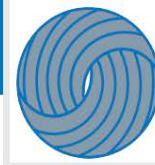


Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

December 2 - December 8, 2019



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK

Highlights:

Accountability:

- A hearing is set for December 10-13 at the ICJ for the lawsuit brought by the Gambia against Myanmar alleging crimes of genocide. Lawyers for the Gambia are seeking “provisional measures” to protect the Rohingya while the case is heard in full.

High-level Statements:

- At the COP25 Conference in Madrid, Hasina has once again urged the international community to step up efforts to resolve the Rohingya crisis.
- The Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Benoit Prefontaine, said that Canada is using all tools at its disposal, including sanctions, against Myanmar leaders and companies, as well as diplomatic efforts to help find a solution to the Rohingya crisis.

Camp Conditions:

- According to a new report from Human Rights Watch, almost 400,000 Rohingya children are being denied meaningful education in the camps in Cox’s Bazar due to government restrictions.
- The office of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPHR), a Rohingya rights group, has been forced to close after authorities shut down electric service for undisclosed reasons.

Developments:

[No time fixed yet to shift Rohingyas to Bhasanchar](#) New Age Bangladesh (December 8)

The government is yet to fix any date for transferring the stipulated one lakh Rohingyas from Cox’s Bazar to Bhasanchar with the likely extension of the shelter project’s completion time by about one and a half years. Officials said that the cost of the project being implemented by the Navy on the tiny Bay of Bengal island was also set to rise by Tk 858.32 crore, raising suspicion that the planned transfer of Rohingyas might be delayed. The UN evaluation of the technical, humanitarian and security arrangements in the new location is also yet to be completed. On top of that, rights groups have been protesting that the island would not be a liveable place for the displaced Myanmar citizens.

[Myanmar faces genocide hearings at The Hague](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 7)

Gambia, a tiny, mainly Muslim West African country, filed a lawsuit in November accusing Myanmar of genocide, the most serious international crime. Next week, lawyers pressing a case against Myanmar for alleged genocide against its Muslim Rohingya minority will ask judges to order immediate action to protect them from further violence. During three days of hearings starting December 10, it will ask the 16-member panel of UN judges at the International Court of Justice to impose “provisional measures” to protect the Rohingya before the case can be heard in full. Gambia’s request for a provisional injunction is the legal equivalent of seeking a restraining order against a country.

Similar:

[In rare legal test, Myanmar faces genocide hearings at The Hague](#) Reuters (Dec. 5)

[Using all tools against Myanmar for solution to Rohingya crisis: Canada](#) United News Bangladesh (December 7)
Addressing a symposium titled “Bangladesh-Canada Relations: Prognosis for Partnership” organised by Cosmos Foundation, the philanthropic arm of Cosmos Group, the Canadian High Commissioner to Bangladesh, Benoit Prefontaine, said that Canada is using all tools at its disposal, including sanctions, against Myanmar leaders and companies, as well as diplomatic efforts to help find a solution to the Rohingya crisis.

Similar:

[Canada: Using all tools against Myanmar for solution to Rohingya crisis](#) Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 7)

[Delayed Rohingya repatriation poses new challenges](#) The Daily Star (December 7)
[op-ed] A recent report titled “Forcibly Displaced Myanmar National (Rohingya) in Bangladesh: Governance Challenges and Way Out” prepared by Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) tells us that the country faces long-term financial, political and security challenges due to the prolonged stay of Rohingyas on Bangladeshi soil. Since Myanmar is not under any serious international pressure to prepare the grounds to take back the Rohingyas, we are increasingly facing socio-economic instability. What is sorely needed now is a multi-stakeholder assessment that will include state and non-state actors to formulate plans from short to long-term intervention for the Rohingya populace, because the way things are being played out in the international arena, this displaced community may be here for a long time.

[Dhaka to have its presence during Rohingya case hearing at Hague](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 7)
Bangladesh will make its presence felt through various engagements among the international community during the three-day hearing at The Hague as the top UN court is set to hear the Myanmar genocide case beginning on December 10. A Bangladesh delegation, led by Foreign Secretary M Shahidul Haque, will leave for The Hague, Netherlands Saturday. The delegation includes some civil society members, and will have meetings with stakeholders and observe the hearing. A minister-level delegation from Canada will also be there during the hearing.

