

# Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

26 August - 1 September, 2019



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## Highlights:

**ASEAN:** The 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly meeting of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) took place this week in Bangkok. During the assembly, Indonesia proposed the inclusion of a resolution on the Rohingya crisis in the agenda. The Myanmar delegation rejected the proposal, and its inclusion was not approved. This is the third AIPA assembly in which Myanmar and Indonesia have clashed on the issue.

## Camp Conditions:

- The government of Bangladesh has suspended the activities of 41 NGOs working in the camps.
- Amnesty International released an advocacy brief on ongoing human rights violations faced by Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, including restrictive regulatory measures in relation to the provision of essential services. Amnesty called on the government of Bangladesh to take into account the longer-term protection concerns of refugees and develop a plan accordingly.
- Media reports this week have highlighted difficulties faced by refugees in the camps, including the risk of child trafficking and the lack of access to education and adequate healthcare.

**Accountability:** The government of Myanmar has announced that the military is conducting a court martial following a probe into alleged mass graves in Rakhine State.

## Developments:

[Myanmar says holding court martial after Rohingya grave probe](#), Dhaka Tribune (1 September)

Myanmar said its military was conducting a rare court martial following a probe into alleged mass graves in Rakhine state. In February 2018, an Associated Press report alleged at least five mass graves of Rohingya in Rakhine's Gu Dar Pyin village – a claim denied by the government. Rights groups say the military has done little to hold anyone accountable for atrocities against the Rohingya.

### *Similar:*

[Myanmar says holding court martial after Rohingya atrocities probe](#), AFP via Yahoo News (1 Sept.)

[Myanmar to hold court martial after Rohingya atrocities probe](#), Al Jazeera (1 Sept.)

[Myanmar army says to punish soldiers in Rohingya atrocities probe](#), Reuters (1 Sept.)

[Rare court martial after investigation of Rohingya mass graves](#), The Telegraph (1 Sept.)

[Myanmar says military holding rare court martial after Rohingya mass grave probe](#), Japan Times (1 Sept.)

[Rohingya Camps in Cox's Bazar: Activities of 41 NGOs halted for 'misdeeds'](#), The Daily Star (1 September)

The government has suspended activities of 41 non-government organizations operating in the Rohingya camps for their involvement in various "misdeeds", according to Foreign Minister A.K. Abdul Momen.

### *Similar:*

[Bangladesh withdrew 41 NGOs from Rohingya camps for 'malpractices'](#), BDNews24 (31 Aug.)

[Minister: 41 NGOs withdrawn from Rohingya](#), Dhaka Tribune (31 Aug.)

[Bangladesh suspends NGO projects for ‘making’ sharp weapons for Rohingya refugees](#), BDNews24 (30 Aug.)  
[NGOs working in Rohingya camps to face action if violate terms: Foreign Minister](#), The Daily Star (29 Aug.)

**[Stolen son: The child traffickers preying on the Rohingya](#)**, CNN (31 August)

Child trafficking has become common in the refugee camps of Cox's Bazar. Trafficked girls may end up in a life of prostitution, boys in forced labor. Many of the trafficked children are transported to India.

*Similar:*

[Mizoram Police rescue three Rohingya girls](#), Times of India (31 Aug.)

**[Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh Refusing to Go Back Is a Good Thing](#)**, The Wire (31 August)

[op-ed] Rohingya refugees refusing to return to Myanmar is remarkable because it reaffirms the sovereign right of any refugee displaced by force to decide whether or not to go back to their country of origin. It also gives teeth to the principle of voluntary repatriation through informed consent as a fundamental component of any process of refugee return. While this is a well-established norm in international law, states routinely bypass it while repatriating displaced persons.

