

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

December 30, 2019 - January 5, 2020



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Highlights:

High-level statements:

- At the inauguration of a photo exhibit in Dhaka, “Flash on Rohingya Genocide”, Foreign Minister Momen said that Myanmar lacks sincerity about Rohingya repatriation. He also highlighted that Myanmar has not denied that atrocities have taken place, but rather has denied only the specific charge of genocide at the ICJ.
- The Bangladeshi government is likely to set its sight on medium term and long term policies to face the Rohingya crisis, according to new Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.

Country visits:

- The Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ambassador Manuel Sager, was in Bangladesh this week for a four-day visit to meet with stakeholders and to understand key developmental challenges the country is currently facing.

Border Conditions:

- The Bangladeshi government cut off cellphone service along the Bangladesh-India border for three days this week.
- Over 400 Bangladeshi citizens have attempted to leave India and re-enter Bangladesh in the wake of the CAA, and now are being held at the border.

Regional matters:

- India’s Union Minister Jitendra Singh, has said that the Indian government’s next move will be regarding the deportation of Rohingya refugees, as they will not be able to secure citizenship under the new CAA. The statement has prompted more controversy and outcry.

International support:

- The German Foreign Federal Office has contributed 2.5 million euros towards the WFP’s Rohingya refugee response in Cox’s Bazar.

Developments:

[Australia’s support sought to expedite Rohingya repatriation process](#) United News Bangladesh (January 5) the The Australian High Commissioner to Bangladesh Julia Niblett made a farewell call on Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen this week. During the meeting, Dr. Momen also thanked the Australian government for providing aid to Rohingyas living in Cox’s Bazar district, and said that Bangladesh is seeking support from the Australian government to expedite the repatriation process of Rohingyas to Myanmar from Bangladesh.

[Director General of SDC in Bangladesh on four day visit](#) Dhaka Tribune (January 5)

The Director General of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), Ambassador Manuel Sager, has arrived in Bangladesh on a four-day visit. Sager will meet senior Government of Bangladesh officials, development partners, and other key stakeholders, to discuss the national implementation of Agenda 2030. The objective of his visit is to understand the key developmental challenges Bangladesh is facing at present, including the ongoing humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar. The ambassador will also take a first-hand look into Switzerland's development engagements in Bangladesh.

[Why is most of Asia looking away from Myanmar?](#) The Daily Star (January 5)

[op-ed] A high number of Asian nations either opposed the recent UNGA resolution or abstained from voting. Can these abstentions in a vote condemning gross violations of international law and obligations be called anything other than abetting such heinous crimes? If anyone makes a map of genocide abettors, it will certainly put Asia to shame. In order to mount a more effective campaign against Myanmar, Bangladesh needs more help from within the region.

[View from Bangladesh: India is using its neighbours as scare objects to spread the politics of hate](#) Scroll (January 4)

[op-ed] We, a group of Bangladeshi writers, artists, and academics who collectively take the name Katatare Prajapati Collective write in support of the on-the-ground work being done by Bangladeshi human rights organizations. We now write to condemn discriminatory measures in India's National Register of Citizens, Citizenship Amendment Act, and National Population Register. As Bangladeshis, and as South Asians, we stand against the demonisation of peoples of neighboring countries for electoral politics. We express our solidarity with the conscious and concerned people of India, first and foremost the brave students. Those who have protested in India against NRC-CAA-NPR have a full understanding of the original promise of the Indian Constitution, and are willing to put their lives on the line for the reaffirmation of that secular vision, as an example to all nations.

[Canadian envoy: Skilled workforce, better infrastructure to help Bangladesh grow faster](#) Dhaka Tribune (January 3)

The Canadian high commissioner has said that Rohingyas are unlikely to move in a large number back to Myanmar soon, as they hear all the time that conditions just are not conducive to a safe, dignified and voluntary return. "And so I think this is going to take time. . . We need to take care of them while they are here waiting to go home," he said.