[UN chief: Efforts to find early solution to Rohingya crisis will continue](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 7)
United Nations secretary-general António Guterres has reassured Bangladesh of continuing his efforts towards finding an early and durable solution to the Rohingya crisis. He made these remarks while discussing the crisis after Bangladesh’s new permanent representative to the UN, Rabab Fatima, presented her credentials to him at the headquarters of the global body in New York. During the discussion, Guterres described Bangladesh as a friend of the UN and lauded the country’s socio-economic developments under the leadership of prime minister Sheikh Hasina.

[Trafficking in Rohingya: Exploiting the desperate](#) The Daily Star (December 7)
[op-ed] While coping with the changed circumstances—from having a life in their native Rakhine State to finding themselves displaced and stateless—the Rohingya population has had to face up to another insidious and menacing threat lurking in the shadows in their place of refuge: human trafficking. As it turns out, refugees are some of the easier prey for the human traffickers. Taking advantage of the desperation of these displaced people, the traffickers trick the more vulnerable ones into sex slavery, domestic servitude, and forced labour. And although men and young boys also fall victims to the lure of the traffickers, who give them false hopes of better lives abroad, it is the women and girls who are easier targets and the more lucrative ones. In order to eliminate human trafficking, we need to address to root causes that make the Rohingya vulnerable to traffickers: economic hardships, lack of education, lack of livelihood generation opportunities, lack of access to the basic necessities. The host country, along with the humanitarian agencies working with the Rohingya population, needs to take a more thorough and comprehensive approach covering all aspects of human trafficking in order to address and eliminate this problem. Till then, desperate people will keep falling for desperate measures in search of a better life.

Similar:

[Taking on traffickers at the world’s largest refugee site](#) UNHCR (Dec. 2)



[**12,000 SIMs seized in Rohingya camps in Bangladesh**](#) New Age Bangladesh (December 7)

Over 12,000 unregistered mobile phone SIM cards have been seized in a fresh crackdown in Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar since September following change of the refugee relief and repatriation commissioner. Officials at the commissioner's office in Cox's Bazar said they were not seizing handsets, but rather taking away the SIM cards of both Myanmar and Bangladeshi operators used by the Rohingyas. These steps were taken alongside weakening the mobile phone networks inside the camps following the August 25 rally in Kutupalang camp where over one lakh Rohingya gathered seeking justice to atrocities of Myanmar military in Rakhine state.

[**Changes to Passport, Foreigners Acts still pending in top court**](#) The Economic Times (December 6)

On September 8, 2015, the Indian government changed the passport and foreigners acts to allow non-Muslim refugees from Bangladesh and Pakistan to stay in India if they entered prior to December 31, 2014, regardless of whether they entered the country with or without valid papers. The changes were challenged in the Supreme Court but are yet to be heard. The matter assumes significance in the light of Union Cabinet's nod to the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, which proposes to give citizenship right to persecuted non-Muslim minorities of Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan.

Similar:

[Non-Muslims refugees need to stay 5 yrs for citizenship](#) Deccan Herald (Dec. 7)

[**Bangladesh: Rohingya Rights Group's Office Padlocked, Power Lines Snapped**](#) Radio Free Asia (December 6)

A Rohingya rights group involved in documenting alleged atrocities suffered by refugees who fled violence in Myanmar closed its headquarters in Bangladesh after authorities shut down electric service for undisclosed reasons. Activities of the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights (ARSPHR) had been frozen during the past two weeks after local officials snapped off power lines at its offices in Cox's Bazar's Ukhia sub-district, according to Mohammad Ayas, one of the group's leaders. ARSPHR, whose leader Mohib Ullah had claimed he received death threats in recent months, is the biggest of several community groups to emerge among the Rohingya in the sprawling refugee settlements in southeastern Bangladesh. Refugee Commissioner Mahbub Alam Talukder denied that the Bangladeshi government had any role in what happened to ARSPHR.

