

# Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

November 25 - December 1, 2019



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY  
NETWORK

## Highlights:

### Accountability:

- Myanmar's government has set up a special unit on "international criminal justice" as it faces a series of lawsuits over its brutal crackdown on Rohingya Muslims.
- Myanmar's military has begun a rare court martial of soldiers following a probe into alleged atrocities during a crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, a government spokesman said.

### High-level Statements:

- According to IOM's new World Migration Report-2020, Bangladesh is currently hosting the largest number of stateless people in the world, about 906,000 persons, mainly because of the Rohingya exodus.
- The UNHCR said this week that it is extremely difficult to set a timeline when a conducive environment for the return of Rohingyas would be created.
- During a courtesy call on prime minister Sheikh Hasina, the visiting Chief of General Staff of the Saudi Armed Forces General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili said Saudi Arabia highly appreciated the role of Bangladesh in Rohingya issue and said Riyadh will always stay beside Dhaka on this issue.

### Camp Conditions:

- Bangladesh Army Chief Gen. Aziz Ahmed said that a plan to surround the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar with barbed wire fences and guard towers was "in full swing", prompting concerns from rights advocates.
- A UN envoy has offered technical expertise to assess arrangements on Bhashan Char, where Dhaka plans to shift about 100,000 Rohingya refugees, stating that the UN wanted to be "engaged" in the proposed refugee relocation.
- UNFPA Bangladesh and the Local Government and Engineering Department have signed an agreement to implement a US\$8m gender-based violence component of the World Bank Funded Emergency Multi-sector Rohingya Crisis Response Project to address gender-based violence in the camps.

## Developments:

[‘Boycott Myanmar’](#) The Daily Star (November 30)

Rohingyas across Europe have planned mass rallies and a global campaign, "Boycott Myanmar", to globally drum up their demands for justice as the International Court of Justice (ICJ) begins its first ever hearing on the genocide case against Myanmar on December 10. The European Rohingya Council and Myanmar Muslim Association Netherlands are organising a Rohingya solidarity rally from December 10 to 12 in front of the ICJ at The Hague, Netherlands.

[UN offers to assess Bhashan Char plan](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 30)

A UN envoy has offered technical expertise to assess arrangements on Bhashan Char where Dhaka plans to shift about 100,000 Rohingya refugees. Kelly Clements, a deputy high commissioner of the UNHCR, told reporters in Dhaka that the UN wanted to be "engaged" in the proposed refugee relocation, which has been criticized by rights groups.

*Similar:*

[UN offers to assess Bangladesh's Rohingya relocation plan](#) Prothom Alo (Nov. 30)

[UN offers to assess Bangladesh's refugee island plan](#) Outlook India (Nov. 28)

[UN Offers to Assess Bangladesh's Plan to Relocate 100,000 Rohingya Refugees to Island](#) News18 (Nov. 29)

[UN offers to assess Bangladesh's refugee island plan](#) New Indian Express (Nov. 29)

**[IOM: Bangladesh hosts most stateless people in the world](#)** Dhaka Tribune (November 29)

Bangladesh is currently hosting the largest number of stateless people in the world, about 906,000 persons, mainly because of the Rohingya exodus that began in August 2017. This number is one fourth of the total number of stateless persons globally with 3.9 million as of 2018, according to the World Migration Report-2020, launched on Wednesday by the International Organisation for Migration.

*Similar:*

[Without a home](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 30) [op-ed]

**[Riyadh will always stay beside Dhaka on Rohingya issue](#)** New Age Bangladesh (November 29)

During a courtesy call on prime minister Sheikh Hasina at her official Ganbhaban residence, the visiting Chief of General Staff of the Saudi Armed Forces General Fayyadh bin Hamed Al-Ruwaili said Saudi Arabia highly appreciated the role of Bangladesh in Rohingya issue and said Riyadh will always stay beside Dhaka on this issue.

*Similar:*

[KSA Army chief: Saudi with Bangladesh over Rohingya issues](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 28)

[KSA with Bangladesh over Rohingya issues](#) The Independent (Nov. 28)

**[Rohingyas use 3 lakh mobiles](#)** The Daily Star (November 29)

Rohingyas of Ukhia and Teknaf upazilas of Cox's Bazar are using around three lakh mobile connections of local carriers, a technical committee of the telecom regulatory commission has found out. The connections are being used for local and international communication. The BTRC will verify the registration information provided by the mobile phone operators and if any irregularities are found, the operators will have to pay a fine of Tk 5,000 for each SIM unregistered or registered with incorrect information. The telecom regulator has asked the operators to block all services, except voice calls, in the Rohingya camp areas of Ukhia and Teknaf until further notice.

