

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

November 18 - November 24, 2019



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NETWORK

Highlights:

Accountability:

- Myanmar has announced that its leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, will head the legal team it will send to the International Court of Justice to contest the case of genocide filed against it.

High-level Statements:

- U Zaw Htay, spokesperson for the President's Office of Myanmar, has again accused Bangladesh of not cooperating in repatriation efforts.
- Former UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon has called for a political solution to the Rohingya crisis to allow them to return to their places of origin in Rakhine state "freely and safely."
- China, Russia and Turkey have all expressed their support for Bangladesh and for the resolution of the Rohingya crisis this week.

Country Visits:

- Christine Burgener, the UN secretary general's special envoy to Myanmar, met with several refugees recently returned to Myanmar in Maungdaw township.

Camp Conditions:

- Camp managers and other local officials overseeing Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh are now incorporating NASA satellite observations into their decision making in order to reduce the risk to refugees from landslides and other natural hazards.
- The Bangladeshi military reports that they have begun work on the barbed-wire fencing around the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar.

Developments:

[Rohingya case matter of 'high national interest': Myanmar](#) The Statesman (November 24)

Myanmar said that the case filed by the Gambia against the country at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) concerning the alleged violation of the provisions of the 1948 Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, is a matter of "high national interest". Myanmar has retained the services of topmost legal experts to contest the case and a strong legal team has been formed.

[Myanmar must stop 'unjustifiable' campaign against Bangladesh: Foreign ministry](#) Bdnews24 (November 24)

Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi's office has "unduly" attributed the repatriation of the Rohingya not commencing "entirely to non-cooperation and non-respect of bilateral arrangements by Bangladesh", the Bangladeshi foreign ministry has said in a statement. According to the statement, Myanmar's continued rally of "fabricated information, misrepresentation of facts, unsubstantiated claims, and unwarranted accusations" testifies its government's campaign to avoid its obligations to create an environment in Rakhine conducive for a "sustained" Rohingya repatriation.

[‘China concerns, contributes and acts over Rohingya issue’](#) Prothom Alo (November 24)

Chinese ambassador in Dhaka Li Jiming said China, utilising its traditional friendship with Bangladesh and Myanmar, will do whatever they can to help alleviate the Rohingya crisis and push forward their "early" repatriation.

Similar:

[China remains engaged to have a solution to Rohingya crisis: Envoy](#) The Independent Bangladesh (Nov. 17)

[Work on barbed-wire fencing around Rohingya camps begin: Army Chief](#) The Daily Star (November 24)

Discussing that barbed-wire fences will be erected around Kutupalong and Nayapara Rohingya camps, Army Chief General Aziz Ahmed today said initially work on installing boundary pillars has started.

[‘Myanmar brought it upon itself’](#) The Daily Star (November 23)

A human rights defender from Myanmar said recent legal steps against his country at the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the International Criminal Court (ICC) over the Rohingya issue were something the country's regime "brought upon itself". This issue is regarded "very sensitive" in Myanmar, said Khin Zaw Win, the director of Tampadipa Institute in Yangon. "Don't touch it, it's not your problem" -- this is how Rohingya issue is being treated in Myanmar, he said. "But it is," Khin told an international conference on Bangladesh's genocide at Bangla Academy.

[22 Rohingya arrested after fleeing Myanmar camp by boat](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 23) Twenty-two Rohingya Muslims trying to escape one of Myanmar's camps by boat were arrested after they were forced ashore by their leaking vessel, local police have said. They told police they had been travelling for four days from Thetkaypyin camp near the Rakhine state capital Sittwe. Many Rohingya have tried to escape over the years to Thailand or Malaysia, often paying extortionate fees to human traffickers for places on overcrowded, decrepit boats.

