

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

December 16 - December 22, 2019



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK

Highlights:

Accountability:

- Rohingya victims filed an official complaint to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development for violations of its investment guidelines by Norway's state-owned Telenor company, demanding an independent investigation into the use of Telenor infrastructure by Burmese security forces to carry out atrocities against Rohingya.

Camp Conditions:

- According to a new UNICEF report, only 241,000 out of 450,000 refugee children aged between four and 14 in the camps in Cox's Bazar are enrolled in learning centers.
- Forty-three new infrastructure components meant to improve the facilities on Bhashan Char under a revised project were announced this week, including increasing the height of the flood-protection embankment and the construction of building for UN and aid agency operations.

International support:

- The inaugural Global Refugee Forum took place in Geneva this week.

Country Visits:

- The final day of a Myanmar-Asean delegation's two-day Cox's Bazar visit to meet Rohingya representatives concerning repatriation have ended without any definite outcome.

High-level Statements:

- At a meeting in Spain, foreign ministers of the Asia-Europe Meeting member countries have called for a permanent solution of the Rohingya crisis through ensuring dignified and sustainable repatriation.

Developments:

[Momen's appeal to foreigners' delegation: 'We must stop genocide'](#) United News Bangladesh (December 22)

Addressing a function hosted in honor of a visiting delegation of media personalities, writers, historian and diplomats, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen called upon foreign friends to write against atrocities and violence in order to build a sustainable world of peace and stability, and to stop the recurrence of such atrocities in any part of the world.

[Most Rohingya children out of school](#) Arab News (December 22)

More than half of Rohingya children living in the camps of Cox's Bazar do not have access to formal education, according to a new UNICEF report. Out of 450,000 refugee children aged between four and 14, only 241,000 are enrolled in learning centers in the southeastern Bangladesh town, which hosts refugees from Myanmar. UNICEF has developed a learning competency framework in accordance with the Myanmar school curriculum to teach the children five subjects: English, Burmese, mathematics, life skills, and science.

[Fazle Abed, founder of world's biggest non-governmental organization BRAC, dies aged 83](#) Reuters (December 21)
Fazle Abed, the founder of BRAC, the world's largest non-governmental development organization, has died at the age of 83 in his home country of Bangladesh. Abed founded BRAC in 1972 as a small rehabilitation project and over five decades built up the massive operation that worked in 11 countries in Asia and Africa, with offices in Britain, the United States and the Netherlands. Its goals were helping the landless poor by educating children, teaching women about health care, and funding small businesses.

Similar:

[Founder of Bangladesh development organization BRAC dies](#) Washington Post (Dec. 21)

[BRAC founder Fazle Hasan Abed dies aged 83](#) Outlook India (Dec. 21)

[Two Rohingya killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 21)

Two Rohingya (suspected yaba dealers) have been killed in a reported gunfight with Border Guards Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar. The incident occurred at Palongkhali union of Ukhiya upazila.

Similar:

[2 Rohingya 'yaba traders' killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) The Independent (Dec. 21)

[Vulnerabilities in the Rohingya refugee camps](#) ReliefWeb (December 20)

A recent study from the Assessment Capacities Project found that individuals and households often experience multiple vulnerabilities at once, and that being vulnerable in one way often leads to another form of vulnerability, resulting in an inescapable and vicious circle. Even those who are least vulnerable and appear to have a safety net, such as remittances from abroad, are not completely immune from vulnerability.

[Rohingyas Face Third Hearing on Illegal Travel Charges in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady Region](#) Radio Free Asia (December 20)

A group of 93 Rohingya Muslim refugees who fled displacement camps in western Myanmar's Rakhine state with the help of human traffickers in mid-November have faced their third hearing on charges of traveling without official permission, a lawyer for the refugees said. During the trial, Patheingyi township judge Khin Myat Myat said, "According to the law, if they are found guilty, they will face a sentence of up to one to two years with hard labor or a fine."

Similar:

[Dozens of Rohingyas, including children, cry at the Myanmar court on the charge of illegal travel](#) The Media HQ (Dec. 22)

[Rohingya crisis: Rights activists for joint risk assessment in Cox's Bazar](#) Prothom Alo (December 20)

COAST Trust and UNHCR jointly hosted 'Together for Better Rohingya Response until the Repatriation and Facilitating Development in Cox's Bazar', where speakers emphasised the need to conduct a joint risk assessment in Cox's Bazar as locals affected by the Rohingya crisis are not getting their fair share of benefits of development programmes. An effective and holistic development plan should be taken based on that assessment, they said. The speakers also called for making education a top priority in development plan and ensuring participation of local Civil Society Organisations and local union parishads at all levels.

