastate communities, arbitrary arrests aimed at silencing dissent, mass displacement, and an economic collapse that has driven millions into hardship. Despite repeated calls for dialogue and a peaceful resolution, the military junta has persistently disregarded both regional and international efforts to end the crisis, further entrenching suffering and instability.

At this critical juncture, we respectfully address Your Excellency in your capacity as Prime Minister of Malaysia and ASEAN Chair for 2025, with a deep sense of urgency and solidarity. We extend our support and offer constructive recommendations to help shape a stronger, more inclusive, and action-oriented response to the crisis—one that reflects the core values of Malaysia's Madani governance: Sustainability, Prosperity, Innovation, Respect, Trust, and Compassion. These principles provide a vital foundation for ASEAN to take decisive action toward a peaceful, democratic, and rights-respecting Myanmar, ensuring that the voices and aspirations of its people are not disregarded.

Guided by these commitments, ASEAN Parliamentarians for Human Rights (APHR), a regional network of current and former parliamentarians dedicated to human rights and democracy in Southeast Asia, together with civil society organizations across the region, urge ASEAN—under Malaysia's leadership—to pursue a strategy that upholds justice, inclusivity, and lasting peace and take the following urgent actions:

- **Placing Humanitarian Compassion at the Core of ASEAN's Myanmar Policy**

ASEAN must prioritize humanitarian compassion in its response to the ongoing crisis in Myanmar. We respectfully propose the establishment of a Myanmar Humanitarian Response Center within the country, that is independent and enables the direct delivery of aid to the affected communities. Humanitarian assistance should be channelled through trusted local and regional organizations, ensuring that the distribution remains impartial, equitable, and focused on those most in need.

- **Strengthening Regional Stability Through Inclusive Dialogue**

Building on the previous ASEAN chairs' initiatives, we believe it is essential for ASEAN to broaden its peace dialogues to include all relevant stakeholders, particularly ethnic minorities, civil society representatives, and resistance groups in Myanmar. We respectfully call on ASEAN to avoid legitimizing military-led processes that marginalize democratic forces advocating for a new federal political framework. A sustainable and meaningful resolution can only be achieved by engaging with those who truly represent the aspirations of Myanmar's people, rather than those who seek to suppress them.

- **Advancing Good Governance and the Rule of Law**

We fully support your position on prioritizing peace over elections in Myanmar. In this regard, we respectfully urge ASEAN member states to reject any military-led elections that fail to meet internationally recognized democratic standards. The region's credibility hinges on ensuring that Myanmar's future governance is built on legitimacy and public trust. ASEAN should also consider supporting an inclusive constitutional dialogue on federalism, which would provide a political framework that guarantees fair representation and protection of rights for Myanmar's diverse ethnic communities.

- **Ensuring Long-Term Policy Continuity Through the ASEAN Troika**

To ensure a consistent and sustainable approach, we respectfully recommend that ASEAN establish a permanent Myanmar-focused team within its Secretariat. This would help maintain continuity across the terms of ASEAN Chairs, avoiding the challenges posed by short-term, chair-led initiatives and ensuring long-term strategic engagement.

- **Mobilizing International Partnerships for Sustainable Solutions**

We believe Malaysia is uniquely positioned to host an International Conference on Myanmar, bringing together key global actors, including the United Nations, the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), China, Russia, India, and the United States. This would facilitate the coordination of diplomatic and economic measures aimed at holding the military regime accountable. ASEAN must also take the lead in regional and international efforts to prevent arms sales to the junta, applying both economic and military pressure to halt their atrocities.

- **Promoting Gender, Ethnic, and Social Equity in ASEAN's Myanmar Response**

Finally, we urge ASEAN to ensure that its response to Myanmar is both gender-sensitive and inclusive of the country's diverse ethnic communities. Women's participation in peace negotiations should be prioritized, ensuring their voices are central to shaping the country's future. Moreover, humanitarian aid must be distributed equitably, reaching the most vulnerable populations without discrimination.

Excellency,

The crisis in Myanmar represents not only a national tragedy but also a pressing regional challenge that calls for principled and decisive leadership from ASEAN. We are confident that under Malaysia's Madani vision, ASEAN can rise to this challenge and reaffirm its commitment to peace, justice, and the protection of human dignity in Myanmar.

As ASEAN Chair, Malaysia bears both the moral and strategic responsibility to lead the region towards a more people-centered and effective response to this crisis. The decisions made in 2025 will not only impact Myanmar's future but will also influence ASEAN's reputation as a regional leader in promoting peace, justice, and human rights.