Similar:

[Skilled workforce to help Bangladesh grow faster: Canada](#) Prothom Alo (Jan. 3)

[Landmine, Yaba issues on agenda](#) New Age Bangladesh (January 3)

A five-day top-level border security conference between Bangladesh and Myanmar will begin in Dhaka this weekend. The conference will take place amid allegations against Myanmar of planting landmines along the Bangladesh border and its failure to stop the smuggling of contraband Yaba pills from it to Bangladesh. Delegates will discuss issues of preventing the illegal drug flow, exchanges of fire at the border, illegal entry of Myanmar nationals into Bangladesh, and of repatriation of those stuck in Bangladesh after crossing the border.

[CAA, NRC not India's internal matter: HRW](#) New Age Bangladesh (January 3)

Human Rights Watch's South Asia director, Meenakshi Ganguly, has said that the Citizenship Amendment Act and the National Register of Citizens is not an internal matter of India, '... since [the] government says CAA is to protect religious minorities persecuted in sovereign Afghanistan, Bangladesh and Pakistan,' in response to a statement made by India's external affairs ministry. She described a statement made by spokesperson of Indian Ministry of External Affairs on CAA and NRC as 'double standards since India failed' to join UN efforts to protect persecuted Rohingya Muslims, citing sovereignty.

[Govt's next move to focus on deportation of Rohingya refugees: Union Minister](#) Times Now News (January 3)

Asserting that the Citizenship (Amendment) act (CAA) was implemented in Jammu and Kashmir the day it was passed by Parliament, Union Minister Jitendra Singh has said the government's next move would be regarding the deportation of Rohingya refugees as they will not be able to secure citizenship under the new law. He demanded a

probe into how the Rohingyas reached and settled down in the northern-most belt of Jammu after passing through several states from West Bengal. "They do not belong to the six (religious) minorities (who will be given citizenship under the new law). They do not belong to any of the three (neighbouring) countries (Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan)," he said, adding that the Rohingyas came to the country from Myanmar and hence, they would have to go back.

Similar:

[Next move on deportation of Rohingya refugees: Union Minister](#) The Economic Times (Jan. 3)
[CAA in J&K: Rohingyas came from Myanmar, will have to go back, says Jitendra Singh](#) Financial Express (Jan. 4)
[Modi Government's Next Step is to Deport Rohingyas From India: Union Minister Jitendra Singh](#) India.com (Jan. 3)
[How did Rohingya Muslims reach Jammu? Govt next move will be to deport illegal Rohingyas: Union Minister Dr. Jitendra Singh](#) OP India (Jan. 4)
[Rohingyas will have to leave; they don't fall under the 6 minorities as per law: BJP leader](#) Sentinel Assam (Jan. 4)
[India only shelter for persecuted minorities from Pakistan, Bangladesh & Afghanistan: Jitendra Singh](#) Outlook India (Jan. 5)
[Including Rohingya Muslims under new citizenship law would be foolish and dangerous](#) One India (Jan. 4) [op-ed]
[Jammu: BKP Minister Jitendra Singh's Statement on Rohingyas' Deportation Draws Flak](#) News Click (Jan. 4)

[NRC, CAA and Bangladesh](#) The Daily Star (January 3)

[op-ed] The rolling out of the National Register of Citizens (NRC) and the application of Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) in India are likely to have grave consequences for Bangladesh. Even if India refrains from officially deporting those who would fail in the NRC test, millions of Muslims who would be unable to prove their claims to Indian citizenship and secure protection under the CAA in all likelihood will cross the border and seek shelter in Bangladesh. They would do so to avoid languishing in detention camps in atrocious conditions. The recent border crossings from the Indian side and the concomitant telecom network suspension in Bangladesh may signal the beginning of a difficult time for the country. It is time for those at the helm of the state to discard the rhetoric, take stock of these developments and collectively develop a national strategy to face the likely challenge.

Similar:

[Neighbour's worries over CAA and NRC](#) FRONTLINE (Jan. 3)

[Over 400 Bangladeshi nationals trying to flee India arrested by border guards](#) WION (January 2)

Bangladesh Border Guards have detained over 400 Bangladesh nationals, who were trying to flee India and illegally re-enter the neighboring country. All these 445 Bangladeshi nationals were staying without legal documents in India, BGB chief Major general Shafeenul Islam said in an official statement.