[NGO Report: Malaysia Now a Destination for Sex-Trafficking of Rohingya Girls](#) Radio Free Asia (December 20)

Malaysia has become a destination for sex trafficking of Rohingya girls, with traffickers luring teens at Bangladesh refugee camps with false promises of a better life in the Southeast Asian nation, a Kuala Lumpur-based NGO has said in a new report. The Child Rights Coalition Malaysia (CRCM) released its 101-page report after the U.S. State



Department alleged in June that Bangladeshi criminal groups were taking Rohingya women from refugee camps at night, exploiting them in sex trafficking and then returning them during the day.

[**Unproductive meeting between Myanmar, Rohingyas ends in Cox's Bazar**](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 19)

The final day of a Myanmar-Asean delegation's two-day Cox's Bazar visit to meet Rohingya representatives concerning the latter's repatriation have ended without any definite outcome. The 47 Rohingya community leaders, which included six women, told reporters that the Myanmar representatives insisted that they return to Myanmar. Chan Aye, director general of Myanmar foreign ministry's Department of International Organizations and Economics, said the Rohingyas had put forth a number demands during the discussion over the past two days, and that they would forward these issues to the top officials of the Myanmar government and work to resolve them as quickly as possible. Myanmar officials stressed that Rohingyas would have to get the National Verification Card [NVC] first as non-Myanmar nationals to kick off the repatriation process. Then, Myanmar will scrutinize the cards and decide about their citizenship. The Rohingya leaders rejected the proposal like they had before.

Similar:

[Bangladesh: Rohingyas Remain 'Hopeless' following Myanmar Meetings](#) Radio Free Asia (Dec. 19)

[Myanmar rigid on Rohingya repatriation conditions](#) New Age Bangladesh (Dec. 19)

[Myanmar-Rohingya Talks Yield No Progress on Repatriation, Refugees Say](#) VOA News (Dec. 20)

[Myanmar govt-Rohingya meeting ends without an outcome](#) Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 18)

[**Rethinking solutions to the Rohingya refugee crisis**](#) Open Global Rights (December 19)

[op-ed] The Rohingya refugee crisis is an enormous challenge for the international community. Bangladesh is under the strain of hosting a million Rohingya refugees and their voluntary repatriation to Myanmar appears remote. Short of decisive action by the Security Council or other regional institutions or bodies, or unforeseen political developments in Myanmar, other solutions and mitigating actions deserve attention. For example, Bangladesh should grant access to public schools and temporary work rights in addition to ensuring health care including psycho-social support, family planning and reproductive health services. Another solution is resettlement. A properly managed resettlement programme with UNHCR support can avoid risks of fraud or pull factors. Of course, the international community cannot overlook the serious violations of human rights experienced by the Rohingya. Some measures of accountability and seeking justice for the Rohingya are essential.

[**Nine refugees voluntarily return to Rakhine State**](#) Myanmar Times (December 19)

Two families of refugees comprising nine people have voluntarily returned from Bangladesh to Rakhine State. U Ko Ko Naing, director general of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Relief and Resettlement, said the returnees arrived on Tuesday at Taung Pyo Letwe repatriation camp in Maungdaw. Officials at Taung Pyo Letwe carried out security checks and issued national verification cards (NVCs) to two males and four females. They are still verifying the identities of the other three. The returnees were taken to Hla Phoe Khaung temporary camp and later transferred to the administrator of West Myoma ward and Kyauk Chaung village.

[**Myanmar's Suu Kyi calls supporters a 'source of strength' during genocide hearings**](#) Japan Times (December 19)

Myanmar leader Aung San Suu Kyi has thanked supporters who staged large rallies on her behalf as she defended the country against genocide charges at The Hague, speaking to the nation for the first time since she returned. "The support of our people, given generously and unquestioningly ... was a great source of strength to us when we presented our case at the ICJ," Suu Kyi said in a televised address screened by the state broadcaster.