**[Rohingya repatriation has reached a stalemate](#)**, The Daily Star (31 August)

[op-ed] It is evident that the repatriation process of Rohingya refugees has reached a stalemate not for any fault of Bangladesh, but because of Myanmar's failure to convince the Rohingya that it is safe to return. In such circumstances only the international community can step up efforts to pressure Myanmar to create a conducive environment for the refugees to return without fear or uncertainty. This would mean exerting pressure on Myanmar to allow UN and aid workers as well as representatives of the Rohingya refugees to go to Rakhine and assess the situation. So far, such access has been denied.

**[BMPCA: Rohingya organizing themselves using telecom network illegally](#)**, The Dhaka Tribune (31 August)

The Bangladesh Mobile Phone Consumer Associate President has alleged that the Rohingya people are organizing themselves using telecommunications networks illegally. He urged the government to take steps on this issue.

**[Malaysia for stronger bilateral ties with Bangladesh](#)**, The Daily Star (30 August)

Amir Farid, Malaysia's Acting High Commissioner to Bangladesh, said Malaysia, as a member of ASEAN, is working with Bangladesh and Myanmar on addressing the Rohingya crisis. Malaysia was one of the few countries that immediately responded to Bangladesh's call for assistance from international community during the early weeks of Rohingya crisis.

*Similar:*

[Kuala Lumpur eyes stronger ties with Dhaka](#), Dhaka Tribune (30 Aug.)

**[Myanmar lacks ‘will’ to repatriate Rohingya and hasn’t dismantled refugee camps, Bangladesh says](#)**, AFP via Japan Times (30 August)

Bangladesh has accused Myanmar of lacking the “will” to repatriate the Rohingya, as the spat between the countries grew over the recent failed attempt to return the stateless minority to their homes. Briefing foreign diplomats in the capital Dhaka, Bangladesh's foreign minister, A.K. Abdul Momen, questioned Naypyidaw's resolve in taking back the Rohingya.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh says Myanmar lacks ‘will’ to repatriate Rohingya](#), malaymail (30 Aug.)

**[Despite Obstacles, Committees Give Rohingya Women Their First Say in Bangladesh Refugee Camps](#)**, International Organization for Migration (30 August)

Women's committees were launched as a pilot project supported by IOM in September 2018 to provide a forum for Rohingya refugee women to voice their concerns, access information and obtain referrals for services. The response



to the creation of the committees from women was immediate and positive while the reaction from men was more mixed. However, as the community benefits have become clearer, many men now support the committees.

[\*\*Bangladesh Foreign Minister briefs diplomats over Rohingya Situation\*\*](#), DDNews (29 August)

During a briefing for diplomats, the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh Dr. A.K. Abdul Momen called upon the international community to keep up the pressure on Myanmar for early return of the Rohingya refugees. He said that Myanmar should create a conducive environment for the return of Rohingyas through decisive action, including allowing international media and UN agencies to monitor and report on Myanmar's readiness to receive their displaced people.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh Foreign Minister briefs diplomats over Rohingya situation](#), All India Radio (29 Aug.)

[\*\*Bangladesh to review Rohingya refugee camp management\*\*](#), DD News (29 August)

At a meeting of the National Task force on Rohingya Issues in Dhaka, the government of Bangladesh announced that it is considering reviewing the operations of the camps in Cox's Bazar and surrounding areas, and to strictly monitor the activities of international NGOs working in the area. These issues were raised in the wake of a large rally held, without permission, in the camps last week to mark the second anniversary of the Rohingya fleeing from Myanmar.

[\*\*China Proposes Meeting with Bangladesh, Myanmar over Rohingya Repatriation\*\*](#), Radio Free Asia (29 August)

Beijing has proposed a fresh tripartite meeting with Bangladesh and Myanmar to jumpstart the repatriation of Rohingya Muslims, Bangladesh's foreign minister has said, as pressure mounted for the two neighboring countries to find a solution to the refugee crisis. China's proposal came a week after a second attempt to return thousands of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar from camps in southeastern Bangladesh collapsed, amid criticism from rights groups and the UN that Naypyidaw had not provided guarantees for the safe return of refugees.

