

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

February 10 - February 16, 2020



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Highlights:

Camp conditions:

- Bangladeshi officials have confirmed that barbed-wire fences are being erected around the Rohingya camps, and have announced that the procedures to begin moving Rohingya in the camps to Bhasan Char island will begin soon.
- The bodies of 17 people, including 14 women and three children, have been found in the Bay of Bengal after a Malaysia-bound boat capsized in the bay. Seventy-one people were rescued, and more than 50 remain missing.
- UNICEF has released preliminary information about the upcoming education pilot project it will be conducting in the camps in Cox's Bazar.

International support:

- The WFP in Bangladesh has welcomed a contribution of EUR 2.5 million (USD 2.7 million) from the German Foreign Federal Office (GFFO) towards its Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar.

Conditions in Myanmar:

- The Myanmar Navy has detained roughly 50 Rohingya refugees at sea in southern Myanmar's Ayeyarwady region, as they attempted to leave for an "unknown destination".
- According to Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU), killings and sexual violence has risen in the Rakhine state despite an order from the International Court of Justice for Myanmar to take certain measures to protect Rohingyas.

Developments:

[Bodies of two more Rohingyas found in Bay](#) New Age Bangladesh (February 16)

Two more bodies of Rohingya women have been found in the Bay of Bengal near Chera Dwip of Saint Martin's island. With this, bodies of 17 people including 14 women and three children have been found in the Bay of Bengal after a Malaysia-bound fishing boat capsized in the bay some 10 kilometres west of Saint Martin's Island on February 11.

[Informal Education Brings Hope to Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh](#) VOA News (February 15)

Dozens of sprawling informal education centers across refugee camps in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar are providing a glimmer of hope for thousands of Rohingya refugee children. Across makeshift camps in the refugee city of Kutupalong, hundreds of informal learning centers have been set up by international agencies and Rohingya community leaders to give the refugee children access to education. The opportunity to learn and improve skills is something the youngsters were never offered back in Myanmar. The Bangladesh government, however, announced in January that it was working with the United Nations' children agency UNICEF to provide formal education to the children. UNICEF described the move as "a major new phase" for education of the refugee children that initially targets 10,000 Rohingya students from grades six to nine and will later be expanded to other grades. Through a

program called the Learning Competency Framework and Approach, the UNICEF currently provides informal education to 220,000 Rohingya children between aged four to 14. An estimated 315,000 children and adults are getting education in over 3,200 learning centers supported by the UNICEF and other agencies. Many Rohingya refugees, however, say the learning centers are not enough to empower their children and equip them with needed skills.

[Ensuring justice, accountability must for safe Rohingya repatriation: Dhaka to UNSC](#) United News Bangladesh (February 15)

Addressing the UN Security Council open debate on "Peacebuilding and sustaining peace: transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict situations" in New York, Bangladesh's Permanent Representative to the UN Ambassador Rabab Fatima said ensuring justice and accountability for the Rohingya is an important precondition for their safe, dignified and voluntary return to Rakhine State and eventual societal reconciliation. She also exemplified the ICJ's order of January 23 as a momentous development in this regard.

[Processing start soon to shift 1 lakh Rohingyas to Bhasan Char: Minister](#) The Independent (January 15)
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal has said the process of relocating one lakh Rohingyas from Cox's Bazar camp to Bhasan Char will begin on completion of erecting barbed-wire fences around the Cox's Bazar camp.

Similar:

[Shifting of one lakh Rohingyas to Bhasan Char soon](#) The New Nation (Feb. 16)

[Process to shift Rohingyas to Bhasan Char to start soon: Home Minister](#) United News Bangladesh (Feb. 15)

[Home minister: Barbed wire fencing underway around Rohingya camps](#) Dhaka Tribune (February 15)
Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal has said barbed wire fences are being constructed around the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar to prevent the refugees from leaving their shelters. The barbed wire fences were being erected around the Rohingya camps on the instructions of Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. In addition, watchtowers and CCTV (closed-circuit television) cameras will be set up to further strengthen surveillance on the Rohingya camps.

Similar:

[Surveillance of Rohingya not weak: home minister](#) The Daily Star (February 16)

['Don't deport Rohingyas'](#) The Daily Star (February 14)
Free Rohingya Coalition, a global platform of Rohingyas worldwide, has urged Saudi Arabia not to deport any Rohingyas until the genocide against Myanmar is over. The urge comes as a Saudi delegation is in talks with Bangladesh authorities over the deportation of the Rohingyas from Saudi Arabia.

