

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

July 29 – August 4, 2019



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Highlights:

Transnational events: The 26th annual ASEAN Regional Forum took place this week in Bangkok. One of the main topics of the forum was the Rohingya, with multiple countries highlighting the issue both in their statements and through the 2019 Annual Security Outlook.

Repatriation:

- There are renewed discussions about repatriation beginning soon, after a visit from a Myanmar delegation to the camps in Cox's Bazar last week.
- Bangladesh has submitted a list of another 25,000 names to Myanmar to be verified for repatriation.

Country visits:

- A delegation from Myanmar visited the camps in Cox's Bazar last weekend, attempting to persuade the Rohingya to return. During their visit there was discussion of "partial" or "natural citizenship", however the proposal still requires the Rohingya to apply for NVC cards and falls short of the Rohingya's condition of full citizenship
- Two Catholic cardinals have visited the camps in Cox's Bazar on behalf of Caritas and the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences.
- The Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Taro Kono visited Bangladesh and Myanmar this past week, offering to mediate repatriation discussions between the two countries.

International Support: Australia has announced a new US\$55 million initiative to combat human trafficking, including as it affects Rohingya refugees.

Camp Conditions: IOM and JICA have collaborated to provide one of the world's largest humanitarian solar water systems to one of the camps in Cox's Bazar. The new system will provide clean water to approximately 30,000 individuals.

Developments:

[India wants Bangladesh to start Rohingya repatriation again](#), BDNews24 (Aug. 4)

India wants Bangladesh to start Rohingya repatriation again in August, Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said after meeting with his Indian counterpart S Jaishankar at the Asean meeting in Bangkok. Additionally, Momen said he believes the process would start soon.

[Rohingya a growing regional security issue: Malaysia](#), United News Bangladesh (Aug. 3)

In ASEAN's Annual Security Outlook 2019, Malaysia described the Rohingya problem as a growing regional security issue, saying it is not merely a domestic problem. The report also states that Malaysia believes the situation in Rakhine state continues to be a "perpetuate concern", including that it is fertile ground for future terrorist cells.

[Rohingya crisis: India urges world to help Bangladesh](#), Dhaka Tribune (Aug. 3)

The Annual Security Outlook 2019 report by Asean shows India's deepening concern regarding the Rohingya issue in Bangladesh. India has urged the world to help Bangladesh cope with the "humanitarian burden" that was placed upon the country due to the influx of a huge number of Rohingya who have settled in Cox's Bazar. The report, released during the 26th Asean Regional Forum in Bangkok, also mentions that India is "deeply conscious" of the humanitarian and security implications Bangladesh is facing due to the presence of Rohingya.

Similar:

<https://nenow.in/neighbour/india-urges-world-to-help-bangladesh-to-end-rohingya-crisis.html>

[Local NGOs-CSOs want leading role in their sphere of work](#), United News Bangladesh (Aug. 3)

The Bangladesh NGO-CSO Coordination Process in cooperation with COAST Trust organized a press conference at the National Press Club titled "There is no alternative to localization of development and humanitarian aid: Greater unity of CSO NGOs are needed". During the conference, the CSO NGO's charter of accountability and charter of expectations have been adopted, after being prepared through a bottom up process.

[Do not turn away from the horrors that the Rohingya face](#), The Globe and Mail (Aug. 2)

[op-ed] Two years ago, the world was shocked by brutal, tragic images coming out of Myanmar. Today, the news cameras and Canadians' eyes have largely turned away. But the refugees themselves do not have this luxury – and the crisis continues to this day. The Rohingya crisis is one of many around the world, but this is not a reason to place it on the sidelines. The Rohingya remain the largest stateless population in the world, and addressing their plight in a more sustained way is a matter of moral obligation as well as clear self-interest on the part of all countries, including Canada. This is not the time to step back or turn away.

[Bangladesh seeks Asean support for Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (Aug. 2)

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has sought support and cooperation from Asean regional forum partners so that Rohingya can return to their homeland in safety and security. The minister made his appeal while addressing the 26th Asean regional forum in Bangkok. Minister Momen said that if the Rohingya crisis remained unresolved for long, it might seriously undermine the security and stability of the entire region. Momen sought comprehensive engagement of the international community, particularly Asean, in the creation of a conducive environment in northern Rakhine state as well as in the repatriation and reintegration process.