**[Rohingya killed in landmine blast in Naikhongchhari border](#)** Dhaka Tribune (November 29)

A Rohingya man has been killed in a landmine explosion at the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Naikhongchhari upazila of Cox's Bazar. The incident was reported from the upazila's Ghumdum area. Two others were injured.

*Similar:*

[Landmine Blast: Rohingya man killed, 2 injured](#) The Daily Star (Nov. 30)

**[PM Modi has assured NRC an 'internal issue': Bangladesh envoy](#)** Hindustan Times (November 29)

After some 1.9 million people were left out of the final version of the National Register of Citizenship (NRC) in Assam in August, statements by BJP leaders that these people would be deported have sparked concerns among the public in Bangladesh. These concerns have been exacerbated by plans to implement the NRC across India. However, Prime Minister Narendra Modi has assured Bangladesh the implementation of the NRC is an "internal issue" that will be resolved internally, Bangladesh high commissioner Syed Muazzem Ali said.

*Similar:*

[NRC implementation India's internal matter, which will be resolved internally: Bangladeshi envoy](#) Outlook India (Nov. 29)



[Aung San Suu Kyi fans join VIP tours for Rohingya genocide trial](#) Frontier Myanmar (November 29)

Ardent fans of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi are snapping up spots on US\$2,000 tours to The Hague, in a display of moral support as Myanmar faces charges of genocide over the Rohingya crisis at the UN's top court in December. Supporter rallies, billboards and outpourings of praise online followed the shock announcement by the country's civilian leader last week that she would personally represent Myanmar at the International Court of Justice. The once-lauded democracy champion will be defending the 2017 military crackdown against the Rohingya. Social influencer Pencilo and well-known TV presenter Mg Mg Aye are among the 20 or so people to have already signed up for the tour.

*Similar:*

[Suu Kyi fans join VIP tours for Rohingya genocide trial](#) France24 (Nov. 29)

[UNFPA Collaborates with the Government to Prevent Gender-Based Violence in Rohingya Camps](#) Reliefweb (November 28)

Rohingya women and girls face high levels of discrimination within their community, and most stay in their shelters due to social norms that limit their roles in the public sphere, as well as to avoid sexual assault and trafficking that occurs in the camps. This restricted mobility is particularly challenging for women-headed households. UN agencies and local NGOs have reported high levels of domestic violence, sexual exploitation and trafficking faced by women and girls in the camp. According to the VAW Survey 2015, jointly conducted by UNFPA and the Bangladesh Bureau of Statistics, 73% of ever married women in Bangladesh have experienced some kind of violence by their current husband, 55% have reported some type of violence in the past 12 months, and 50% reported physical violence in their lifetime. Moreover, adolescents and youth between the ages of 10-24 years of age who constitute 55% of the population have specific sexual and reproductive health needs as well as psychosocial support needs that must be addressed. In response to these needs, UNFPA Bangladesh and the Local Government and Engineering Department signed an agreement to implement the Gender-Based Violence component of the World Bank Funded Emergency Multi-sector Rohingya Crisis Response Project (EMCRP). The EMCRP aims to improve socioeconomic and disaster resilience, while at the same time improve basic facilities and community services, in the affected area target districts. The GBV component of the EMCRP is US\$8 million of the overall project of US\$165 million.

[Rohingya island camp plans spark worry on nearby shores](#) The New Humanitarian (November 28)

Bangladesh says Bhasan Char, a shifting silt island threatened by cyclones and disappearing land, could be a safe home for up to 100,000 Rohingya refugees. Bangladeshis who live with the same dangers nearby aren't so certain. This article provides in-depth coverage about Bhashan Char and how those living nearby see the potential relocation site.

[How the UN Compact on Refugees Can Address the Rohingya Crisis](#) Asia Sentinel (November 28)

The large-scale influx of refugees into Bangladesh is precisely the type of intractable situation that the Global Compact on Refugees and the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2018 are designed to address. These resolutions are milestones that signal the international community's embrace of a more comprehensive response to the dramatic increase of forced migrants over the past several years. While neither instrument is legally binding, they contain important political commitments that states around the world, including governments in Asia, have accepted. They affirm the global nature of the problem and the need to devise collaborative, longer-term, practical solutions.

[Extremely difficult to set timeline for Rohingya return: UNHCR](#) New Age Bangladesh (November 28)

The UN Refugee Agency has said it is extremely difficult to set a timeline when a conducive environment for the return of Rohingyas would be created. The UNHCR called on the international community to continue its support to Bangladesh and the humanitarian response while, in parallel, working with the Myanmar government to support Myanmar to create the conditions conducive to sustainable return. 'It's extremely difficult to set a timeline (when the conducive environment for Rohingya return will be created). There're too many factors,' UNHCR deputy high commissioner Kelly T Clements told reporters.