[Justice will be a long time coming for the Rohingya. But the latest ICJ ruling is a start](#) EuroNews (February 14)
[op-ed] On 23 January, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued what amounted to a "cease and desist" order against Myanmar, ordering authorities there to end genocidal practices against the Rohingya. The ruling of the so-called "World Court" has brought hope that international justice will prevail after the horrors inflicted on women, men and children in Rakhine State by Myanmar's security forces. While the decision is an important symbolic victory for the Rohingya, it remains to be seen how much effect the provisional measures will have in practice. The court has little power to actually enforce the order by itself. Like most international justice efforts, the ICJ's effectiveness largely depends on the goodwill of states. It is highly unlikely that we will see major, structural change of the kind Rohingyas themselves are calling for, including dismantling a system of apartheid-like discrimination, or providing support for international justice efforts. There are, however, private indications that Myanmar feels under enough pressure to want to show some signs of progress. While it is easy to be cynical about what the recent, precedent-setting ICJ ruling will actually accomplish in practice, the court order does reinforce the universality of human rights and the rule of law. It has also brought much needed hope to victims and further pressure on Myanmar to show signs of progress. We also have to remember that international justice is a long game - and one that is just getting started in Myanmar.



[Nine human traffickers arrested over capsized Rohingya boat](#) Asia News (February 14)

Bangladesh police have arrested nine alleged human traffickers connected to the recent wreck of the overcrowded boat of Rohingya, during which 15 refugees died and many others remain missing. The arrests have taken place in the past two days in the southern district of Cox's Bazar, where most of the tent cities hosting the refugees are located. Ikbal Hossain, deputy police commander of Cox's Bazar, reports the arrested people will also be charged with attempted murder. In total, there are 19 suspects in the sights of the agents, including 18 of Bengali nationality. The boat, loaded with refugees, sank on 11 February off the southern coast of Bangladesh.

[Bangladesh to allow no NGO school in Rohingya camps without permission](#) New Age Bangladesh (February 14)

Primary and mass education minister Md Zakir Hossain has said that NGOs must ask permission before operating education centres at the Rohingya camps. The government has decided to provide only non-formal education to the Rohingya children, equivalent to grade three, under which they would be taught basic mathematics, English and the Burmese language. 'There is no permission to teach anything else at the camps,' he said. The state minister said that the government was setting up new learning centres to impart education to the Rohingya children and adolescents of the host communities in Cox's Bazar. The learning centres will be established and run with a \$25 million World Bank grant under the government's Reaching Out-of-School Children project.

[Bangladeshi Police: No Evidence to Prove Abduction of Christian Rohingya](#) BenarNews (February 14)

Bangladeshi police have said they have uncovered no evidence to confirm that a Christian Rohingya family had been abducted from a refugee camp, while a rights group demanded that the government find the missing people and bring those responsible to justice. Authorities opened an investigation last month after two groups of refugees filed police complaints accusing each other of launching attacks that wounded at least 12 people. During one of the attacks, masked men seized a Christian and three members of his family, according to witnesses and a Dhaka-based association that protects the rights of minorities.

[Christians Abducted, Attacked in Bangladesh Refugee Camp](#) Human Rights Watch (February 13)

A Rohingya Christian pastor and his 14-year-old daughter were abducted from their shelter in a refugee camp in Bangladesh on the morning of January 27. The previous night scores of men attacked 22 Christian families living in Kutupalong Camp 2 in Cox's Bazaar. The attackers beat up residents, vandalized homes, and looted personal property in the sprawling Rohingya refugee camp. At least 12 Rohingya Christian refugees were injured and hospitalized following the attack. A makeshift Christian church and school were also smashed. After the attack the families relocated to a United Nations transit center and filed a police case against 59 alleged assailants. The Benar News Agency and Radio Free Asia have reported that camp residents believe that the attackers are linked to the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), an ethnic Rohingya armed group. An ARSA representative denied and condemned the attacks on Christians, saying the assailants were harming the group's fight for Rohingya rights. Victims say the Bangladesh authorities, who described the attack as an "ordinary law and order incident" and not an attack aimed at Christians, are not doing enough to protect them or to find the pastor and his daughter. Rohingya Christians have previously reported facing threats and violence in the camps. The Bangladesh authorities should urgently locate the pastor and his daughter, and bring those responsible to justice. The government should also act immediately to protect all vulnerable groups in the country's refugee camps, including religious minorities like Rohingya Christians.

[Germany makes EUR 2.5 million contribution to support WFP Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar](#) World Food Programme (February 13)

The WFP in Bangladesh welcomes a contribution of EUR 2.5 million (USD 2.7 million) from the German Foreign Federal Office (GFFO) towards its Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar. This contribution will enable WFP to continue its life saving food assistance in the camps through in-kind distributions and electronic vouchers. The Government of Germany, through the GFFO, has been a generous supporter of WFP Bangladesh. With this contribution, GFFO has provided WFP Bangladesh with a total EUR 6.5 million (USD 7 million) since 2019 for food assistance through in-kind food distributions and e-vouchers.