[\*\*Bangladesh: Parents fear for lost generation of Rohingya children\*\*](#), Amnesty International (29 August)

In a new advocacy brief, Amnesty International warns that a lost generation of Rohingya children are being systematically denied an education in Bangladesh and that many young people in the camps express a sense of hopelessness and uncertainty. In its brief, AI calls on the Bangladeshi government to lift restrictions that limit the enjoyment of refugees' rights. The organization also calls on the international community to support Bangladesh in pursuing longer-term solutions to help Rohingya refugees rebuild their lives. [[Full report](#)]

[\*\*President seeks China's continued support for Rohingya repatriation\*\*](#), The Daily Star (29 August)

President M Abdul Hamid sought the Chinese government's continuous support to ensure the safe and dignified repatriation of Rohingyas to their homeland in Myanmar when Li Jiming, new Chinese Ambassador to Dhaka, presented his credentials to the President.

*Similar:*

[Envoy: China to play more constructive role to resolve Rohingya crisis](#), Dhaka Tribune (29 Aug.)

[\*\*14 Rohingyas detained in Sylhet\*\*](#), The Daily Star (29 August)

Police have detained 14 Rohingyas, including six children, from the Mamtajganj area of Kanaighat upazila in Sylet. Md Shamsuddoha, officer-in-charge of Kanaighat Police Station said that the group from a Rohingya camp in Cox's Bazar claimed they were trying to cross the border into India.

[\*\*Most ASEAN Members Back Myanmar's Repatriation, Aid Efforts in Rakhine\*\*](#), The Irrawaddy (28 August)

The majority of ASEAN members backed Myanmar's efforts in terms of humanitarian relief and repatriation of Rohingya in western Myanmar during the 40<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of the ASEAN Inter-Parliamentary Assembly (AIPA) in Bangkok this week. During the assembly, Indonesia proposed for discussion a draft resolution on the Rohingya humanitarian crisis. However, the Myanmar delegation rejected it during the AIPA executive meeting, saying the proposed resolution does not reflect the Myanmar government's existing efforts there.



*Similar:*

[Row over Rohingya stalls AIPA](#), Bangkok Post (30 Aug.)

[Rohingya row stymies caucus](#), Bangkok Post (28 Aug.)

[Ending Impunity for Gender-Based Violence in Genocide](#), Ms. Magazine (28 August)

[op-ed] A major opportunity to reform how the international justice system addresses sexual violence currently exists: the investigations into genocidal violence against the Rohingya in Burma. A gendered understanding of these crimes is essential and will fulfill the international community's responsibility to recognize and punish all forms of genocidal violence. In July, the prosecutor of the ICC requested to investigate alleged crimes committed against the Rohingya—including deportation, persecution and other inhumane acts. Her investigation must include the reports of sexual violence from the UN's Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, which showed that sexual violence occurred with such intensity that it may amount to genocide.

[Rohingya repatriation: Thailand promises continued support for Bangladesh](#), Dhaka Tribune (28 August)

Thailand has said it will continue its support to Bangladesh for the swift repatriation of Rohingya refugees. Newly-appointed Thai Ambassador Arunrung Phothing Humphreys conveyed this message when she called Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina this week.

[Myanmar to join US-ASEAN maritime drills despite sanctions](#), Channel News Asia (28 August)

Myanmar's navy will join maritime drills with the U.S. in Southeast Asia next week, a spokesman has said, in a rare show of military cooperation, despite Washington slapping sanctions on top army brass over the Rohingya crisis.

[Japan envoy to help resettle Rohingya refugees](#), Japan Times (28 August)

The Japanese Embassy in Myanmar has begun cooperating with the Myanmar government in resettling Rohingya returnees. More than 250 Rohingya are estimated to have been returned to Myanmar surreptitiously without due process since April 2018. The Myanmar government has asked the Japanese Embassy to help investigate the fate of those returnees, and the Japanese ambassador has said the embassy will identify what kind of assistance is needed, provide advice to the Myanmar government and coordinate efforts with related UN agencies.