Similar:

<http://www.theindependentbd.com/post/210103>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/world/news/bangladesh-seeks-world-engagement-rohingya-repatriation-1780858>

<http://www.dailyindustry.news/bangladesh-seeks-asean-support-back-rohingyas/>

[IOM, Japan Build Solar-powered Water Supply Network for 30,000 Rohingyas](#), ReliefWeb (Aug. 2)

One of the world's largest humanitarian solar water systems was officially inaugurated by IOM and the Japan International Development Agency (JICA). The network will provide safe, clean water to approximately 30,000 people living in the Kutupalong Mega-Camp from a deep underground well. This network is the largest and most cost-effective system in the camps, and is the result of positive collaboration between JICA, the Bangladeshi Government, the United States and IOM.

Similar:

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/07/31/solar-powered-water-supply-network-opens-for-rohingyas>

<https://www.thedailystar.net/rohingya-crisis/news/iom-japan-build-water-supply-network-30000-rohingyas-1779772>



[Rohingya activists slam ASEAN's call for dialogue with Myanmar](#), AlJazeera (Aug. 2)

Efforts by ASEAN to encourage "dialogue" between Rohingya refugees and the Myanmar government have sparked fierce criticism from Rohingya activists, who accuse the regional bloc of whitewashing the Myanmar military's crimes and legitimizing deeply flawed repatriation plans.

[Malaysia PM's Call For Rohingya Citizenship or Separate State Rankles Myanmar](#), Radio Free Asia (Aug. 2)

The Myanmar government has denounced the Malaysian Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamad over comments he made suggesting the creation of a separate state for the country's persecuted Rohingya Muslims, calling it a violation of ASEAN's non-interference principles. The government spokesman said that the comments could affect cooperation between the Myanmar and Bangladeshi governments on refugee repatriation, as well as Myanmar's cooperation with ASEAN.

Similar:

<https://newsinfo.inquirer.net/1149566/rohingya-citizenship-myanmar-angry-at-mahathirs-comments>

[Myanmar softens its position on Rohingya refugees](#), Asia Times (Aug. 1)

Amid mounting pressure, Myanmar appears to be softening its position on the repatriation of the more than a million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. This week, a senior Myanmar official said his country would be willing to grant "part citizenship" to the Rohingya in order to win back the trust of the refugees. The offer fell just short of the refugees' demand of full citizenship and that proved to be the stumbling block to restarting repatriation, which has been stalled since 2018. The question of citizenship has been nonnegotiable until now, as Myanmar has consistently characterized the Rohingya as infiltrators and economic migrants from Bangladesh, even though they have been living in the Arakan province for over 100 years.

[Myanmar Wants to Track Rohingya, Not Help Them](#), Foreign Policy (Aug. 1)

[op-ed] Myanmar's proposed National Verification Cards for the Rohingya have recently attracted the support of the United Nations' special envoy of the secretary-general on Myanmar, Christine Schraner Burgener, who reportedly approved the suggestion by the Rakhine State Minister that this form of documentation would be a necessary first step on the path toward citizenship for the Rohingya. Any reasonable observer should conclude that the interim status provided by the proposed National Verification Cards is a trap in the exact same way in which the white cards issued by the military juntas of the past were a trap. They are not meant to grant an interim status, and they are will not get anyone any closer to full citizenship. Rather, they are a useful tool of population accounting, which can be used for further targeting of Rohingya individuals for exclusion and arbitrary state force.

[Bangladesh, Thailand discuss bilateral issues](#), BDNews24 (Aug. 1)

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen and his Thai counterpart Don Pramudwinai met to discuss bilateral issues in Bangkok on the sidelines of the 26th ASEAN Regional Forum. On the Rohingya issue, Momen mentioned that Bangladesh has a lot of expectations for Thailand as the current chair of ASEAN to resolve this issue. He sought Thai help for early repatriation of Rohingyas in safety and security.