Similar:

[Illegal Bangladeshi migrants continue to flee India under CAA-NRC panic](#) DNA India (Jan. 3)
[Large numbers of Bangladeshis living illegally in India for decades fleeing to Bangladesh over fears of NRC: Intelligence sources](#) OP India (Jan. 4)

[Myanmar has not denied Rohingya atrocities: Momen](#) BDNews24 (January 2)

Speaking at the inauguration of a photo exhibition in Dhaka, Flash on Rohingya Genocide, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen said that Bangladesh is making every diplomatic effort to send Rohingya refugees back to Myanmar, which has "not denied charges of atrocities" in the world court. "Myanmar did not deny carrying out atrocities. It only objected to the charges that genocide took place there," he said at the event.

Similar:

[Myanmar has not denied Rohingya atrocities: B'desh FM](#) Outlook India (Jan. 3)

[Photos show grisly genocide against Rohingyas](#) New Age Bangladesh (Jan. 4)

[Myanmar lacks sincerity over Rohingya repatriation](#) The Independent (Jan. 2)

Myanmar lacks sincerity in repatriating Rohingyas, as it has repeatedly pledged to take back its nationals but is not taking them back, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said at the inauguration of the 'Flash on Rohingya Genocide' photo exhibit in Dhaka. Bangladesh is keen to send the Rohingyas back through bilateral and multilateral negotiations, but no Rohingya has returned so far despite two attempts taken over the last two years, the minister added.

Similar:

[Momen blames Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation delay](#) Prothom Alo (Jan. 2)

[Government muses for midterm plan on Rohingya crisis: FS](#) New Age Bangladesh (January 2)

The government is likely to set its sight on medium term and long term policies to face the Rohingya crisis, according to new foreign secretary Masud Bin Momen. 'We have signed a MoU (memorandum of understand) on repatriation of Rohingya people to Myanmar two years ago and the launching of physical repatriation is taking time,' he told members of Diplomatic Correspondents, Bangladesh at his office. 'We may require considering medium to long term solutions.' Asked about the challenges for the 2020, he said repatriation of Rohingya people of Myanmar from Bangladesh would be a challenge.

Similar:

[Focus must not shift from Rohingya issue](#) The Daily Star (Jan. 2)

[Foreign secy: Mujib Borsho, Rohingya issues among priority agenda](#) Dhaka Tribune (Jan. 1)

[Germany gives WFP 2.5m euros for Rohingya refugees in B'desh](#) Outlook India (January 1)

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Bangladesh welcomed a new contribution of 2.5 million euros from the German Foreign Federal Office towards its Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar. The German funds enable the WFP to continue its life saving food assistance in refugee camps in Cox's Bazaar - where some 80 percent of Rohingya depend entirely on humanitarian aid - through in-kind distribution and electronic vouchers.

Similar:

[Germany gives WFP 2.5 m euros for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh](#) Sentinel Assam (Jan. 2)

[FROM THE FIELD: Bangladesh's bamboo boom](#) UN News (January 1)

More than 24 million bamboo poles have been harvested for construction projects in the enormous refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, thanks, in part, to support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM). Now, IOM is working with the Bangladeshi authorities to build a sustainable bamboo market which will continue to provide for the refugees' needs but also make the isolated region of the country an international hub for the product.

[Thai policeman arrested as key suspect in human trafficking of Rohingya](#) The Thaiger (December 31)

Police have arrested a man who they believe has trafficked at least 200 Rohingya refugees into Thailand on their way to Malaysia. Charin Chuenchom was arrested over the weekend at a house in Ratchaburi, east of Bangkok. Chanin consequently confessed and was handed over to authorities for prosecution. Police believe Chanin was a key player in a human trafficking gang illegally moving Rohingya people out of Myanmar through Thailand to Malaysia. He's been charged with smuggling migrants and human trafficking.