[Myanmar Navy Detains 50 Rohingya Who Were Trying to Leave Country](#) Radio Free Asia (February 13)

The Myanmar Navy has detained roughly 50 Rohingya refugees at sea in southern Myanmar's Ayeyarwady region, while local authorities have apprehended five suspected human traffickers who allegedly helped them try to leave the country for an unknown destination, a local official has said.

[Rohingyas getting foreign help in passport forgery](#) The Daily Star (February 13)

A foreign organisation of Rohingyas is assisting some Myanmar nationals -- who took shelter in Bangladesh following the military crackdown in Rakhine State -- in passport forgery, according to Police Bureau of Investigation (PBI) in Chattogram. This came to light after police arrested three Rohingya youths on September 6 last year along with Bangladeshi passports. According to their confessional statements before court, they were on their way to Dhaka to go to Turkish embassy for visa purposes. The European Rohingya Council (ERC), an association of Rohingyas residing in Europe, helped finance and guide the youths through local contacts. One of the arrestees gave a confessional statement before a Chattogram court on January 23 this year, detailing the process of forging the documents.

[Rohingya rights group: Violence rises in Rakhine despite ICJ order](#) Dhaka Tribune (February 13)

A Rohingya rights group has said killings and sexual violence has risen in Rakhine state despite an order from the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for Myanmar to take certain measures to protect Rohingyas. The Arakan Rohingya Union (ARU) said in a statement that the situation in Rakhine state had gone from bad to worse following the court order as Myanmar terms the genocide case at the ICJ as an international ploy. The statement also said, citing ground reports, violence against the Rohingya in Northern Rakhine state had been steadily climbing over the past few weeks.

Similar:

[Violence against Rohingya rises in Rakhine despite ICJ order: Rights group](#) The New Nation (Feb. 13)

[No Rohingya returned to Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia: FM](#) New Age Bangladesh (February 13)

Foreign minister AK Abdul Momen said no Rohingya have returned to Bangladesh from Saudi Arabia or any other country. 'We don't know about any Rohingya going to Saudi Arabia or returning with a Bangladeshi passport,' he said at the inaugural function of BIMSTEC Traditional Healthcare Expo-2020 at the International Convention City Bashundhara. He said no Rohingya travelled abroad or returned home with Bangladeshi passport. Regarding Rohingyas holding Bangladeshi passports in Saudi Arabia, the foreign minister said that Dhaka had not been officially informed about this by the Bangladesh embassy nor by the Saudi government.

Similar:

[Foreign minister: No Rohingya returned from Saudi Arabia](#) Dhaka Tribune (Feb. 12)

[No rights for the Rohingya?](#) The Asean Post (February 12)

The criticism ASEAN faces in relation to the way it has been handling the Rohingya issue is nothing new. Human rights observers have often claimed that the 10-member bloc has done little to ensure the safety of the Rohingya, asserting that diplomacy between member countries, as well as its adherence to a non-interference policy, has consistently trumped human rights concerns. If ASEAN is most concerned about repatriation, then more bad news for the bloc surfaced when an Australian think-tank claimed that Myanmar has made "minimal" preparations for the return of Rohingya refugees sheltering in Bangladesh. The Australian Strategic Policy Institute (ASPI) said in a report that analysis of satellite imagery shows "no sign of reconstruction" in the overwhelming majority of former Rohingya settlements. On top of this, according to the ASPI, in some areas, destruction of existing residential buildings has continued. It is understandable that ASEAN wants to maintain good diplomacy between all its members but a line must be drawn. If it is indeed true that Myanmar has made no preparations for the return of the Rohingya but claims that it is ready to take them back, then something is clearly amiss. ASEAN must assume the worst in this case and act accordingly, otherwise it will be responsible for whatever atrocities might befall the Rohingya after repatriation.



[Trawler capsizes: Another Rohingya rescued in St Martin's Island](#) Dhaka Tribune (February 12)

The Bangladesh Navy has rescued another Rohingya man who went missing as a trawler en route to Malaysia carrying Rohingyas capsized near Saint Martin's Island. The man was rescued in a critical condition from Saint Martin's Island in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar district. Members of the Bangladesh Navy and Coast Guard are continuing the rescue work for the second day. On Tuesday, 15 Rohingyas died after the trawler capsized. The deceased includes 12 women and three children though their identities are yet to be confirmed. As of Tuesday night, 72 Rohingyas were rescued and given primary treatment.