Respectfully yours,

Signed by parliamentarians and civil society organizations:

Indonesia

1. Eva Kusuma Sundari; APHR Board Member; former member of the Indonesia Parliament
2. Mercy Chriesty Barends; APHR Chairperson; Member of the Indonesia Parliament
3. Taufik Basari; Former Member of the Indonesia Parliament
4. Luluk Nur Hamidah; Former Member of the Indonesia Parliament

Malaysia

1. YB Wong Chen; APHR Board Member; Member of the Malaysian Parliament for Subang
2. Charles Santiago; APHR Co-Chairperson; former member of the Malaysian Parliament
3. YB Syerleena Abdul Rashid; Member of the Malaysian Parliament for Bukit Bendera
4. YB Yuneswaran Ramaraj; Member of the Malaysian Parliament for Segamat
5. Maria Chin Abdullah; Former member of the Malaysian Parliament
6. Young Syefura Binti Othman; Member of the Malaysian Parliament for Bentong

Philippines

1. Ariel Casilao; Former member of the Philippine House of Representatives
2. Carlos Isagani Zarate; Former Deputy Minority Leader of the Philippine House of Representatives (18th Congress); Bayan Muna (People First) Party
3. Tomasito Tom Villarin; Former Member of the Philippine House of Representatives
4. Emmi De Jesus; Former Member of the Philippine House of Representatives

Thailand

1. Kasit Piromya; APHR Board Member; former Thai Foreign Minister
2. Rangsiman Rome; APHR Board Member; Member of the Thai Parliament
3. Kannavee Suebsang; Member of the Thai Parliament
4. Klaikong Vaidhyakarn; Former Member of the Thai Parliament
5. Chonthicha Jangrew; Member of the Thai Parliament
6. Chulapong Yukate; Member of the Thai Parliament

Cambodia

1.Mardi Seng; Chairperson of the Council of Asian Liberals and Democrats; Senator of the Kingdom of Cambodia

Timor Leste

- 1.Maria Angelina Lopes Sarmento; APHR Board Member; Member of the National Parliament of Timor-Leste
- 2.Abel Pires Da Silva, PhD; 2022-23 Minister of Public Works, Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste; Former Member of Parliament; Chair of the Infrastructure Committee (2017-2022); Member of Timor-Leste's Superior Council of Defence and Security (2018-2022)
- 3.Lidia Norberta Dos Santos Martins; Member of the National Parliament – Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
- 4.Jose Da Cruz; Member of the National Parliament – Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste
- 5.Sancia Florencia Paixao Bano; Member of the National Parliament – Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste; Fretilin Party
- 6.Mariquita Soares; Member of the National Parliament – Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste

Myanmar

- 1.U Shwe Maung; APHR Board Member; Former Member of the Myanmar Parliament
- 2.Nay Myo Htet; Member of the Myanmar Parliament (Committee Representing Pyidaungsu Hluttaw – CRPH)

Singapore

- 1.Anthea Ong; Former Member of the Singapore Parliament
- 2.Braema Mathiapparanam; Former Member of the Singapore Parliament; Founder President and current exco-member of MARUAH (Working Group for ASEAN Human Rights Mechanism, Singapore)

Civil Society Representatives and Individuals

- 1.Insight Myanmar
- 2.Building and Wood Workers International Asia Pacific (BWI)
- 3.ALTSEAN-Burma
- 4.Tony Oposa, Independent activist, Philippines
- 5.Asia Democracy Network
- 6.Andrew Khoo & Daniel Lo Advocates and Solicitors (Malaysia)
- 7.MARUAH Secretariat (Singapore)
- 8.Asia Democracy Network (ADN)
- 9.Massimo Introvigne, Editor in chief, Bitter Winter magazine
- 10.Initiative to Promote Tolerance and Prevent Violence (INITIATE.MY)
- 11.Rev. Dr. Hermen Shastri (General Secretary, Council of Churches)
- 12.Campaign for Popular Democracy (CPD) Thailand
- 13.Thai Action Committee for Democracy in Burma (TACDB)
- 14.Asian Cultural Forum on Development (ACFOD)
- 15.Alliance for Free Burma Solidarity
- 16.Professor Catherine Renshaw, Dean of Law, Western Sydney University
- 17.Beyond Borders Malaysia
- 18.BNSK- Bangladesh Nari Sramik Kendra (Bangladesh Association of Women Workers)
- 19.Burmese Rohingya Organization UK
- 20.The International Detention Coalition (IDC)
- 21.Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO)
- 22.Arakan Rohingya National Alliance (ARNA)

Arakan Army arrests six Bangladeshi fishermen in Naf River

The Arakan Army arrested six Bangladeshi fishermen along with their fishing boat while they were fishing in the Naf River on March 6, according to local reports.