Similar:

[Bangladesh: Rohingya Rights Group's Office Padlocked, Power Lines Snapped](#) Benar News (Dec. 6)

[Bangladesh orders Rohingya rights group office locked](#) Frontier Myanmar (Dec. 6)

[Bangladesh orders Rohingya rights group office locked](#) Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 7)

[Bangladesh orders Rohingya group office locked](#) The Asean Post (Dec. 7)

[**How Business Can Invest in the Future of the Rohingya and Host Community in Bangladesh**](#) Center for Global Development (December 6)

Bangladesh is hosting more than a million Rohingya refugees, and businesses have a critical role to play in improving the situation for them and their Bangladeshi host communities. The Center for Global Development has identified four viable areas for business investment and procurement in Cox's Bazar: clean energy; fish, shrimp, and seafood; fruits such as mango and pineapple; and handicrafts, specialized clothing, and home goods. Their latest brief covers the background to the crisis and how it is affecting Bangladesh, why businesses should get involved, what investment and sourcing opportunities exist, and what next steps for interested businesses could be.

[**Rohingya Crisis Fallout: TIB paints grim picture**](#) The Daily Star (December 6)

Bangladesh faces long-term financial, political and security challenges, as Rohingya repatriation may not happen anytime soon, said Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) Executive Director Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said at a press conference during the launch of a report titled "Forcibly Displaced Myanmar Nationals (Rohingya) in Bangladesh: Governance Challenges and Way out" at the TIB office. The fund from the international community for nearly one



million Rohingyas may not sustain as no strong international initiative has been taken to oblige Myanmar for creating a conducive environment for the refugees to return soon, he said. "As a result, Bangladesh's socio-economic instability will grow. There are risks of security at local and national levels. The crisis also creates political and diplomatic challenges for the government," Iftekharuzzaman said. It also involves the risks of growing extremism as the people who face violence are more likely to become violent.

Similar:

[Rohingya Crisis Fallout](#) Asia News Network (Dec. 6)

[TIB: Diplomatic limitations led to failed Rohingya repatriation](#) Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 5)

[TIB wants transparency on UN role over Rohingya crisis](#) The Daily Star (December 5)

Transparency International Bangladesh (TIB) wants transparency and accountability of the United Nations in management of the humanitarian crisis of Rohingyas. TIB's Executive Director, Dr. Iftekharuzzaman said at a press conference that it is important that the UN and other NGOs make their information on the spending over the Rohingya crisis, highlighting lack of transparency around administration costs.

[UNICEF: Substantial progress in providing education to hundreds of thousands of Rohingya refugees](#) UNICEF (December 5)

A network of temporary learning centres that was established throughout the camps in the early months of the crisis has been expanded and strengthened to provide a safer and a more protective learning environment, along with better psychosocial support to children who experienced unimaginable suffering. Because neither the Bangladesh nor the Myanmar curriculums are permitted in the camps, UNICEF instead has introduced an informal syllabus known as the Learning Competency Framework and Approach (LCFA). The LCFA is now being progressively rolled out throughout the camps. It is loosely aligned to the national curriculums of Bangladesh and Myanmar and comprises a structured set of teaching and learning materials, with lessons designed for children aged four to 14 in English and Burmese languages. UNICEF has continued to advocate for enhanced education opportunities for Rohingya refugee children and adolescents and is continuing to explore options to assess and certify learning outcomes achieved by Rohingya children in the current informal education system.

[Lawsuit against Myanmar over Rohingya genocide: Hearings at ICJ scheduled to start Dec 10](#) The Financial Express (December 4)

On November 11, the Gambia filed a lawsuit against Myanmar in the International Court of Justice (ICJ) for its atrocities against the Rohingya population. Even though the crisis has been ongoing for decades, it's a crucial time for the lawsuit to be filed, advocates say. The Rohingya people's continuing refusal to go back is only testament to the lack of security for them in Myanmar. The lawsuit by the Gambia is supported in large part by the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), and is being led by the Attorney General and Minister of Justice of the Gambia Abubacarr M Tambadou, who decided to pursue actions after a recent visit to Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, a region where about 900,000 Rohingya refugees are living in camps that the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has termed the world's biggest refugee camp. Tambadou, who also worked to bring justice for the case of the Rwandan genocide, immediately recognised a similar pattern and was moved to take action, he said during an event held during UN General Assembly in September. A hearing is expected on December 10.

Similar:

[The Story Behind The Gambia's Lawsuit against Myanmar over the Rohingya Genocide](#) Inter Press Service (Dec. 3)

['Rohingyas to go back when they are ready'](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 4)

A vast number of Rohingyas are willing to return to Myanmar, claims the chief of International Organization for Migration's Bangladesh mission, insisting that they will go back when they are ready. "The only people who can take the decision to go back are the Rohingyas themselves. It has to be a voluntary decision," Giorgi Gigauri told a



workshop on "Reporting Migration" at a Dhaka hotel. Gigauri said tackling tension between the Rohingyas and the local community is a priority for the next year.