[Poor healthcare, prospects for Rohingya babies in Bangladesh](#), Al Jazeera (28 August)

Health workers in the world's largest refugee camp say they're struggling to provide proper care for babies born to Rohingya women in Bangladesh. Few Rohingya babies are taken to Bangladeshi camp clinics and therefore many lack birth certificates. More than 100 babies are born every day in the camps.

[Bangladesh: Tensions soar between Rohingya, locals over murder of politician](#), The Japan News (28 August)

The alleged killing of a local politician by a few Rohingya at Teknaf camp has worsened already strained relations between Rohingya refugees and locals. Thirty-year old Omar Faruk, president of Hnila Union Parishad Jubo League, was found murdered in the Jadimura area early 23 August. As the news spread, hundreds of locals blocked the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf highway in protest, and later vandalized a couple of houses and shops at the camp. On 24 August, two Rohingya accused of the murder were killed in a gunfight with police.

*Similar:*

[Fourth Rohingya refugee shot dead over Bangladesh murder](#), AFP via TimesNews Now (1 Sept.)

[Faruk murder: Prime Rohingya suspect killed in 'gunfight'](#), Dhaka Tribune (1 Sept.)

[Third Rohingya shot dead in Bangladesh refugee camp](#), The Guardian (26 Aug.)

[Curbing Rohingya Crimes: New police unit on cards](#), The Daily Star (27 August)

The government of Bangladesh may soon form an 800-member police battalion to deal with the rise in crimes committed by refugees from Myanmar in the 30 Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar. The proposed battalion was one of the suggestions submitted by the district police to the Police Headquarters in May. Other suggestions include setting up a temporary court, setting up three police stations and a number of police investigation centers, and installing CCTV cameras at different points in the camps, along with a security fence around the camps' perimeter.

[\*\*Bangladesh needs deeper political engagement for Rohingya repatriation\*\*](#), The Daily Star (27 August)

At an event in Dhaka, a group of experts and diplomats said that Bangladesh needs to have deeper political engagement with Myanmar as well as allies of both countries – China, Japan and India – for a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis. They said that a sustainable solution, including safe returns to Rakhine State, is possible if Myanmar does two things: make amendments to existing laws and creating a safe zone in Rakhine with the deployment of security personnel from China, Japan, and India along with the presence of Myanmar security forces.

*Similar:*

[Helping The Rohingyas: Dhaka did its part, now it's up to the world](#), The Daily Star (28 Aug.)

[\*\*The Forgotten Rohingya: Stuck in Limbo in Myanmar's Prison-Like Camps\*\*](#), Voice of America (27 August)

Independent human rights groups and journalists are blocked by the government of Myanmar from entering IDP camps or to investigate alleged human rights abuses in northern Rakhine State, Myanmar. This month marks the two-year anniversary since more than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh after a brutal military crackdown. For those who remained in Rakhine, they face severe movement restrictions and many are confined to a life behind barbed wire fences in the Sittwe camps, heavily patrolled by police.

[\*\*Atrocities on Rohingyas: Inaction of key world powers delays justice\*\*](#), The Daily Star (27 August)

Justice remains elusive for Rohingyas due to a lack of strong support from major world powers, like the US, China, and Russia, legal and international experts have said. The International Criminal Court's (ICC) move to probe the alleged acts of genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity committed by the Myanmar military on Rohingyas was promising but the court has no jurisdiction over Myanmar. Experts said the best way to hold Myanmar accountable is by taking the matter to the UN Security Council, which could refer it to the ICC.

[\*\*Rohingya youth stabbed dead in Cox's Bazar\*\*](#), Dhaka Tribune (26 August)

A Rohingya youth was stabbed dead by another member of the community at Kutupalong camp in Ukia in Cox's Bazar. In the last two years, 43 Rohingyas were killed in internal conflicts, while 32 others died in gunfights with security forces.

