

The humanity lost its way and iniquities superseded every notion of justice, morality, and faith when the hundreds of Rohingyas were brutally massacred and forced to leave their homeland The Republic of the Union of Myanmar. In the said context, The Gambia, a small Muslim majority nation of Africa, had [instituted proceedings](#) against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for alleged state intervention in the mass killings and grave violation of “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, 1948”. To repudiate these allegations and to submit Myanmar’s side, the State Counselor and Nobel laureate Aung San Suu Kyi presented herself in the Peace Palace. Amid allegations for her complicit silence in the “ethnic cleansing”, she denied any human rights violations admitting the use of “disproportionate” force in some instances. She further denied admitting any case of rape and sexual violence. It is, obviously, impossible for the global community and the ICJ to believe that only an “internal armed conflict”, which once rendered the whole agenda of human rights helpless, made more than 700,000 Rohingyas to fly away from their land in Rakhine State asking haven in neighbouring Bangladesh. The case’s outcome is yet to come and justice would have to struggle long to prove the “genocide”. Also, ICJ cannot impose or enforce its verdicts! After all, it would be a game of reputation that might result in some sanctions and economic loss to Myanmar. Here, we try to revisit the painful journey of the Rohingya community.



Rakhine on map

A Brief History of Rohingya Conflict

Burma, later came to be known as Myanmar, was the homeland of more than a million Rohingyas, a Sunni Islamic ethnicity, in the mid of twentieth century. After its independence, Buddhist Myanmar denied Rohingya's inclusion in any of the recognized ethnic groups. It meant that neither the Central government nor the Rakhine state, where they originally resided, would concede them as citizens. Rohingyas don't have citizenship and even the word "Rohingya" is alien to the Myanmar authorities which identify them as "Bengalis" proclaiming that they originally belonged to the present Bangladesh region. They are the [largest stateless groups](#) in the world (you may see the recognized ethnicities [here](#)). Discrimination against them is so devastating and decimating and can be estimated by the laws which don't allow them to marry, have kids, secure employment, perform religious rites, and are subjected to violence of petty officials and have practically no access to education. They have the least literacy and the greatest poverty rates in the country.

Violence is an indispensable part of their lives and it shows a double-sided story. One side represents the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) which recently emerged as a militant group in Rakhine succeeding a glut of small militant factions. ARSA employed and trained helpless and starving Rohingyas for mercenary activities and blatantly attacked Police and Army checkpoints in 2017. The other side is the military junta, also known as Tatmadaw, which, after its power seizure in 1962, made the Rohingyas witness one of the cruellest phases in human memory. In the 2017 clashes which Myanmar called "counterterrorism operations", thousands of civilian Rohingyas looted, raped, and brutally massacred. The [fact-finding mission of the United Nations](#) endorsing this called the military "clearance operations" against ARSA a "human rights catastrophe". The [mission acknowledged](#) the "genocidal intent" and said that "the international community must hold the Myanmar military to account for the tremendous pain and suffering it has inflicted on persons of all genders across the country." As a probable consequence of the "genocide", more than one million Rohingyas fled to the neighbouring countries asking for shelter. This gravest chapter of human history sets a "textbook example of ethnic cleansing."



Rohingya Refugee camp, Coz Bazaar, Bangladesh

Status Quo and The Way Ahead

The number of Rohingyas as refugees in Bangladesh alone is approx nine hundred thousand, seven hundred thousand of this whopping number came after the 2017 genocide. Bangladesh was the only country that readily accepted the Rohingya refugees. Other countries where they majorly went in search of shelters are India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Thailand. These persecuted people, who in thousands knocked the doors of these countries begging for asylum, are forced to live in ghettos with inedible food, contaminated water, and thatched houses with no access to education to children, and no permanent employment.

Myanmar is an infant democracy with its first democratically elected government assumed office in 2016. It was seen as dawn of Rohingya's fortune but the reverse happened. The struggle for democracy that Aung San Suu Kyi had fought diligently for years and that made her win the Nobel Peace Prize and secured her the position of the State Counselor, a *de*

facto head, came as adversity for Rohingyas. Soon after she enthroned, the attacks against Rohingyas augmented. Perusing the official statements and certain proclamations one can easily extrapolate that the birth of democracy was none but a mere “settlement” between Army and Suu Kyi’s administration. Suu Kyi has been seriously admonished at various global platforms. Amnesty international had [revoked](#) its ‘International Ambassador of Consciousness’ award after her “shameful betrayal” on the Rohingya issue and human rights violations.

For Rohingyas, the way ahead is full of complexities. None can assure their safe future either in asylum countries or in their homeland. When Myanmar agreed to accept Rohingyas’ return in the country voluntarily, not even a single Rohingya accepted the offer. This demonstrates the fear they have submerged in. The fight in the International Court of Justice is going to be a long one. Gambia’s initiation is applaudable but proving a “state-sanctioned genocide” would be difficult. United Nation should start overlooking the initiations that Myanmar’s government makes in Rakhine to assuage the Rohingyas. The scorched houses should be reconstructed, Army should accept its role in the mishaps, Army’s ascendancy should be lessened in residential areas, the government should agree to accept them as recognized citizens, schools and hospitals should be constructed, certain special rights must be secured to Rohingyas for some time. If all these steps are taken with an intention of rehabilitation, pacification, and justice, we could see Rohingyas back in their homeland and Justice would be hailed.

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