

# Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

January 27 - February 2, 2020



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## Highlights:

### Camp conditions:

- The Government of Bangladesh has agreed to allow Rohingya children have access to formal education. The government will begin a pilot study in cooperation with UNICEF for 10,000 pupils. Students will be taught Myanmar curriculum through age 14, and children older than 14 will receive skills-based training.

### Accountability:

- A government minister from Rakhine state has confirmed that Myanmar will not destroy evidence related to allegations of genocide against Rohingya Muslims.

### International support:

- The United Nations World Food Programme in Bangladesh welcomed a new contribution of GBP 8 million (USD10,296,010) from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development to support the Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar this week.
- South Korea has committed US\$500,000 to distribute FM radios to members of the Rohingya minority group to improve their access to information, particularly about repatriation plans and conditions in Rakhine.

## Developments:

### [Redrawing Rohingya Strategy](#) The Daily Star (February 2)

[op-ed] Within a week of the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) that provisionally recognised the group identity of the Rohingya and the unremitting persecution that the community has endured over decades, the Bangladesh government announced that it will grant access to education to Rohingya children. The decision has been enthusiastically welcomed by the refugee community as well as rights groups at home and abroad. Under the scheme, Rohingya refugee children up to the age of 14 will receive education following the Burmese curriculum, and children above that age will get skills training. The recent decision is of major significance for the lives of tens of thousands of refugee children. Access to education will not only help them realise their innate potential, it will also empower them to make a distinction between right and wrong and thereby protect them from the machinations of promoters of violent extremism and human trafficking. Education will help the refugees to pursue livelihood opportunities upon their eventual return to Burma and also in cases of third-country settlement. The policy change is also in sync with the government's obligation under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that affirms that every child has a right to education.

### [Dhaka's crucial role in enforcing ICJ ruling](#) The Daily Star (January 31)

[op-ed] In the ICJ ruling, there are at least two points that give Bangladesh some advantage in pursuing its objective to repatriate all the refugees. The ICJ opined that "the Rohingya in Myanmar remain extremely vulnerable," and rejected the country's claim of steps taken to facilitate the return of the Rohingya refugees present in Bangladesh, noting that

“Myanmar has not presented to the Court concrete measures aimed specifically at recognising and ensuring the right of the Rohingya to exist as a protected group under the Genocide Convention.” This observation by the ICJ gives Bangladesh a powerful tool to press Myanmar to resolve the citizenship issue, because of which the Rohingya refugees have so far refused to go back to their country. The second advantage for Bangladesh is the recognition of Rohingyas as a protected group under the Genocide Convention. In its reasoning for ordering provisional measures, the ICJ referred to a particular part of the UN General Assembly resolution of December 27, 2019, where it said: “in spite of the fact that Rohingya Muslims lived in Myanmar for generations prior to the independence of Myanmar, they were made stateless by the enactment of 1982 Citizenship Law and were eventually disenfranchised, in 2015, from the electoral process.” This observation certainly removes the chance for all those frivolous labelling of Rohingyas as Bengalis by the Myanmar authorities. The ICJ ruling has now provided us with a huge opportunity to pursue a forceful course of action. And it is not only for the repatriation of a million-plus refugees, but also for the sake of taking a moral position against genocide. Standing up for an oppressed people, the Rohingyas, is the right thing to do. It will also send a strong message to other nations who are systematically making religious minorities stateless.

#### [Rohingya man killed in gunfight: RAB](#) Prothom Alo (January 31)

A suspected Rohingya drug trader was killed in a reported gunfight with members of Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) at Baharchhara Mantalia near Marine Drive in Teknaf upazila of Cox's Bazar. Three RAB men were injured in the gunfight.

#### [Bangladeshi Police Probe Reported Abduction of Christian Rohingya Family](#) Radio Free Asia (January 30)

Bangladeshi authorities have opened an investigation into the alleged abduction of a Christian Rohingya family after two groups of refugees filed police complaints accusing each other of launching attacks that wounded at least 12 people. An alleged attack on Jan. 27 by machete-wielding Muslim Rohingya men on a Christian community at the Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar district led to the temporary relocation of at least 17 Christian Rohingya families to a U.N. shelter.