*Similar:*

[Difficult to set a timeline for Rohingya return: UNHCR](#) The Daily Star (Nov. 29)

**Bangladesh had no alternative but to allow Rohingyas** The Daily Star (November 27)

Bangladesh had no alternative but to allow Rohingyas in the country when they faced atrocities in Myanmar's Rakhine state, Foreign Secretary Shahidul Haque said during a public lecture on the Rohingya at Brac auditorium. General people had a lot of emotion when Rohingyas were killed and their houses burnt and when they ran across the border of Bangladesh for their lives, the secretary said. "It was a very difficult decision. We had in mind the consequences at the national level. But we also had to consider international obligations."

**Minister: Army chief to open new line of negotiation during Myanmar visit** Dhaka Tribune (November 27)

The foreign minister has said that an upcoming visit of the Bangladesh Army chief to Myanmar will bring something good for Bangladesh and "open another line of negotiation" between the two countries over Rohingya repatriation. Bangladesh Army Chief of Staff General Aziz Ahmed will go to Myanmar next month.

*Similar:*

Army chief's Myanmar tour to add more negotiation line: FM New Age Bangladesh (Nov. 28)

**Myanmar begins court martial after probe into Rohingya atrocities** AlJazeera (November 27)

Myanmar's military has begun a rare court martial of soldiers following a probe into alleged atrocities during a crackdown on Rohingya Muslims, a spokesman said, as the country prepares to face genocide charges at an international court in The Hague. Spokesman Zaw Min Tun said that soldiers and officers from a regiment deployed to Gu Dar Pyin village, the site of an alleged massacre of Rohingya, were "weak in following the rules of engagement". In a statement published on its website, the army said the soldiers being court martialed were involved in "accidents" in Gu Dar Pyin.

*Similar:*

Myanmar Begins Rare Court Martial After Probe Into Rohingya Atrocities NYTimes (Nov. 26)

**Bangladesh, Myanmar trade barbs over stalled repatriation plan** Myanmar Times (November 27)

Bangladesh hit back at Myanmar's accusation that Dhaka is to blame for the failure to repatriate more than 700,000 refugees from northern Rakhine State who are living in cramped camps in Cox's Bazar. It accused Myanmar of conducting a campaign of "fabricated information, misrepresentation of facts, unsubstantiated claims, and unwarranted accusations" in a bid to shift the blame of the problem to Bangladesh. "The crisis originated in Myanmar, and the solution entirely lies there. None other than Myanmar should be responsible for [the] prolongation of the crisis," the Bangladesh Foreign Ministry said over. On November 15, a Myanmar government spokesman told a press conference in Nay Pyi Taw that the repatriation has been stalled due to Bangladesh's "non-cooperation and non-respect of the bilateral agreement."

*Similar:*

Rohingya Repatriation: Stop your propaganda The Daily Star (Nov. 25)

Dhaka ready to send back Rohingyas The Independent (Nov. 27)

**Myanmar sets up special legal unit as Rohingya cases loom** AlJazeera (November 27)

Myanmar's government has set up a special unit on "international criminal justice" as it faces a series of lawsuits over its brutal crackdown on Rohingya Muslims in 2017. The unit is designed to strengthen legal expertise and provide an opinion to government ministries in relation to international criminal law, according to a statement from the Office of State Counsellor, Aung San Suu Kyi.

*Similar:*

Two Myanmar Military Officers Join Int'l Criminal Justice Unit for ICJ Defense The Irrawaddy (Nov. 27)

### [The Rohingya Quandary](#) The Daily Star (November 26)

[op-ed] The Myanmar authorities have been successful in pursuing an ethnic-cleansing project over the last three decades. They have driven out most of the estimated three million Rohingyas. Diplomacy has failed to persuade or put enough pressure on Myanmar to budge from its denial of citizenship rights to Rohingyas and create the conditions for their return. The efforts in diplomacy, legal steps and mobilising international support must continue. But all indications are that Myanmar has no intention to restore conditions that would allow the Rohingyas to return to their homeland. Bangladesh is in the Rohingya quandary for the long haul. One important issue facing the Rohingyas in Bangladesh is the future of their children. Fifty-five percent of the camp residents are children under 18. Proper education is the least that can be done for the children traumatised and deprived of their basic rights. It would enhance Bangladesh's image as a humane nation. The children of the host communities who are paying a high price due to the refugee crisis should also benefit from the education services for children.