[\*\*Why aid groups want Rohingya refugees to vote\*\*](#), The New Humanitarian (26 August)

In July, thousands of refugees in the Rohingya camps voted in an election for committee members and leaders to represent them in front of Bangladeshi authorities and aid groups. The elections are intended to encourage more representative leadership – and upend the prevailing system, which rights groups say is unaccountable, dominated by unelected men, and prone to corruption. However, change doesn't happen over night, and it will take some time before refugees in the camps turn to the new elected leaders with their problems.

[\*\*Two years on, the Rohingya and their Bangladeshi hosts are under extreme pressure\*\*](#), The National (26 August)

[op-ed] For any mass displacement crisis, the humanitarian community's ultimate goal is to ensure the voluntary return of displaced people to their homes in safety and dignity. But until the optimal conditions are available for the Rohingya's safe and dignified return to their homes in Myanmar, it is very important that the international community's response to increasing humanitarian needs in and around refugee camps is enhanced, and that efforts to strengthen food security in the refugee camp and within the host community are boosted to preserve gains achieved in other areas like nutrition, health, education, employment, livelihoods and women's empowerment.

*Similar:*

[Cox's Bazar: Rohingya refugees, two years after their exodus](#), Asia News (26 Aug.)

[Two Years On: The Forgotten Side Of The Rohingya Crisis](#), Euro News (26 Aug.)

[Two Years On: no home for the Rohingya](#), Asia Times (26 Aug.) [op-ed]

[From empathy to disregard](#), Dhaka Tribune (30 Aug.) [op-ed]

[\*\*Over 730,000 Rohingya fled Myanmar. Only a few dozen have returned\*\*](#), Irish Times (26 August)

Ever since more than 730,000 Rohingya started fleeing to Bangladesh to escape a vicious campaign of ethnic cleansing, governments from both countries have repeatedly vowed that a return of the Muslim minority to

Myanmar was imminent. After all the assurances that it was safe for them to return to Myanmar, only a few dozen have done so.

[In Bangladesh refugee camps, Rohingya youth speak out](#), Frontier Myanmar (26 August)

Mayyu Ali founded the Art Garden Rohingya Facebook page, a space to showcase more than 150 young poets who write in both Myanmar and English. One reason Ali wanted to foster a community of young poets was to help channel the frustrations of young people who have been stuck in the Bangladesh camps for two years with no access to formal education and no immediate prospect of returning home.

[Zakat fund raises \\$38.1 million for 648,476 refugees this year](#), Gulf News (26 August)

UNHCR's Refugee Zakat Fund assisted 648,476 internally displaced people in the first half of the year. According to a new report, \$38.1 million has been raised through global donors, surpassing the target of \$26 million. In May this year, the fund also expanded its reach to cover displaced Rohingya in Bangladesh, making it the first crisis outside the Middle East and North Africa region to receive Zakat assistance.

[200,000 Rohingya rally to mark 'Genocide Day'](#), The Straits Times (26 August)

About 200,000 Rohingya rallied in a Bangladesh refugee camp on August 25 to mark two years since they fled a violent crackdown by Myanmar forces, just days after a second failed attempt to repatriate the refugees.

*Similar:*

[200,000 Rohingya Refugees March for "Genocide Day" 2 Years After Expulsion from Burma](#), Democracy Now (26 Aug.)

[200,000 Rohingya refugees rally to mark 'Genocide Day' in Bangladesh camp](#), Japan Times (26 Aug.)

[Years after 'textbook ethnic cleansing,' fate of Rohingya remains in limbo](#), TRT World (26 August)

[Myanmar's Rohingya refugees commemorate two years of exile](#), ABC News Australia (28 Aug.)

*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](mailto:advocacy@rsn.ngo). For more information about RSN and our work, please visit <https://refugeesolidaritynetwork.org/>*