#### [WFP in Bangladesh welcomes a new contribution of £ 8 million from the United Kingdom to support the Rohingya refugees](#) WFP (January 30)

The United Nations World Food Programme (WFP) in Bangladesh welcomes a new contribution of GBP 8 million (USD10,296,010) from the United Kingdom's Department for International Development to support the Rohingya refugee response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This new contribution will support WFP to provide 270,600 refugees with life-saving assistance over three months through electronic vouchers (e-vouchers). This programme allows refugees to purchase a variety of food items from 25 WFP e-voucher outlets across the Rohingya refugee camps.

#### [Follow Bangladesh's lead, let refugee kids attend schools, Putrajaya told](#) Free Malaysia Today (January 30)

Malaysian human rights group Tenaganita has called on Putrajaya to follow Bangladesh's lead after Dhaka announced that Rohingya children living in refugee camps would be allowed to receive a formal education. Tenaganita executive director Glorene Das said this was a wake-up call for the government since Bangladesh's refugee population was five times the size of Malaysia's. She urged Putrajaya to give refugee children access to the national syllabus by integrating them into local schools, adding that it was also to prevent further division in society.

#### [South Korea pledges fresh aid to support Rohingya repatriation](#) the Jakarta Post (January 30)

South Korea is the first ASEAN dialogue partner to contribute funds to support Rohingya repatriation, granting US\$500,000 to distribute FM radios to members of the minority group to improve their access to information, particularly about repatriation plans and conditions in Rakhine.

#### [2019 in review – Bangladesh: Freedoms remained under attack](#) Amnesty International (January 30)

Bangladesh had a mixed record on human rights in 2019, continuing to host nearly a million refugees and inch towards the progressive realization of economic and social rights while some freedoms remained under attack, Amnesty International said as the human rights organization released annual reports on events in the Asia-Pacific region. Human Rights in the Asia Pacific: Review of 2019 published by Amnesty International delivers the most comprehensive analysis of the state of human rights in the world's largest continent.



*Similar:*

[Amnesty International says freedoms remained under attack in Bangladesh in 2019](#) Dhaka Tribune (Jan. 31)

[Bangladesh: Freedoms remained under attack in 2019, says Amnesty International](#) IndiaBlooms (Feb. 1)

[Freedom of expression increasingly restricted](#) The Daily Star (Feb. 1)

[Freedom of expression and the extreme reality](#) The New Nation (Feb. 2)

[Mixed record in human rights for Bangladesh in 2019: Amnesty International](#) The Daily Star (Jan. 31)

[UN, global community laud Bangladesh's decision to provide education for Rohingya children](#) The Daily Star (January 29)

The United Nations and global humanitarian community have welcomed Bangladesh government's decision to expand access to education for Rohingya children living in settlements in Cox's Bazar. "We believe this is a positive step and a clear indication of the commitment by the Government of Bangladesh to ensure access to learning for Rohingya children and adolescents, as well as to equip them with the right skills and capacities for their future and return to Myanmar when the conditions allow," they said in a media statement after a recent meeting of the National Task Force chaired by Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen.

[Myanmar Minister Says Country Will Not Destroy Evidence in ICJ Rohingya Case](#) Radio Free Asia (January 29)

Myanmar will not destroy evidence related to allegations of genocide against Rohingya Muslims, a government minister from violence-ridden Rakhine state has said, nearly a week after the U.N.'s top court ordered the country to preserve evidence and take measures to protect the minority group from genocidal acts. Though a verdict in the ICJ case could be years in coming, the preservation of evidence is crucial for other legal action being taken against specific individuals accused of ordering the violence in cases at the International Criminal Court and in an Argentine court. Colonel Min Than, Rakhine state's minister for security and border affairs said that the central government has no reason to destroy evidence and has not issued any separate orders to take action with regard to the ICJ's ruling.