[15 die as Malaysia-bound Rohingya boat capsizes: Coast guard](#) Prothom Alo (February 11)

At least 15 women and children drowned and more than 50 others were missing after a boat overloaded with Rohingya refugees sank off southern Bangladesh as it tried to reach Malaysia Tuesday, officials said. Some 138 people -- mainly women and children -- were packed on a trawler barely 13 metres (40 feet) long, trying to cross the Bay of Bengal, according to a coast guard spokesman. Seventy-one people have been rescued including 46 women. Among the dead, 11 were women and the rest children.

Similar:

[At least 15 women and kids drown as Rohingya refugees' boat sinks off Bangladesh](#) CBS News (Feb. 11)

[At Least 15 Rohingya Muslims Killed as Boat Sinks Off Coast of Bangladesh](#) VOA (Feb. 11)

[At least 14 dead as Rohingya boat sinks in Bangladesh](#) BBC News (Feb. 11)

[Rohingya: At least 16 refugees drown as boat leaving Bangladesh capsizes in Bay of Bengal](#) Independent (Feb. 11)

[Rohingya Boat Capsizes in Bay of Bengal; at Least 15 Dead](#) U.S. News & World Report (Feb. 11)

[14 Rohingya die, dozens unaccounted for as boat sinks off Bangladesh](#) France24 (Feb. 11)

[Rohingya refugees die after boat capsizes off Bangladesh](#) AlJazeera (Feb. 11)

[Boat Packed With Rohingya Refugees Capsizes Off Bangladesh](#) New York Times (Feb. 11)

[At least 15 dead after boat capsizes off Bangladesh](#) AlJazeera (Feb. 13)

[The UN Stands Ready to Support the Cox's Bazar Boat Accident Survivors](#) ReliefWeb (Feb. 11)

[Tragic Drowning of Rohingya Caused by Desperation](#) Save the Children (Feb. 11)

[Rohingya Refugees Drown as Boat Capsizes off Bangladesh](#) Radio Free Asia (Feb. 11)

[Rohingya man killed in 'gunfight'](#) Prothom Alo (February 10)

A Rohingya man, described as a notorious robber by the law enforcement, was killed in what the members of the Rapid Action Battalion called a gunfight with them in Teknaf.

[The U.N.'s top court ordered Myanmar to protect the Rohingya. Here's how that could matter.](#) The Washington Post (February 10)

Recently, the United Nations' top court ordered Myanmar to take urgent measures to protect Rohingya Muslims from genocide. In a unanimous decision, the International Court of Justice ruled that without such measures, the vulnerable Rohingya minority could suffer "irreparable harm." This legally binding decision has been hailed by human rights advocates as a "first taste of justice" for the Rohingya. However, whether it actually protects the Rohingya will depend on the diplomacy that comes next.

[Expanding education for Rohingya refugee children in Bangladesh](#) UNICEF (February 10)

In 2020, UNICEF will enter a major new phase for education of Rohingya refugee children living in camps in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh, together with other humanitarian actors. Following a landmark decision by the Government of Bangladesh, UNICEF will further expand access to education by introducing the Myanmar curriculum on a pilot basis in the first half of the year. The pilot will initially target 10,000 Rohingya students from grades six to nine. It will then be expanded to other grades in a phased manner. The pilot targets older children, who currently have less access to education compared with their younger counterparts. Rohingya children will learn Burmese, English, mathematics, science and social studies, with additional subjects introduced over time. Lessons learned from the implementation of

the pilot will be integrated into the second phase as the curriculum is scaled up and expanded to reach more children across other grades. UNICEF welcomes the announcement from the Government of Bangladesh and recognizes its commitment to ensure access to learning for Rohingya children and adolescents.

[Saudi Arabia mounts pressure on Bangladesh to take back 42,000 Rohingya](#) Prothom Alo (February 10)

The Saudi government is mounting pressure on Bangladesh to take back 42,000 Rohingya who have Bangladeshi passports. The issue came up for discussion at the recent conference of Bangladesh ambassadors in Abu Dhabi. Saudi Arabia thinks these Rohingya with Bangladeshi passports travelled by air to the Middle Eastern country, diplomatic sources in Dhaka and Saudi Arabia have said.

Similar:

[Riyadh asks Dhaka to take back 50,000 Rohingyas](#) New Age Bangladesh (Feb. 11)

In compiling this digest, RSN has attempted to include the most relevant news accounts from the past week concerning Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. From time to time, news beyond Bangladesh or the Rohingya community is included, but currently RSN does not have the capacity to expand the scope. We recognize that some developments may have been overlooked, and that some sources may not be viewed by all as credible or balanced. Inclusion of a news story and its summary does not constitute any kind of endorsement or position taken by RSN, and the text and positions included in the above are solely those of the authors of the respective articles. If you have any comments or feedback for us regarding this digest, please email advocacy@rsn.ngo. For more information about RSN and our work, please visit <https://refugeesolidaritynetwork.org/>