

# Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

December 23 - December 29, 2019



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY  
NETWORK

## Highlights:

### Accountability:

- The UN General Assembly has approved a resolution strongly condemning rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minority groups in Myanmar, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and deaths in detention (134-9, 28 abstentions).

### International support:

- The European Commission has released €10 million in humanitarian aid to address the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh and Myanmar. This is in addition to the €33 million funding already announced earlier this year.
- Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte publicly expressed his willingness to accept Rohingya Muslims into the Philippines, and encouraged Malaysia and Indonesia to do the same.

### Camp Conditions:

- Bangladeshi officials have defended security measures aimed at “protecting” Rohingya refugees, after the International Crisis Group published a study indicating that barbed-wire fencing, watchtowers and restrictions on phone use and movement could drive refugees toward crime or extremism.
- The government is set to block almost 3 lakh mobile connections that are currently being used in Rohingya camps in Cox’s Bazar as it ramps up its efforts to crack down on criminal activities by a section of the refugee population.

### Regional matters:

- The controversy over India’s CAA and NRC continued this week, resulting in tensions within the country and beyond.
- A Rohingya couple in India set to be deported back to Myanmar have had their deportation stayed.

## Developments:

### [Experts seek stronger global efforts to ensure justice for Rohingyas](#) The Independent (December 29)

The Centre for Genocide Studies (CGS) at Dhaka University hosted the panel discussion on "The Rohingya Crisis: Why Accountability?". Speakers at the discussion laid emphasis on strengthening joint global efforts on accountability, mentioning that the recent hearing at the top UN court in The Hague offers both challenges and opportunities for the international community to get involved deeply and ensure justice for Rohingyas. They expressed their optimism over a positive outcome from the International Court of Justice as The Gambia requested six provisional measures in the genocide case filed against Myanmar. The speakers observed that the repatriation process and the bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Myanmar will not be affected due to the proceedings.

### [Calcutta High Court stays deportation of Rohingya couple](#) New Indian Express (December 29)

The Calcutta High Court has restrained the central and West Bengal governments from deporting a Rohingya couple, in "the spirit of humanity" till the disposal of a writ petition filed by the duo. A bench headed by Justice Sabyasachi

Bhattacharya gave the order on a writ petition in which Abdur Sukur alias Adi Sukur and his wife Anowara Begam pleaded they shouldn't be sent back to Myanmar "to face persecution", having already sought refugee status with the UNHCR in New Delhi. The couple, arrested in 2017 after they entered India through Bangladesh and were on their way to Delhi for a UNHCR hearing, have served out their sentence but are still lodged in Dum Dum jail.

[Rohingya genocide case against Myanmar: West's failure to support the Gambia surprising, if not shocking](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 29)

On November 11, the Gambia filed a case with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) against Myanmar, alleging violations of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide in connection with the Rohingyas. The Gambia filed the case as the chair of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation's (OIC) ad hoc ministerial committee on accountability, for human rights violations against the Rohingyas that was established at the 45th OIC Council of Foreign Ministers in Dhaka in 2018. Apart from the OIC, the Gambia received open support from only two western countries: Canada and the Netherlands. Canada and the Netherlands also urged all state parties to the Genocide Convention to support the African nation. That did not happen, however; no other countries voiced their support in favour of the Gambian endeavour to seek justice for the Rohingyas, which has surprised many, including officials at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, former diplomats and international relations experts in Bangladesh.

[U.N. Resolution Condemns Myanmar's Abuse of Rohingya](#) New York Times (December 28)

The United Nations General Assembly has approved a resolution strongly condemning rights abuses against Rohingya Muslims and other minority groups in Myanmar, including arbitrary arrests, torture, rape and deaths in detention. In a 134-9 vote with 28 abstentions, the body approved the resolution, which also calls on Myanmar's government to take urgent measures to combat incitement of hatred against the Rohingya and other minorities in the states of Rakhine, Kachin and Shan. General Assembly resolutions are not legally binding, but they often reflect world opinion.

*Similar:*

[Resolution on Myanmar adopted at UNGA with overwhelming majority](#) United News Bangladesh (Dec. 28)

[Myanmar Rohingya: UN condemns human rights abuses](#) BBC (Dec. 29)

[UN decries human rights abuses against Rohingya](#) Taipei Times (Dec. 29)

[UN condemns Myanmar over human rights abuses against Rohingya](#) The Guardian (Dec. 27)

[International Crisis Group urges Bangladesh to shift sights to long-term plans for Rohingya](#) BDNews24 (December 27)

The International Crisis Group has urged Bangladesh to shift its focus to long-term plans for the Rohingya and their hosts instead of restricting the humanitarian response to meeting the refugees' immediate needs. The refugees are unlikely to return to their homeland in the near or even medium term, but Bangladesh's policy toward the Rohingya remains focused on near-term repatriation out of fear that long-term plans will ease pressure on Myanmar, the ICG said in a report. The group has also called on external partners for support in making those plans succeed.