[Rohingya Genocide Victims Recognized, But Major Challenges Remain](#) The Globe Post (January 29)

In a historic ruling, the victims of one of the worst mass atrocities in modern history were officially recognized on the world stage for the first time last week. The U.N.'s highest court issued a preliminary decision ordering Myanmar to do everything possible to end the alleged ongoing genocide of the country's Rohingya Muslims. Though the court is yet to issue a ruling on the charges, last week's preliminary decision is an important first step toward justice, said Steve Gumaer, President of Partners Relief & Development, one of the leading NGO's operating in Myanmar. In the wake of the ruling, The Globe Post's Bryan Bowman spoke with Gumaer to discuss the implications of the ICJ's decision and the daunting challenges that the Rohingya continue to face.

[Bangladesh allows formal education for Rohingya children](#) Prothom Alo (January 28)

Rohingya children living in Bangladesh refugee camps will be allowed to receive a formal education after a change of heart by Dhaka in a move welcomed by right activists. The children were previously barred from studying the curriculums used in Bangladesh and Myanmar, and instead received primary education in temporary learning centres set up by the UN children's agency UNICEF. The decision came after a meeting of a national taskforce set up by the government. Local media reported that a pilot programme involving more than 10,000 students would be launched soon, with UNICEF and Dhaka jointly designing the curriculum. The refugee children will be schooled in Myanmar history and culture up to age 14, and will also receive skills training so they can take up jobs back in Myanmar when they return home.

*Similar:*

[Rohingya children to get education, skills training in Bangladesh camps](#) New Age Bangladesh (Jan. 28)

[Bangladesh allows education for Rohingya refugee children](#) Outlook India (Jan. 28)

['Great news': Bangladesh allows education for Rohingya children](#) AlJazeera (Jan. 30)

[Bangladesh allows education for Rohingya refugee children](#) Dhaka Tribune (Jan. 28)

['They can chase their dreams': Dhaka offers education to Rohingya kids](#) StraitsTimes (Jan. 31)

['Wonderful news': Bangladesh permits education for Rohingya kids](#) AsumeTech (Jan. 31)

[Bangladesh to improve schools for Rohingya refugee children](#) Dawn (Jan. 30)

[Five things you need to know this week about global education](#) ReliefWeb (Jan. 31)

[Bangladesh hopes to stem trafficking of Rohingya by opening schools](#) Reuters (Jan. 29)

[Bangladesh: Rohingya children get access to education](#) Amnesty International (Jan. 28)

[‘A Game-Changer’ for Rohingya Refugee Youth as Bangladesh Grants Access to Formal Education](#) Refugees International (Jan. 28)

### [RAB rescues 13 Rohingya women from traffickers in Dhaka’s Aftabnagar](#) BDNews24 (January 27)

The Rapid Action Battalion has rescued 13 young Rohingya women and arrested two suspected traffickers in Dhaka’s Aftabnagar. The women rescued are around 18 years old. The RAB seized a huge amount of fake passports, birth certificates, birth registration and passport forms. The arrestees have confessed to trafficking seven people abroad in December last year and five more this month, according to an RAB official.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh Police Bust Int’l Gang Trafficking Rohingya Women Into Sex Work in Malaysia](#) The Irrawaddy (Jan. 28)

### [Shelling Rohingya village ‘expression of anger’: experts](#) New Age Bangladesh (January 27)

The shelling of a Rohingya village in Rakhine by the Myanmar military was an expression of anger after the order of the ICJ asking authorities to protect the members of the community, according to Bangladesh Enterprise Institute acting president Humayun Kabir. Two women, one pregnant, were killed and seven other people injured after Myanmar troops shelled a Rohingya village last week, according to a lawmaker and a villager, two days after the ICJ ordered the country to prevent alleged genocide of Rohingya Muslims.