Similar:

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/rohingya-crisis/2019/08/01/rohingya-crisis-bangladesh-seeks-thai-role-as-asean-chair>

<http://www.newagebd.net/article/80422/rohingya-crisis-bangladesh-seeks-thai-role-as-asean-chair>

[Japan urges Myanmar to improve refugee plan](#), Myanmar Times (Aug. 1)

Japanese Foreign Affairs Minister Taro Kono said he has asked the Myanmar government to improve the repatriation plan for Rakhine State refugees who have fled to Bangladesh. The meeting featured discussions on Rakhine and other matters, including refugee camps in Myanmar, he said.



Similar:

<https://english.kyodonews.net/news/2019/07/22adba3b5a1d-japans-kono-meets-aung-san-suu-kyi-pledges-help-on-rohingya-issue.html>

[ASEAN working closely with Myanmar on repatriation](#), Myanmar Times (Aug. 1)

Lim Jock Hoi, secretary general of ASEAN, has said that the ASEAN Coordinating Centre for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management (AHA Centre) is working under a specific time frame to conduct a preliminary needs assessment and arranging further visits to Myanmar and Bangladesh. Officials from AHA Centre have already visited northern Rakhine State twice since February to conduct a preliminary study on receiving returnees, and to examine measures taken by the Myanmar government to facilitate the efficient and sustainable repatriation of refugees. U Win Myat Aye, vice chair of the Union Enterprise for Humanitarian Assistance, Resettlement and Development in Rakhine (UEHRD) said fruitful cooperation with ASEAN is welcomed by the government and the AHA Centre has provided significant help in the process.

[Australia pledges US\\$55 million to fight human trafficking in Southeast Asia](#), Channel News Asia (Aug. 1)

Australia has pledged US\$55 million to fight human trafficking in Southeast Asia, vowing to tackle "modern slavery" ensnaring vulnerable populations across the region, from low-paid workers to underage brides and Rohingya refugees. The funding is part of a 10-year scheme that includes training for police and judges to probe criminal networks.

Similar:

<https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/australia-pledges-us-55-million-to-fight-human-trafficking-in-southeast-asia-239960>

[Cardinals of Yangon and Manila visit refugees in Bangladesh](#), UCA News (July 31)

Cardinal Tagle (of Manila) president of Caritas Internationalis, and Cardinal Bo (of Yangon) president of the Federation of Asian Bishops Conferences (FABC) conducted a two-day visit to Rohingya refugee camps in the Cox's Bazar. They also met with the head of Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission, the main state body overseeing the 1 million Rohingya refugees residing in about 30 refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. This visit was made exclusively on humanitarian grounds on behalf of Caritas Internationalis and the FABC and was not diplomatic in nature.

Similar:

<https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/cardinals-visit-rohingya-refugee-camp-in-bangladesh-66493>

<https://catholicoutlook.org/cardinals-tagle-bo-visit-rohingya-refugees-in-bangladesh/>

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/church/news/2019-07/bangladesh-tagle-bo-visit-rohingya-refugees-caritas.html>

<https://www.indcatholicnews.com/news/37600>

<https://www.worldreligionnews.com/religion-news/cardinals-visit-bangladesh-rohingya-refugee-camp>

[Emergency monsoon training saves Rohingya refugee lives](#), UNHCR (July 31)

Refugee volunteers, trained by UNHCR and partners, are at the forefront of efforts to protect residents of the sprawling refugee settlements during the monsoon season, and to spread awareness of the risks the weather brings and how families can better protect themselves. In addition to instruction in rescue and first-aid techniques, the volunteers also receive safety equipment including lifebelts and throwlines to allow them to swing into action quickly.

[Myanmar targets remnants of Rohingya identity](#), Arab News (July 31)

[op-ed] Myanmar's strategy is fully transparent: Rhetorically yielding to international pressure, making "plans" for the resettlement of the refugees, agreeing accords with Bangladesh and so on, while signaling in no uncertain terms to the Rohingya themselves that they have nothing to return to and that they will not be safe if they do return. Then, when the Rohingya do the sensible thing and refuse voluntary resettlement, Myanmar can wash its hands of its responsibility for them. For the time being, the authorities in Myanmar are unhappy that the Rohingya still have a claim to their former lands in northern Rakhine State. But as the traces of their villages are erased and as more time

passes, more and more of the few Rohingya remaining in the country yield to the pressure and flee. As the localization of the largest proportion of Rohingya over the border in Bangladesh becomes the new normal, the claim the Rohingya have to their ancestral lands and to citizenship in the country of their birth will have been successfully erased.