[Ban Ki-moon seeks political solution to Rohingya crisis](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 23)

Former UN secretary general Ban Ki-moon has called for a political solution to the Rohingya crisis to allow them to return to their places of origin in Rakhine state "freely and safely." "There should be a political solution," he told reporters after a meeting with Foreign Minister Momen, seeking Myanmar's steps to end the Rohingya crisis.

Similar:

[Bangladesh can't deal with Rohingya situation alone: Ban Ki-moon](#) New Age Bangladesh (Nov. 24)

[Lost and Found: Depicts brave story of humanity in Rohingya camps](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 22)

[film review] If you do not know what kind of inhuman crisis is going on in the lives of Rohingya refugees, who fled to Bangladesh from their country, Myanmar, for survival, then you must watch the documentary, *Lost and Found*. The National Geographic film documents Kamal Hussein, a Rohingya refugee who reunites parents with their lost children in Kutupalong camp in Bangladesh. Kamal, who came to Bangladesh around 27 years ago, was separated from his own parents as a small boy fleeing Myanmar in the 1990s.

[Assessing Landslide Risk in Rohingya Refugee Camps](#) State of the Planet Columbia University (November 22)

Camp managers and other local officials overseeing Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh are now incorporating NASA satellite observations into their decision making in order to reduce the risk to refugees from landslides and other natural hazards. Information like daily rain totals can help inform how to lay out refugee camps and store supplies.

[Rohingya: ICC prosecutor pledges to uncover the truth](#) United News Bangladesh (November 22)

International Criminal Court (ICC) Prosecutor Fatou Bensouda said her investigation will seek to "uncover the truth" and will now focus its efforts on ensuring the pursuit and success of its independent and impartial investigation. "In doing so, we aim to bring justice to victims and affected communities, and count on the full support and cooperation of States Parties, civil society, and other partners," she said in a statement following judicial authorization to commence an investigation into crimes committed against Rohingyas.

[Lawyer: Genocide Case Against Myanmar Based on ‘Compelling’ Evidence](#) Voice of America (November 22)

An attorney assisting Gambia with its lawsuit against Myanmar alleging state-sponsored genocide at the U.N.’s top court said that he was confident that the West African nation would win the case based on copious, strong evidence of army atrocities against the Muslim Rohingyas. “The evidence is plentiful,” Paul Reichler, an attorney at Foley Hoag LLC in Washington, said. He spoke a day after the Myanmar government announced that State Counselor and Foreign Affairs Minister Aung San Suu Kyi would lead a team in defending the country at the International Court of Justice.

[Myanmar fails to take back Rohingyas two years after signing agreement](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 22)

Two years have passed by since Bangladesh and Myanmar signed a bilateral agreement on the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas sheltered in Cox’s Bazar, but not a single persecuted person from Rakhine is yet to return home due to the unwillingness of Myanmar. According to the agreement, the repatriation should have begun within two months of inking the deal meaning by January 22, 2018 and Myanmar was supposed to ensure a favourable condition for the return of the Rohingyas. Had Naypyitaw honoured the deal, most of the Rohingyas would have returned to their homes by now.

[A complete landscape plan needed to save Cox’s Bazar: Raquibul Amin](#) New Age (November 22)

Raquibul Amin, country representative of the International Union for Conservation of Nature, known as global authority on the conservation status of wildlife, asked for the redesigning of a total landscape plan for Cox’s Bazar forest areas to mitigate human-elephant conflict that increased in the past couple of years after a large number of Rohingya refugees settled in the areas blocking natural corridors for elephant migration. Amin said the government should plan reforestation in the areas of need to lessen environmental problems that deepened in the recent years.