### [Christian Rohingya Refugees Say They Were Attacked in Bangladesh](#) Radio Free Asia (January 27)

Twelve Christian Rohingya refugees who claim they were attacked by Rohingya militants “due to our faith” are undergoing treatment for injuries in southeastern Bangladesh, one of the alleged victims and a Christian group has said. Bangladeshi police confirmed the violence but denied that the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) was involved. Four Christians and one Muslim were wounded in an “ordinary law-and-order incident,” police said.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh: 17 Christian Rohingya Families Taken to UN Shelter after Alleged Attacks by Muslims](#) BenarNews (Jan. 28)

### [When economics prevails over genocide](#) The Daily Star (January 27)

[op-ed] Despite the ICJ’s order, Myanmar—it seems—remains defiant with its genocidal intent against the Rohingya. And Myanmar has good reason for its intransigence. First of all, while the ICJ’s order is binding, it is not enforceable; and in the face of Myanmar’s non-compliance, The Gambia (the country that brought the case against Myanmar at the ICJ) at best can approach the UN Security Council for it to decide whether it will use its powers to force Myanmar to comply with the ICJ’s order. While the world is busy exploring potential economic tie-ups with Myanmar, thanks to its vast untapped resources and strategic geopolitical importance, it is the Rohingya and Bangladesh that are bearing the brunt of Myanmar’s economic possibilities. While the ICJ’s verdict is a welcome move, without political will to hold Myanmar to account it will not yield any positive outcome for the Rohingya. Expecting much from it would be a folly.

### [Myanmar ruling sets important precedent for genocide prevention](#) The Hill (January 27)

[op-ed] The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruled unanimously on January 23 that the Rohingya minority in Myanmar remains at serious risk of genocide, and that Myanmar must take “all measures within its power” to prevent it. The ruling was right for the Myanmar case, and also sets an important precedent for the prevention of genocide in other conflicts. For Myanmar, based on my recent fieldwork there, the UN was right in assessing that genocide in



Myanmar is likely to reoccur. The ruling also sets an important precedent for the international community in responding to and, crucially, preventing genocide. The ICJ has ruled on genocide only once before, in 2007, but retrospectively (in ruling that Serbia had violated its duty to prevent genocide in Srebrenica during the war in Bosnia). Meanwhile, the International Criminal Court (ICC), distinct from the ICJ and set up to prosecute individuals (rather than states) guilty of genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity, has only been able to operate in a post facto manner, and then only over limited cases. (There is currently an ICC investigation into Myanmar, which is one reason why the order to prevent destruction of evidence is so crucial.) The ICJ ruling thus represents an unprecedented legal and political step towards holding states accountable for the prevention of genocide. Critics will rightly point out that the ruling may be too little too late, with Myanmar and Bangladesh still reeling from 2017's genocidal acts. Further, it is right to be realistic and cautious about the likelihood that the ruling will be implemented. But calling out genocide as genocide matters.

*Similar:*

[Interview: Landmark World Court Order Protects Rohingya from Genocide](#) Human Rights Watch (Jan. 27)

[Why the ICJ Is Trying to Protect Myanmar's Rohingya](#) Council on Foreign Relations (Jan. 24)

[Preventing genocide in Myanmar: Court order tries to protect Rohingya Muslims where politics has failed](#) The Washington Post (Jan. 29)

[What significance does the interim decision of the International Court of Justice has for the Rohingya minority in Myanmar?](#) Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Jan. 28)

[EU urges Myanmar to comply with ICJ Rohingya ruling](#) Outlook India (January 27)

The European Union (EU) on Monday urged Myanmar to comply with the International Court of Justice's ruling to implement provisional measures to protect the Rohingya Muslim minority from possible genocidal acts. "The EU welcomes these important first steps towards acknowledging the severity and scale of the violence that occurred, the gross violations of human rights and the disproportionate use of force by Myanmar's military and security forces," the bloc's delegation to the country said, adding that they hoped Myanmar would "use these opportunities to make further progress on its democratic transition towards a society where the rights of everyone are fully recognized and protected."

*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/>*