The incident took place in the western part of Udaung Creek, Maungdaw Township.

All six detained fishermen are Bangladeshi nationals and are currently being interrogated by the armed group, sources confirmed.

The arrests follow a pattern of increasing restrictions and detentions of fishermen in the region.

Ongoing arrests of fishermen

This is not the first time the group has detained fishermen in the Naf River and nearby areas. On February 27, it arrested 29 Bangladeshi fishermen but later handed them over to the Bangladesh Border Guard.

Additionally, on February 13, at around 6:00 AM, the group arrested 24 Rohingya refugees who had left the Bangladesh refugee camps to fish in the open waters.

Despite growing concerns from the families of the detained individuals, the group and its political wing have not issued any official statements regarding the reason for the arrests.

The prolonged silence has intensified fears about the safety and well-being of those in custody.

Names of the arrested fishermen

- 1.Mamat Shofi (b) Abul Hashim (37)
- 2.Sha Alam (b) Mamat Shofi (20)
- 3.Abdul Hafiz (b) Sha Alam (25)
- 4.Adu Salam (b) Adu Shukkur (27)
- 5.Solim Ullah (b) Rahmat Ullah (30)
- 6.Mamat Solim (b) Muhamat Rofiq (28)

A total of 24 Rohingya refugees and six Bangladeshi fishermen remain in the group's custody, with no clear explanation about their fate. Their families continue to appeal for their safe release, fearing mistreatment or forced disappearances.

The rising number of detentions in Rakhine has raised serious concerns over the safety of both Rohingya refugees and Bangladeshi nationals working in the region.

Rights groups and humanitarian organizations have been urged to take necessary steps to ensure the protection of civilians affected by the situation.

This news is originally published in: <https://rohingyakhobor.com/arakan-army-arrests-six-bangladeshi-fishermen-in-naf-river/>

Arakan Army (AA) Imposes Fees on Rohingya for Family Registration in Maungdaw

March 5, 2025 – Maungdaw, Arakan

The Arakan Army (AA) has begun issuing new family registration documents to Rohingya communities in Maungdaw Township, following a population verification process that closely resembles past procedures enforced by the Myanmar military.

The verification, which started on January 13, 2025, includes photographing residents and recording family details.

Initially, the AA provided these documents free of charge. Still, reports from Mingalar Gyi village indicate that local authorities now demand 5,000 Kyats per document as a “meal fee” for AA personnel.

According to sources, over 600 families in the village are still waiting for their documents.

Population Verification and Registration Process

The same verification procedure is taking place in Hla Phoe Khaung camp and other areas where Rohingya families, including internally displaced persons (IDPs), reside.

The AA/United League of Arakan (ULA) is conducting these checks based on existing Myanmar military records, capturing new photographs, and issuing AA/ULA-stamped family registration documents.

A Rohingya resident who participated in the process described the experience:

“During the checks, families must stand in line, and each person is photographed. It’s exactly like the Myanmar military’s verification process. Women were even barred from wearing burqas for the photos. Once the process is complete, AA issues new family registration documents with their official seal.”

Ethnic Identity Controversy

One of the major concerns regarding these new documents is the ethnic identity classification. Instead of identifying residents as “Rohingya” or “Bengali,” the AA has opted to list them simply as “Muslim.”

A local AA official justified this decision, stating:

"If we write 'Rohingya,' the Rakhine community will not accept it. If we write 'Bengali,' the Rohingya community will not accept it either. Since this is a historical issue, we chose to write 'Muslim' as a compromise."

However, Rohingya activists and community members fear that this move is yet another attempt to erase their identity and deny them legal recognition.

Fears Over AA's Motives

The AA's population verification has raised concerns about its true intentions, with many Rohingya suspecting that the process is meant to serve as a tool for surveillance, restriction, and control rather than protection.

A Rohingya activist warned:

"This verification process is a long-standing method of control that has been used against the Rohingya since 1992. It allows authorities to monitor and restrict our community under the guise of population management."

As tensions grow, many Rohingya in Maungdaw remain skeptical of AA's long-term plans, fearing that the new registration system could eventually be used to limit their rights and freedoms rather than secure their place in Arakan.

Arakan Army (AA) Bans Rohingya Identity, Threatens Severe Punishment

Kyauktaw, Myanmar – March 3, 2025

The Arakan Army (AA) has imposed a strict ban on Rohingya residents in Kyauktaw from identifying themselves as “Rohingya,” warning of severe consequences for those who defy the order.