[We, the Rohingya youth, demand our right to an education](#) AlJazeera (December 31)

[op-ed] Today, the world sees Rohingya as desperate, simple village people. But this was not always the case. We are the indigenous people of Arakan, which was renamed Rakhine State in 1989, and have played a primary role in building a civilisation there. Until very recently there were many Rohingya occupying prominent posts in Myanmar's government bodies, from police to Parliament. Over the years we undoubtedly fell behind as a result of the oppression we have been subjected to. After all, people who are unable to house themselves, do not have access to sufficient nutrition and healthcare, who receive no support from their government and are categorically denied access to education, inevitably fall behind. But this does not mean we do not have the will, potential and capacity to help the development of our country. The international media can change the way they represent the Rohingya. They can resist buying into Myanmar government's propaganda and stop talking about us as if we are ignorant, uneducated victims and start acknowledging what we really are: A proud, intelligent and capable people who have contributed greatly to the building of contemporary Myanmar. The international community can take action to help generations of Rohingya youth who have been targeted simply for pursuing an education. They can create opportunities for us to continue our education outside of Myanmar so we can more effectively fight for the wellbeing of our people and our country.

[Bangladesh suspends phone services near border with India](#) Outlook India (December 31)

Fearing that Muslim refugees living in India might return to Bangladesh, the Sheikh Hasina government has suspended mobile services in areas along the border. Though the Bangladesh high commission officials in New Delhi said they were not aware of the decision, the Dhaka media reported that the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) had issued an order for suspension of services. Media reports however said that BTRC in its order to telecommunications service providers had asked them to suspend the network in border areas "until further notice for the sake of the country's security in the current circumstances". Dhaka newspapers said the network had been suspended, affecting around 10 million users in 32 districts of Bangladesh along the border. The decision was taken by the government after a high-level meeting, media reports said.

Similar:

[Bangladesh suspends phone services near border with India](#) Sentinel Assam (Jan. 1)

[Bangladesh restores telecom services along India border](#) Scroll India (Jan. 2)

[Govt annoyed over Japan's support to Myanmar](#) New Age Bangladesh (December 31)

Japan's support to Myanmar's stance that no genocide was committed against ethnic and religious minority Rohingya people has made the Bangladesh government annoyed, according to diplomatic sources. The government is likely to lodge a protest either formally or informally through diplomatic channels at the earliest either in Dhaka or in Tokyo.

Similar:

[Dhaka protests at Tokyo stance on Rohingya genocide](#) New Age Bangladesh (Jan. 1)

[Few Details as Myanmar Army Holds Court-Martial For Atrocities Against Rohingya](#) The Union Journal (December 30)

Myanmar's army has held a fifth hearing in a court-martial for troopers accused of committing atrocities in the course of the brutal 2017 military-led crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in Rakhine state, a military spokesman has said. The hearings which have already taken place at an army base in northern Rakhine state were held between Nov. 26 and Dec. 29. The defendants, who embody officer-level servicemen, have been detained at native battalions, however the spokesman declined to offer the precise variety of troopers being tried.

[RMMRU: Not recognizing Rohingyas as refugees might stop international aid in the near future](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 30)

Revealing a report of the Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) at the Press Club, lawyers and academics criticized the government for their repeated mistake of not recognizing the Rohingya as refugees and failing to term the oppression as genocide, which in the near future is likely to interrupt the international aid supply that



largely supports the aid operations in Cox's Bazar. Furthermore, they warned that it might also hamper the proceedings in the case filed with the International Court of Justice (ICJ) by The Gambia.

[Rohingya man detained with fake passport in Bangladesh airport](#) IndiaBlooms (December 30)

A Rohingya man was detained with a fake passport and other documents after he reached Bangladesh's Hazrat Shahjalal International Airport in country's capital Dhaka from Malaysia. The Rohingya man went to Malaysia from Myanmar in 2013 using sea route, he said.

[Year-end review: Diplomatic front remains gripped with Rohingya crisis](#) Dhaka Tribune (December 30)

Similar to the previous year, Bangladesh's diplomatic front remained gripped by the Rohingya crisis in 2019, with no tangible progress in regard to the repatriation of the displaced people who have taken refuge in Cox's Bazar, fleeing persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine state. Throughout the year, Bangladesh's diplomacy claimed to have tried its best, at least, to begin the process to solve the protracted crisis through starting the repatriation. But Myanmar was successful, yet again, in frustrating the repatriation efforts, violating its obligations under the bilateral instruments signed between Dhaka and Naypyidaw, and ignoring the will of the international community.

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/>