[Rohingya refugees need rights, not restrictions](#) Asia Times (November 21)

[op-ed] Some high-level officials of the Bangladeshi government have recently expressed concern that the Rohingya refugees represent a security threat to Bangladesh and the wider region. Under this premise, they have implemented a series of restrictions on the Rohingya communities in the refugee camps. But there no facts to back up their claim. We Rohingya believe the restrictions have been put in place mostly to try to persuade us to go back to Myanmar before adequate safety measures are in place there. Bangladesh is not our country, and we are not citizens here. Nonetheless, we are entitled to basic human rights. We need access to education, security and health, like all human beings. These things also help us to build supportive communities that are less vulnerable and less likely to resort to crime. We are not a threat to our Bangladeshi brothers and sisters. Please allow us to continue to live in dignity in your country, until safety is restored in Rakhine, and conditions allow us to return to our country and to our homes.

[Briefing: What’s behind a flurry of legal bids to prosecute Myanmar for genocide?](#) The New Humanitarian (November 21)

A burst of legal action across the globe this month has provided fresh impetus for efforts to examine atrocity crimes allegedly committed by Myanmar against its Rohingya minority. This article analyzes the impact of each action taken in different tribunals to bring Myanmar accountable for the Rohingya crisis.

[Rohingya Crisis: Reconciliation necessary to resolve it](#) The Daily Star (November 21)

Bangladesh has said it believes reconciliation can be a critical enabler for resolving the Rohingya humanitarian crisis, the brunt of which it is bearing. Referring to various successful models of reconciliation, Bangladesh urged Myanmar to adopt clearly defined reconciliation strategies through a whole-of-society approach and by ensuring transparency and objectivity in the reconciliation process.

Similar:

[Bangladesh to Myanmar: Reconciliation critical for resolving Rohingya crisis](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 20)

[Is reconciliation necessary in Rohingya crisis?:](#) Daily Star Straits Times (Nov. 23) [op-ed]

[SC to hear Plea seeking deportation of Rohingyas, Bangladeshis next month](#) ANI News (November 21)

The Supreme Court of India will take up after four weeks a petition seeking deportation of illegal immigrants, including Bangladeshis and Rohingyas from India. The petitioner, Ashwini Upadhyay has sought a direction to central and state governments to “identify, detain and deport illegal migrants and infiltrators”.



Similar:

[SC to hear PIL on Rohingyas, Bangladeshis' deportation in four weeks](#) Business Standard (Nov. 21)

[China, Russia for deeper engagement](#) New Age Bangladesh (November 21)

China and Russia have separately expressed intent to make deeper engagement in implementing the bilateral agreements between Bangladesh and Myanmar for peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis. Chinese ambassador Li Jiming and Russian ambassador Alexander I Ignatov expressed their eagerness to this end in separate meetings with foreign minister AK Abdul Momen at the foreign ministry in Dhaka, according to diplomatic sources.

Similar:

[Envoy: China plays unique role in resolving Rohingya crisis](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 24)

[Chinese envoy peddles new formula for Rohingya repatriation](#) BDNews24 (Nov. 24)

[Rohingya youth held at Ctg passport office](#) The Daily Star (November 21)

Officials of Panchlaish Passport Office in port city foiled another bid by a Rohingya youth to get a Bangladeshi passport through submitting fake documents. The officials detained and handed him over to police. The arrestee is Mohammad Shah, 20. Recently, a Rohingya youth and Bangladeshi broker were arrested over similar charges.

[NYU Helps Rohingya Refugees Prepare for Cyclones and Monsoon Threats](#) NYU (November 21)

NYU Professor of Environmental Education Raul Lejano and his team have created risk-prevention workshops to help Rohingya refugees living in Bangladesh better prepare for extreme weather events. The researchers are working with the Cyclone Preparedness Programme of Bangladesh and NGO, Bangladesh Disaster Preparedness Centre, to design and implement a series of empowerment-based risk communication workshops to help people in this community better prepare for extreme weather events that may put their lives in danger.