The directive was issued during a meeting on February 26, 2025, where the AA leadership declared that using the term “Rohingya” would lead to harsh punishment.

According to an attendee of the meeting, Commander-in-Chief Major General Twan Mrat Naing reportedly stated, *“Anyone who uses the word ‘Rohingya’ will be labeled as an ARSA terrorist from Maungdaw and will face the highest punishment.”*

This warning has intensified fear among the Rohingya community, which already faces tight restrictions under AA rule.

The armed group has also ordered local Rohingya to report any strangers entering their villages, effectively increasing surveillance and further limiting their freedom.

Targeting Identity Amidst Systematic Oppression

A Rohingya resident who attended the meeting voiced deep concern over the new restriction, stating, *“We are already struggling for survival, and now they are even taking away our name.”*

Despite earlier claims by the AA that they respect Rohingya rights, their actions since taking control of major towns in northern Rakhine reveal otherwise.

Between March and August 2024, at least 2,500 Rohingya were killed, and 40,000 were forced to flee Myanmar, according to Nay San Lwin, co-founder of the Free Rohingya Coalition, who spoke to *The New Humanitarian*.

This ban on self-identification follows a broader pattern of persecution that the Rohingya have endured for decades.

The Myanmar military previously stripped the Rohingya of citizenship and fundamental rights, and now the AA is attempting to erase their identity entirely.

Erasure of Rohingya Identity and Increased Marginalization

The AA’s prohibition on using the term “Rohingya” adds to the community’s marginalization and fear.

Many believe that this restriction will further prevent Rohingya from accessing humanitarian aid, seeking justice for past atrocities, or reclaiming their rightful place in Myanmar.

A Rohingya activist described the move as part of an ongoing strategy to silence and erase the community. *"First, they drove us from our homes, now they want to erase our name. This is another step toward making sure we never exist in Myanmar's history."*

International Concerns Over Rising Abuses

The United Nations and human rights organizations have consistently warned against measures that suppress Rohingya identity and limit their rights.

However, with Myanmar's ongoing conflicts and political instability, Rohingya communities remain increasingly vulnerable.

As tensions escalate under AA rule, many fear that Rohingya in Kyauktaw and other parts of Rakhine will face further persecution.

For now, the threat of punishment is forcing many to remain silent about their identity, as even the word "Rohingya" has become too dangerous to say.

Arakan Army Tightens Restrictions on Rohingya in Buthidaung, Escalating Humanitarian Crisis

Buthidaung, Rakhine State – The Rohingya community in Buthidaung Township is facing an escalating humanitarian crisis as the Arakan Army (AA) imposes severe restrictions on movement, communication, and daily life, deepening their isolation and vulnerability. According to local sources, the AA has banned the use of mobile phones and Bangladeshi SIM cards, cutting off Rohingya residents from outside contact. Those caught violating the order reportedly face harsh punishment, including imprisonment or execution.

The AA has allegedly intensified efforts to control information flow, ordering residents to surrender all mobile devices. Last week, armed members conducted raids in multiple villages, including Fonyo Layp, confiscating communication equipment and reinforcing surveillance. *"We are constantly living in fear. If we are caught using a Bangladeshi SIM card, we could be jailed or worse,"* a Rohingya villager told local sources. Despite these measures, some Rohingya continue to access Bangladeshi networks in secret, but the risks remain high. Reports indicate that violations of the ban could result in prison sentences of up to four years or even execution.

In addition to communication restrictions, the AA has reportedly targeted young, educated Rohingya, detaining individuals and subjecting them to forced labor. Witnesses claim that Rohingya men in several villages have been coerced into signing labor contracts under threat of detention. *"We are afraid to even step outside. If they suspect we are educated, we could be taken away at any moment,"* a young Rohingya resident from Buthidaung said. The alleged forced labor practices have drawn comparisons to past abuses committed by Myanmar's military, further exacerbating fears of systemic repression.

The Rohingya community in Buthidaung remains increasingly isolated, with limited access to information, resources, and external support. Human rights organizations warn that the latest wave of restrictions mirrors previous persecution tactics, raising concerns about long-term ethnic cleansing efforts. International watchdogs are calling for urgent intervention to prevent further deterioration of the situation. With communication channels severed and reports of forced labor mounting, activists warn that the crisis could escalate into an even greater humanitarian catastrophe. *"The world must act now. The Rohingya in Buthidaung are being silenced, and their suffering is largely unseen,"* a human rights advocate stated. As restrictions tighten, the fate of the Rohingya in Rakhine State remains uncertain, with fears of further displacement, repression, and worsening conditions in the weeks ahead.



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.

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