[Rohingya Crisis: Dhaka, Beijing discuss ways for early repatriation](#) The Daily Star (December 27)

Bangladesh and China have discussed ways for "early repatriation" of Rohingyas to their place of origin in Rakhine State of Myanmar during a meeting in Bangladesh. The Chinese envoy also met Chairman of Red Crescent Society of Bangladesh Hafiz Ahmed Mazumdar, and its Vice-Chairman Prof Dr Md Habibe Millat. The two sides discussed humanitarian cooperation between Bangladesh and China, and early return of Rohingyas to their homeland.

[Japan Backs Myanmar's Claim That No Genocide Occurred in Rakhine State](#) The Irrawaddy (December 27)

The Japanese ambassador to Myanmar said his government firmly believes that no genocide was committed in the country, and expressed hope that the court will reject The Gambia's request that provisional measures be taken against Myanmar. Japan has become the first country to voice support for Myanmar since the Southeast Asian country's legal team testified at the World Court, where The Gambia filed a case of genocide over the Rohingya crisis.



[Bangladesh Pushes Back Against Criticism of Security Measures at Rohingya Camps](#) Radio Free Asia (December 27)  
Bangladeshi officials have defended security measures aimed at “protecting” Rohingya refugees, after an international NGO said in a new study that barbed-wire fencing, watchtowers and restrictions on phone use and movement could drive refugees toward crime or extremism. The report released by the International Crisis Group (ICG) warned that such “counterproductive” security measures could alienate the refugees and “set the stage for greater insecurity and conflict in southern Bangladesh.” The Rohingya refugees “cannot expect freedom and other facilities like the Bangladeshis [have],” Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan Kamal said as he fielded questions about the study.

[In tandem with NRC, CAA may affect status of India’s Muslim minority: Congressional Research Service](#) The Free Press Journal (December 27)  
The amended Citizenship law along with a National Register of Citizens (NRC) being planned by the Narendra Modi government “may affect the status” of Muslim minority in India, a report by the Congressional Research Service (CRS) has said. CRS is an independent research wing of the US Congress which prepares reports periodically on issues of domestic and global importance for lawmakers to take informed decisions. These are not considered as official reports of the US Congress.

*Similar:*

[Everything you wanted to know about the CAA and NRC](#) India Today (Dec. 23)

[Historical promises](#) The Pioneer (Dec. 24) [op-ed]

[Indian states propose land rights amid fears over citizenship law](#) AlJazeera (Dec. 23)

[Duterte Says Philippines Willing To Accept Rohingya Muslim Refugees](#) International Business Times (December 26)  
Philippine President Rodrigo Duterte emphatically expressed his willingness to accept persecuted Rohingya Muslims into the Philippines to begin their lives anew. He also pressed upon Malaysia and Indonesia, whose populace is largely Muslim, to do the same. Of the Philippines’ predominately Catholic population, Muslims make up about 6 percent.

*Similar:*

[No foreseen threat to nat’l security if PH shelters Rohingya refugees – Lorenzana](#) Manila Bulletin (Dec. 28)

[Myanmar, Though Suspicious of China, Edges Closer to Beijing for Safety](#) VOA News (December 25)  
Myanmar has crafted a neutral foreign policy since its colonial years to avoid leaning too much on any foreign power, but a spiraling political crisis at home is pushing it toward China as a buffer against international outrage. A Myanmar more beholden to China would alarm India and a bloc of Southeast Asian nations that hope to contain Chinese influence over the larger member states. During a recent visit to Myanmar, Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi met Aung San Suu Kyi to discuss ways China could help. The two discussed “providing continued assistance to Myanmar’s peace and national reconciliation efforts, as well as for the repatriation process in the Rakhine State (and) continued cooperation between Myanmar and China at the United Nations,” according to the Myanmar foreign ministry.

[Delhi-Dhaka diplomatic overtures to ease tension over India’s new Citizenship Law](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 25)  
In the wake of escalating tension between India and Bangladesh over India’s controversial new Citizenship Law, bilateral diplomatic efforts are underway to ease the situation. India has expressed its firm belief that religious minorities have enjoyed full safety and protection under the present government in Bangladesh. Over the past several days, Dhaka has been receiving diplomatic wires of strong support and re-assurance from the Modi government. India says that the new citizenship law will not be applicable to fresh refugees from Bangladesh entering Indian territory, as it will only be applicable to refugees who have taken shelter in India for at least five years. Meanwhile, Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said that the National Register of Citizens and the new Citizenship Law are India’s internal matters.

*Similar:*

[Govt turns country into dumping ground of India’s excluded citizens: BNP](#) New Age Bangladesh (Dec. 27)



[Keep up efforts over Rohingya repatriation](#) New Age Bangladesh (December 25)

Outgoing Turkish ambassador to Bangladesh Devrim Ozturk has made his farewell call on president Abdul Hamid. During the meeting, the president said bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Turkey were very excellent and the relations had been expanding gradually. He also thanked the envoy for the successful completion of his tenure in Bangladesh. Lauding the role and support of Turkey over the Rohingya issue, Abdul Hamid said Turkey played an effective role to support Rohingya. Turkey also raised their voice for the safe and dignified repatriation of Myanmar's displaced people, he said, hoping that the efforts would continue in the future.