[**How Rohingya women become fodder for sex trafficking**](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 18)

The modern slave trade around the world generates more than \$150 billion, according to the United Nations. Global bodies have designated Bangladesh as a provider and a transit point for human trafficking. The Rohingya crisis has particularly affected the scene. Young Rohingya women in the refugee camps are approached with offers of jobs and marriage proposals by traffickers. They use connections in the local government offices, the passport office, and the Election Commission to procure birth certificates, national ID (NID) cards and passports. If getting a passport becomes



too complicated, the women are hauled onto fishing trawlers and sent journeying across the sea. They are sold off as prostitutes to Indian brothels and cheap labour in Malaysia and Saudi Arabia. The high profit margins associated with human trafficking incentivizes the traffickers to sponsor their targets. But there are instances where the victims pay to be trafficked.

[ASEM calls for sustainable return of Rohingyas](#) New Age Bangladesh (December 18)

Foreign ministers of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) member countries have called for permanent solution of the Rohingya crisis through ensuring dignified and sustainable repatriation of those forcibly displaced people to their land of origin in Myanmar. The call, which also sought conducive conditions inside Myanmar for commencing repatriation as well as accountability over the atrocity committed against the Rohingyas, was adopted by the ministers at the Chair's statement during the 14th foreign minister's meeting of ASEM held in Madrid, Spain.

Similar:

[ASEM calls for durable solution to Rohingya crisis](#) United News Bangladesh (Dec. 17)

[ASEM calls for durable solution to Rohingya crisis](#) Prothom Alo (Dec. 17)

[Rohingya repatriation: Dhaka for decisive global collective actions](#) Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 17)

[Cash ban stokes worry among Rohingya volunteers](#) The New Humanitarian (December 17)

A government order banning cash aid in Bangladesh's Rohingya camps is putting pressure on humanitarian groups to cut cash-for-work schemes, threatening a rare source of income for aid-dependent refugees. Aid officials say negotiations to maintain paid volunteer and cash-for-work programmes are ongoing, and that rumours about pending dismissals may be due to "miscommunication". Many Rohingya say the government's cash ban is the latest in a line of tightening restrictions, after authorities blocked mobile internet and increased security in late August.

[Bangladesh envoy hopes ICJ to put end to atrocities against Rohingyas](#) Prothom Alo (December 17)

Addressing a function celebrating the 49th Victory Day, Bangladesh ambassador to the Netherlands Sheikh Mohammed Belal has expressed hope that the case at the top UN court would put an end to widespread and systematic atrocities carried out by the Myanmar's forces on Rohingya community. He also hoped that it would eliminate the culture of impunity for the sake of a durable solution to the protracted Rohingya problem.

[Rohingya Relocation to Bhashan Char: Govt plans facilities for UN, aid agencies](#) The Daily Star (December 17)

The government has planned to construct a four-storey building on Bhashan Char for the UN and aid agency representatives to ensure effective monitoring of humanitarian activities for one lakh Rohingya refugees to be relocated to the island. It also planned to increase the height of the flood-protection embankment around Bhashan Char housing project from the present nine feet to 19 feet. These are part of the 43 new infrastructure components meant to improve the facilities on Bhashan Char under a revised project which will be placed at the Executive Committee on National Economic Council meeting.

[Millions of Muslim refugees could flee India: Pakistan PM Khan](#) AlJazeera (December 17)

At the Global Refugee Forum in Geneva, Pakistan's Prime Minister Imran Khan said millions of Muslims living in India would be forced to leave as a result of India's new citizenship law, and the ongoing curfew in Indian-administered Kashmir - creating "a refugee crisis that would dwarf other crises." Addressing the Forum, the Pakistani leader said his country would not be able to accommodate more refugees and urged the world to "step in now."

[200 Rohingyas caught fleeing Bangladeshi camps by boat](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 17)

Almost 200 Rohingyas sailed more than 1,500km to escape Bangladesh refugee camps only to be arrested by Myanmar's navy. The boat seizure came just days after Aung San Suu Kyi addressed the UN's top court to deny allegations of a genocidal campaign against the ethnic minority. With the monsoon over and seas relatively calm, increasing numbers of Rohingya are once again risking their lives attempting to reach Malaysia or Indonesia. Bangladeshi authorities say they are stopping one or two boats a week leaving the country's shores, and many more are thought to evade patrols.