Similar: <https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/myanmars-real-intent-towards-rohingya-crisis-now-transparent-daily-star>

[Rohingya Refugees Disappointed Again](#), Human Rights Watch (July 31)

Myanmar officials arrived at the sprawling refugee settlement in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh this week to discuss the repatriation of the Rohingya population. Armed with "fact" sheets, colorful brochures, and PowerPoint presentations, officials were trying to persuade the Rohingya that it was safe to return home. They were not convincing. Instead of this bizarre charm offensive, Myanmar should be dismantling the systematic and institutionalized discrimination against the Rohingya that has caused mass flight to Bangladesh and elsewhere for years. A good place to start is by amending the country's problematic citizenship law.

[Rohingya flow into Bangladesh continues, albeit low: Anisul to UN](#), The Daily Star (July 30)

While submitting a report to the UN Committee Against Torture, the Bangladesh Law Minister Anisul Huq has told the United Nation that the flow of Rohingyas into Bangladesh still continues, though at a lesser rate than before.

[Malaysia: Myanmar must be accountable for Rohingya to return](#), The Washington Post (July 30)

Malaysia's foreign ministry has said that Myanmar's government must pursue justice for alleged human rights abuses against the Muslim Rohingya minority so that hundreds of thousands who fled the brutal military crackdown can return safely to the country.

Similar:

<https://www.ksl.com/article/46606802/malaysia-myanmar-must-be-accountable-for-rohingya-to-return>

[Rohingya suspicious as Myanmar touts repatriation plan](#), AlJazeera (July 30)

When a team of top Myanmar officials met Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's Cox's Bazar over the weekend, they handed out flyers aimed at persuading members of the persecuted minority to return home. Myanmar insists Rohingya must apply for the controversial National Verification Cards if they are to return, but critics argue the cards will only deepen discrimination against the group. A Rohingya youth activist living in the camps in Bangladesh said the delegation's visit was more about assuaging Myanmar's critics than actually convincing the Rohingya to return. Rohingya attendees told Myanmar officials that they were suspicious of the newly built transit camps and wanted to be taken directly to their homes in the event that they agreed to go back. Also present during the visit was a delegation from ASEAN. During one meeting, Rohingya attendees criticized the bloc for a recent report it published praising Myanmar's efforts to prepare for the "smooth and orderly" return of refugees. Critics have said the report glossed over military atrocities and Rohingya leaders complained they were not consulted.

Similar:

<https://www.voanews.com/east-asia-pacific/rights-advocates-question-myanmars-conditions-repatriate-rohingya-refugees>

[Want to resolve Rohingya crisis through talks: PM](#), The Daily Star (July 30)

At a meeting in London with Lord Ahmad of Wimbledon, PM Sheikh Hasina has said that her country wants to resolve the Rohingya crisis through discussions with Myanmar. Lord Ahmad assured all possible support regarding the Rohingya issue, saying the new British Prime Minister Boris Johnson is aware of it.

[Japanese foreign minister visits Kutupalong Rohingya Camp in Cox's Bazar](#), The Daily Star (July 30)

The Japanese Foreign Minister Taro Kono visited the Rohingya camp in Kutupalong of Cox's Bazar. During the visit, Taro Kono said that the Japanese government is always beside Bangladesh to solve the crisis. He is also scheduled to hold a bilateral meeting with his Bangladeshi counterpart AK Abdul Momen in the capital.

Similar:

<https://m.bdnews24.com/en/detail/bangladesh/1649095>

<https://en.prothomalo.com/bangladesh/news/199727/%E2%80%98Japan-against-prolongation-of-Rohingya-situation%E2%80%99>

[UNHCR donates 220 housing units for vulnerable people in Ukhiya, Teknaf](#), The Daily Star (July 30)

The UNHCR has donated 220 housing units to BRAC to assist the vulnerable people affected by the monsoon rain and flood in Ukhiya and Teknaf in Cox's Bazar. The housing units will support more than 1,100 people who have been either displaced or are at risk due to the ongoing monsoon rains and flood.