[HIV, sexual infections rising among Rohingya in Bangladesh](#) Deutsche Welle (December 25)

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh are increasingly vulnerable to contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted infections, medical experts say. According to the latest data released by the Bangladeshi government, 395 Rohingya living in refugee camps in Cox's Bazar have so far been infected with the deadly virus, with 105 new cases identified this year. The real number of those infected could be much higher than the official figure. Public health experts say a lack of awareness about sexually transmitted infections as well as social stigma are hindering efforts to tackle the problem. To prevent the crisis from getting worse, authorities must recognize HIV as a priority issue, and need to pay immediate attention to raise the Rohingya's awareness of HIV and bring about behavioral change. Existing health-care providers must also be empowered to identify and treat people with HIV.

[Rohingya Using Mobiles: 2.94 lakh SIMs to be blocked](#) The Daily Star (December 25)

The government is set to block a few lakh mobile connections that are currently being used in Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar as it ramps up its efforts to crack down on criminal activities by a section of the refugee population. According to the SIM registration process, Rohingyas cannot get mobile connection, for which a national ID card or passport is needed. The refugees have neither, and yet as many as 2.94 lakh of the total of 11 lakh of them have managed local SIMs, according to tests by the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission.

[Missing from India's citizenship law: 100,000 Sri Lankan refugees](#) Reuters (December 24)

Nearly 100,000 Sri Lankan refugees living in India are not eligible for citizenship under a new law, sparking concerns they may be forced to return to the island nation they fled during a decades-long civil war, many with no homes to return to. India's Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) aims to fast-track citizenship for persecuted Hindus, Parsis, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and Christians who arrived in India before Dec. 31, 2014, from Muslim-majority Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan. The law excludes nearly 100,000 Sri Lankan Tamils, an ethnic minority, who live in India, including about 60,000 in camps in southern Tamil Nadu state, according to the home department. Most of these refugees are Hindu or Christian, whose forefathers were born in India. Thousands of Indians have taken to the streets to protest the new law, as well as plans for a National Register of Citizens (NRC), with at least 21 people killed in clashes with police in the biggest challenge to Modi's leadership since 2014.

[Rohingya crisis: EU strengthens humanitarian support with €10 million](#) EU Today (December 24)

The European Commission has released a further €10 million in humanitarian aid to address the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh and Myanmar. This comes on top of the €33 million funding already announced earlier this year and aims to ensure life-saving assistance to refugees, displaced people and host communities across Myanmar's Northern Rakhine State and the border district of Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh. The additional funding will focus on providing quality health care and help address the undernutrition for Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh. It will also provide food nutrition and protection for all displaced people living in Myanmar's Rakhine state, where the humanitarian situation has further deteriorated this year due to the escalation of violence in the region.

*Similar:*

[Rohingya crisis: EU strengthens humanitarian support with €10 million](#) European Sting (Dec. 26)

**[Rohingya Repatriation: Russia urged to put pressure on Myanmar](#)** The Daily Star (December 23)

At the 5<sup>th</sup> Asian Conference of Soviet/Russian Graduates, Bangladesh's Foreign Minister urged Russia to use its influence on Myanmar and put pressure on Naypyidaw to take back its people currently living in Cox's Bazar camps. Russian Ambassador to Bangladesh Alexander I Ignatov, among others, also spoke at the programme.

*Similar:*

[Russia can pressurize Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh FM](#) United News of India (Dec. 24)

**[Myanmar to create conducive conditions in Rakhine, hopes President](#)** United News Bangladesh (December 23)

Terming the Rohingya problem a big one, President Abdul Hamid said he hopes that Myanmar will create a conducive environment for the repatriation of its forcibly displaced nationals. He said this when new Ambassador of Myanmar to Bangladesh U Aung Kyaw Moe presented his credentials to him at Bangabhaban. Ambassador of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam Pham Viet Chien also presented his credentials to the President. Welcoming the envoys, the President expressed hope that the bilateral relations with the two countries will further be expanded during their respective assignments here.

*Similar:*

[Myanmar to create conducive environment for Rohingya repatriation, hopes president](#) Dhaka Tribune (Dec. 23)

[Myanmar, Vietnam ambassadors present credentials to president](#) New Age Bangladesh (Dec. 24)

**['Extremists may take advantage of situation in the region'](#)** Prothom Alo (December 23)

President of Bangladesh Institute of Peace and Strategic Studies (BIPSS) ANM Muniruzzaman, in an interview with Prothom Alo, spoke about India's Citizenship Amendment Act, the state of security in the region and other geopolitical issues.

*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/>*