[Rohingya refugee crisis: Unseen wounds need to heal](#) Medecins Sans Frontiers (December 3)

Before escaping to safety in Bangladesh, many refugees directly experienced or witnessed significant violence and many lost immediate family members. In the camps, they live in cramped, overcrowded makeshift shelters, without enough food, clean water or toilets. Their lives are on hold, their futures uncertain. "We are increasingly seeing new cases of generalised anxiety and depression," says Pooja Iyer, MSF's psychologist in the Jamtoli and Hakimpara health centres. While physical wounds may have healed, the memories of violence and loss of families through death or separation are still alive. Two years on, mental health needs have evolved. Traumatic memories combined with unemployment, anxiety about the future, poor living conditions and little or no access to basic services such as formal education, leave the Rohingya vulnerable to long-term psychological harm.

[Rohingya crisis damaging Bangladesh environment, says Hasina at COP25](#) BDNews24 (December 2)

Addressing world leaders at the 2019 UN Climate Change Conference, known as COP25, in Madrid, Hasina urged the international community to step up efforts to resolve the humanitarian crisis. The South Asian nation has repeatedly called on the international community to put pressure on neighbouring Myanmar to take back its citizens. The Bangladeshi leader once again raised the issue before the international forum and said sheltering the Rohingya refugees has resulted in 'an environmental and social havoc' in the country.

[Bangladesh: Rohingya Children Denied Education](#) Human Rights Watch (December 2)

The government of Bangladesh is blocking aid groups from providing any meaningful education to Rohingya children in refugee camps and banning the children from attending schools outside the camps, Human Rights Watch said in a report released today. The government should urgently lift the restrictions that unlawfully deprive almost 400,000 Rohingya refugee children of their right to education. The 81-page report, "Are We Not Human?: Denial of Education for Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh," documents how Bangladesh prohibits aid groups in the refugee camps in the Cox's Bazar district from providing Rohingya children with accredited or formal education. There is no secondary-level education, and groups are barred from teaching the Bengali language and using the Bangladesh curriculum. Rohingya children have no opportunity to enroll in or continue their education at private or public schools outside the refugee camps either.

Similar:

[Bangladesh is deliberately blocking Rohingya refugee children from education, report says](#) CNN (Dec. 3)

[Rohingya Refugee Children in Bangladesh Are Being Denied Education, Rights Group Says](#) Time (Dec. 3)

[Rohingya child refugees being denied education: HRW report](#) AlJazeera (Dec. 3)

[Rights Group: Bangladesh Blocking Rohingya Refugee Education](#) VOA News (Dec. 3)

[Human Rights Watch says Rohingya child refugees being denied education](#) Reuters (Dec. 3)

[Bangladesh Bars Rohingya Children from Education, Human Rights Watch Says](#) Radio Free Asia (Dec. 3)

[Bangladesh refuses Rohingya child refugees education, says rights group](#) Free Malaysia Today (Dec. 3)

[West Bengal: BSF flags Rohingya infiltration worry, 72 nabbed in 12 months](#) Times of India (December 2)

Rohingyas are continuing their attempt to cross over into India from Bangladesh. The South Bengal Frontier of the Border Security Force (BSF) has released figures revealing that 72 Rohingyas were apprehended along the Indo-Bangladesh border over the last 12 months (December 1, 2018 – November 30, 2019). A total of 1,988 foreigners apprehended during that time.

[Govt optimistic about Rohingya relocation to Bhasan Char](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 2)

The government is optimistic about implementing its plan to relocate Rohingyas to Bhasan Char after completing further technical assessment by an expert team, a senior government official has said. The official said the government has not shelved its relocation plan at all. Separately, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh Steven Corliss said the UN's first technical assessment mission was scheduled to be done from November 17 to November 19. He said the UN and



the government of Bangladesh have agreed to “postpone” the visit to make sure that the right experts, and all the necessary logistical arrangements are in place. “We are awaiting confirmation of an alternative date, and are also submitting terms of reference to the government for these onsite visits, which are part of a broader assessment process,” the UNHCR Representative added.

Similar:

[Govt optimistic about Rohingya relocation to Bhasan Char](#) The Independent (Dec. 2)

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/>