[Myanmar faces three international courts for Rohingya genocide – what good will they do?](#) Open Democracy (November 20)

[op-ed] Last week, three separate judicial actions were undertaken against Myanmar. The charges are the same in each: genocide and other human rights abuses committed against the Rohingya minority in that country. As expected, the Myanmar government has not accepted any of these proceedings and says that its own agencies will investigate any crime. However, no investigation has taken place since the crackdown on the Rohingya began three years ago and moreover there is overwhelming evidence that the government itself contributed to the planning and the execution of the genocide. So there seems to be very little hope that these legal processes will bring to justice the perpetrators of crimes and provide relief to the Rohingyas. But that doesn't mean they are pointless.

[Aung San Suu Kyi to Lead Myanmar Team to Fight Genocide Accusation](#) The New York Times (November 20)

Myanmar's government has announced that its leader, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, will head a legal team it will send to the International Court of Justice in the Netherlands to contest a case of genocide filed against it by the Gambia. The announcement was posted on the Facebook page of the office of the state counselor, a position Ms. Aung San Suu Kyi holds along with that of foreign minister.

Similar:

[Aung San Suu Kyi to defend Myanmar in Rohingya genocide case](#) CNN (Nov. 20)

[Suu Kyi to defend Myanmar against genocide accusation at UN court](#) Aljazeera (Nov. 20)

[Aung San Suu Kyi to Lead Myanmar Team Contesting Rohingya Genocide Case at World Court](#) Time (Nov. 20)

[Rohingya crisis: Myanmar leader Suu Kyi to head legal team contesting genocide case](#) Independent (Nov. 21)

[Aung San Suu Kyi to 'defend' Myanmar against Rohingya genocide accusations](#) The Financial Times (Nov. 20)

[Kamal wants Turkish support for Rohingya repatriation](#) The Independent (Nov. 20)

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal has sought Turkish support for Rohingya repatriation from Bangladesh to their homeland speedily as he made a courtesy call-on the Speaker of Turkish Grand National Assembly Mustafa Sentop in



Ankara. During the meeting yesterday, Kamal said Bangladesh is now paying high price for sheltering the Rohingyas in the face of persecution on them at Rakhaine State in Myanmar although Bangladesh allowed them for some time on humanitarian ground. Terming the persecution over the Rohingyas in Myanmar as a 'heinous' act, Sentop said Turkey would remain beside Bangladesh in resolving this problem.

Similar:

[Bangladesh calls for more Turkish investment](#) Anadolu Agency (November 20)

[Don't come, Rohingya in Malaysia warn those fleeing Bangladesh](#) Free Malaysia Today (November 20)

Malaysia has become home to more than 100,000 Rohingya refugees, the second-highest number in the world after Bangladesh, with most braving the Andaman Sea on rickety boats or paying people smugglers for fake travel documents. But many Rohingyas in Malaysia now face lack of job opportunities and harassment by police as they are deemed illegal immigrants.

Similar:

[Dead-end: Rohingya in Malaysia warn against fleeing from Bangladesh](#) Reuters (Nov. 19)

[Hopes shattered for Myanmar's Rohingya refugees who fled to Malaysia](#) Japan Times (Nov. 20)

[UN to hold public hearing on Myanmar's Rohingya genocide case](#) Free Malaysia Today (November 20)

The Gambia will open its case against Myanmar before the UN's top court in December accusing the mainly Buddhist state of genocide against its Rohingya Muslims. The small, majority-Muslim African country will ask the International Court of Justice to make an emergency injunction to protect the Rohingya, pending a decision on whether to deal with the wider case.

[UN Special Envoy Meets Returning Rohingya Refugees](#) Myanmar Now (November 19)

Christine Burgener, the UN secretary general's special envoy to Myanmar, met with several refugees recently returned to Myanmar, according to a local official in Rakhine state. The meetings took place in Maungdaw township's General Administrative Office, Maungdaw district administrator Soe Aung said.

[Stay or go: For Rohingya refugees, a divisive debate over island camp plans](#) The New Humanitarian (November 19)

Rohingya refugees constantly debate about going or not the Bhasan Char, an island where the Bangladeshi Government is planning to relocate around 100,000 refugees. Even though at first people were not willing to go, at this point some of them feel it is their only option to have a better life than the one they are experiencing in Cox Bazar refugee camps.