Similar:

[Almost 200 Rohingya Caught Fleeing Bangladeshi Camps by Boat](#) VOA News (Dec. 17)

[200 Rohingya caught fleeing Bangladeshi camps by boat](#) Dawn (Dec. 18)

[Almost 200 Rohingya caught fleeing Bangladeshi camps by boat](#) Frontier Myanmar (Dec. 18)

[Rohingya caught fleeing Bangladeshi camps by boat](#) The Asean Post (Dec. 18)

[Myanmar Rohingya Repatriation Seen Delayed by Genocide Trial, 2020 Elections](#) Radio Free Asia (December 16)

The Myanmar government will not push for the much-delayed repatriation of Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh until the genocide case at the U.N.'s top court is over and possibly until Myanmar's next elections are held in late 2020, in-country observers have said.

[ROHINGYA CHILDREN'S EDUCATION: Int'l community must share responsibility: Amnesty](#) The Daily Star (December 16)

The international community must not avoid its responsibility for the education of Rohingya children in Cox's Bazar camps, Amnesty International said ahead of the first Global Refugee Forum. More than half a million children have yet to see the inside of a classroom since they arrived in the refugee camps more than two years ago. The Global Refugee Forum -- which is being hosted by the UN's refugee agency in Geneva and takes place between December 16-18 -- has made education of one its six key themes.

[Rohingya victims demand OECD investigate Telenor's complicity in genocide](#) BNI Online (December 16)

Rohingya victims of Burma's genocidal operations in Maungdaw, Arakan State, filed an official complaint to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) for violations of its investment guidelines by Norway's state-owned Telenor company, demanding an independent investigation into the use of Telenor infrastructure by Burmese security forces to carry out atrocities against the Rohingya. The victims allege that security forces used a Telenor cellular network tower to shoot at fleeing Rohingya men, women and children as they tried to escape the village during the last week of August 2017.

[Global Refugee Forum to Seek Greater Support for Forcibly Displaced](#) VOA News (December 16)

More than 2,000 government, U.N., and business leaders, as well as representatives from civil society and humanitarian agencies, are gathering in Geneva to attend the first-ever Global Refugee Forum. The three-day event opening Monday aims to generate new approaches and long-term commitments to help refugees and the communities that host them. The UNHCR says it hopes this gathering this week in Geneva will prove to be a game-changer in the way refugees and the countries and communities that host them are treated and supported.

Similar:

[Briefing: The increasing squeeze on refugees to go home](#) The New Humanitarian (Dec. 17)

[Three tests for the Global Refugee Forum](#) The New Humanitarian (Dec. 16) [op-ed]

[What you should know about India's 'anti-Muslim' citizenship law](#) AlJazeera (December 16)

India has passed a law that grants citizenship to religious minorities - except Muslims - from neighbouring countries, with legal experts saying it violates the country's secular constitution. The new citizenship law, which was an amendment to a 1955 legislation, allows Indian citizenship to "persecuted" minorities - Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains, Parsis and Christians - from Bangladesh, Afghanistan and Pakistan, but makes no reference to Muslims. Opposition parties say the law is discriminatory as it singles out Muslims in an officially secular nation of 1.3 billion people. Muslims form nearly 15 percent of the population. Critics point out that the move is part of a Hindu supremacist agenda pushed by the government of Prime Minister Narendra Modi since it came to power nearly six years ago. Multiple petitions have been filed against the law in India's Supreme Court.



Similar:

[In India, Modi's citizenship proposal for non-Muslim refugees prompts outrage](#) PBS (Dec. 16)

[Modi Makes His Bigotry Even Clearer](#) New York Times (Dec. 18) [op-ed]

[India Needs a Proper Refugee Law, Not a CAA Suffused With Discriminatory Intent](#) The Wire (Dec. 20)

[India's citizenship act is not discriminatory](#) Asia Times (Dec. 19) [op-ed]

[A new law in India could put Muslims at greater risk of persecution, like the Rohingya](#) The Conversation (Dec. 19)

[Myanmar has 'softened' stance following ICJ hearing, says Bangladesh Foreign Minister](#) ANI News (December 16)

Following the United Nation's International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing, Myanmar has 'softened' its stance on the matter pertaining to Rohingya Muslims, said Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. "They have softened their stance. They have invited me for a visit. These are good initiatives," Momen said.

Similar:

[Myanmar to be sincere in implementing Rohingya repatriation deal: Foreign minister](#) The Daily Star (Dec. 15)

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/>