Similar:

<https://www.dhakatribune.com/bangladesh/nation/2019/07/30/unhcr-gives-220-housing-units-to-flood-stricken-people-in-ukhiya-teknaf>

<http://unb.com.bd/category/Bangladesh/unhcr-providing-housing-units-for-vulnerable-bangladeshi-families/24821>

[Japan offers to mediate Rohingya crisis](#), Dhaka Tribune (July 30)

Japan has proposed that it play a role as mediator between Bangladesh and Myanmar to find a peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis, ensuring their safe return to their place of origin in Rakhine State. Bangladesh said it will consider the proposal. The two sides stressed the need for necessary steps to be taken by the Myanmar government to create an environment conducive to the return of the Rohingyas under UN cooperation. The Japanese foreign minister will leave for Yangon on Wednesday to talk to the Myanmar leadership regarding the Rohingya issue.

Similar:

<https://www.wionews.com/south-asia/rohingya-crisis-japan-offers-to-play-mediator-between-bangladesh-and-myanmar-239627>

<https://mainichi.jp/english/articles/20190731/p2g/00m/0na/014000c>

<http://www.uniindia.com/japan-to-convey-bangladesh-concerns-over-rohingyas-to-myanmar-fm-momen/world/news/1683395.html>

<https://m.bdnews24.com/en/detail/bangladesh/1649411>

[Bangladesh not to be taken hostage on Rohingyas citizenship: Momen](#), The Daily Star (July 29)

Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen has said the Rohingya citizenship issue is an internal affair of Myanmar and Bangladesh would not like to be taken hostage on the matter. Momen said Myanmar has expressed its plan for the first time to provide the Rohingyas "part to citizenship" or "natural citizenship" and it's a "breakthrough". The foreign minister said he observed positive signs from the visiting Myanmar delegation. Momen said the Rohingyas should go back to their motherland to realize their rights.

[Bangladesh Gives Myanmar 25,000 Rohingya Names for Potential Repatriation](#), Radio Free Asia (July 29)

Bangladesh has handed Myanmar a fresh list of 25,000 Rohingya for potential repatriation, after a high-level delegation from Naypyidaw visited Rohingya refugee camps and explained that full citizenship for the stateless minority was not an option. The list of 25,000 people represents 6,000 families that the Bangladeshi government is submitting for identity verification. In total, Bangladesh has now submitted 55,000 Rohingya for verification, of which Myanmar has cleared 8,000 for repatriation.



Similar:

<https://www.thedailystar.net/frontpage/news/rohingya-repatriation-dhaka-hands-over-fresh-list-25000-1778953>

<https://www.benarnews.org/english/news/bengali/bangladesh-rohingya-07292019155639.html>

<http://newsonair.com/News?title=Myanmar-delegation-visits-Rohingya-camps-in-Bangladesh&id=369270>

<https://bdnews24.com/bangladesh/2019/07/29/bangladesh-hands-list-of-25000-rohingya-refugees-to-myanmar-for-verification>

[**Rohingya tell Myanmar they won't return without recognition as ethnic group with right to citizenship**](#), Japan Times (July 29)

Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh refuse to return to Myanmar unless they are recognized as an ethnic group in their home country with the right to Myanmar citizenship, leaders told visiting Myanmar officials as fresh repatriation talks started this past weekend. They also said that the Rohingya will not return to Myanmar unless demands for justice, international protection and the ability to go back to their original villages and lands are met.

Similar:

<https://wtvbam.com/news/articles/2019/jul/28/rohingya-tell-myanmar-they-refuse-to-return-without-recognition/922213/>

<https://www.vaticannews.va/en/world/news/2019-07/bangladesh-myanmar-rohingya-refugees-repatriation-talks.html>

<https://www.scmp.com/video/asia/3020461/rohingya-refugees-call-recognition-fresh-repatriation-talks-myanmar>

<https://www.theaustralian.com.au/world/rohingya-refugees-refusing-to-return-to-myanmar/news-story/353cfc5714380088f3aff948fab76cf6>

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/>