[Malaysian field hospital in Cox's Bazar performs over 900 high-risk surgeries since 2017](#) The Sun Daily (November 19)

The Malaysian field hospital in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has successfully conducted more than 900 high-risk surgeries since its establishment in 2017, despite facing various constraints.

[Will cases brought against Myanmar deliver justice to Rohingya?](#) Aljazeera (November 19)

Last week, three separate cases were filed against Myanmar for atrocities against the Rohingya people in the first international legal attempts to bring justice to the persecuted Muslim minority. The three cases are complementary but can be distinguished on the basis of the crimes they charge Myanmar with, the identity of the accused and the remedies the courts can order. Each court offers distinct advantages.

[Govt says Bangladesh holding up repatriation](#) Myanmar Times (November 19)

The Myanmar government has urged Bangladesh to abide by their bilateral agreement on the repatriation of the more than 700,000 refugees from Rakhine State living in cramped camps in Cox's Bazar. U Zaw Htay, spokesperson for the President's Office, accused Bangladesh of not cooperating in the repatriation, which has worsened the refugees' living conditions. He said that children and the elderly are suffering the most, that members of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) have infiltrated the camp, and that drug use is rampant.

Similar:

[Myanmar Blames Bangladesh for Rohingya Repatriation Failure](#) The Irrawaddy (Nov. 18)

[Myanmar again blames Bangladesh](#) The Independent Bangladesh (Nov. 20)

[Myanmar Rohingya: Will Omar get justice for his murdered family?](#) BBC (November 19)

Two years on, it is still hard to process the brutality of what happened to the Rohingya who had been living in Myanmar. Visible progress towards any kind of justice for the minority Muslim group has been painfully slow. But now we've seen three legal developments - seemingly unrelated - which some legal experts are calling a big step forward, and which offer a degree of hope to Rohingya campaigners.

[Netherlands Provides \\$4.3Mln For Rohingya Refugees In Bangladesh - UN Food Agency](#) Urdu Point (November 18)

The World Food Program (WFP) has said that the Netherlands has provided \$4.3 million in support of the organization's relief efforts for the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh. WFP said the contribution will support the construction of 20 new fish ponds and vertical vegetable gardens to enable refugees to access fresh food. In addition, the funds will be used to train some 4,000 Rohingya women to become self-sufficient.

Similar:

[WFP welcomes support from the Kingdom of Netherlands to support refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar](#) Reliefweb (Nov. 18)

[Image severely damaged, says Myanmar](#) New Age (November 18)

The Myanmar government believes that its image has been severely damaged internationally due to efforts to prosecute the country and its leadership in different international courts. Myanmar's image has been 'severely damaged internationally,' said Zaw Htay, spokesman of the Myanmar government, in his response to a series of international rights group's efforts to prosecute the country and its leadership at the International Criminal Court, the UN's International Court of Justice and a court in Argentina last week.

[Field hospital in Cox's Bazar to continue operating until Dec 2021](#) The Sun Daily (November 18)

The Cabinet plans to continue operating the Malaysian field hospital in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh until December 2021, an extension of another two years. Deputy Defence Minister Senator Liew Chin Tong said although the size of operation remains at 50 beds, starting next year, the Malaysian Armed Forces (ATM) would work with the Ministry of Health and non-governmental organisations in getting the services of medical practitioners.

[Roundtable: Bangladesh in big trouble if Rohingya crisis remains unresolved](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 18)

Speakers at a roundtable discussion, organized by the Daily Bhorer Kagoj, have laid emphasis on serious efforts from China and India and other friends of Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya crisis otherwise they see Bangladesh in "big trouble" within next 10 years.

Similar:

['Rohingya time-bomb' may explode anytime: Roundtable](#) United News Bangladesh (Nov. 18)

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/>