### [India should help Bangladesh's over Rohingya issue: China's envoy](#) United News of India (November 26)

Stating that China is finding a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, China's Envoy here has said that India too, should come forward to help its neighbor. The envoy said that China cares, China contributes, and China acts in resolving the crisis and with its traditional friendship with Bangladesh and Myanmar, Beijing will do whatever they can to help alleviate the situation and push forward early repatriation. But he simultaneously added that despite its good relations with Myanmar, Beijing could not lecture Myanmar what to do since it is a sovereign country that requires China to pursue the matter diplomatically following the principle of equality and mutual respect.

### [Bangladesh Turning Refugee Camps into Open-Air Prisons](#) Human Rights Watch (November 26)

Bangladesh Army Chief Gen. Aziz Ahmed said that a plan to surround the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar with barbed wire fences and guard towers was "in full swing." The plan is the latest in a series of policies effectively cutting off more than 900,000 Rohingya refugees from the outside world. But fencing in refugees in what will essentially be open-air prisons and cutting off communication services are neither necessary nor proportional measures to maintain camp security and are contrary to international human rights law. The fencing will place refugees at further risk should they urgently need to evacuate or obtain medical and other humanitarian services. Refugees told Human Rights Watch the fencing will hinder their ability to contact relatives spread throughout the camps and brings back memories of restrictions on movement and the abuses they fled in Myanmar.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh begins fencing of Rohingya camps](#) Northeast Now (Nov. 25)

[Bangladesh starts fencing Rohingya camps](#) New Indian Express (Nov. 25)

### [Can the International Community Save the Rohingya?](#) The Globe Post (November 26)

[op-ed] This month saw three landmark international legal actions taken against Myanmar over its bloody 2017 military crackdown that forced some 740,000 Rohingya Muslims to flee into neighboring Bangladesh. These are the first international attempts to implicate Myanmar for the alleged genocide. But will any of the measures bring justice to the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh or those remaining in Myanmar living under the brutal regime of military and intercommunal oppression? Sadly, it is unlikely that the legal actions will lead to significant immediate relief for the Rohingya. Yet, even without direct results, the cases are important because they may raise the Rohingya plight's visibility with the international community and force governments to take seriously how they might support the Rohingya through resettlement opportunities, resource distribution to Bangladesh, or other tangible measures. Myanmar's approaching 2020 national elections offer an opportunity to apply pressure on the government that might lay the groundwork for social and political reform. In the meantime, the Rohingya cannot wait. The international community must step up to protect them from further harm.

*Similar:*

[Showdown in International Court of Justice: Sovereignty versus human rights?](#) BNI Online (Nov. 26)



**[25 Rohingyas rescued from Maheshkhali](#)** United News Bangladesh (November 25)

Police have rescued 25 Rohingyas from Sonadia Magchar area of Maheshkhali upazila. Rescued Rohingya youth Aiyaz Mia said a local trafficker gang took 42 of them from the Kutupalong camp promising to take them to Malaysia. After three days and three nights at sea, the traffickers brought them to Sonadia around 5am and said they had arrived at their destination, he said. Sanjita Aktar, another rescued Rohingya, said they took a trawler from Teknaf after the traffickers promised to take them to Malaysia but instead dumped them in Sonadia. Locals informed police after a trawler left the Rohingyas at Sonadia in the morning and 16 Rohingyas fled from the spot.

**[Myanmar Considers Chinese Envoy's Proposal to Kick-start Rohingya Repatriations](#)** Radio Free Asia (November 25)

Myanmar will consider a Chinese envoy's proposal to kick-start Rohingya repatriations by allowing some refugees to return home and report back the on-the-ground situation to their relatives in displacement camps in Bangladesh in an effort to convince them to return, a Myanmar government official has said. Li Jiming, China's ambassador to Bangladesh, proposed to allow one member from each Rohingya refugee family living in displacement camps in Bangladesh to visit Myanmar to observe whether it is safe for other Rohingyas to return to their former villages in northern Rakhine state.

**[Myanmar's Rohingya crisis is moving backwards. Here's how to resolve it](#)** South China Morning Post (November 25)

[op-ed] Myanmar's Rohingya crisis is sliding dangerously backwards. The denial of civil rights, a massive land grab and an upsurge in armed fighting undermine any real hope for change. Despite reports that some Rohingya refugees have returned to Myanmar, the suggestion that more will follow stands in stark contrast to what I witnessed recently when visiting the areas from which they fled. International solidarity with these stateless people needs a fundamental rethink. If we succeed to only administer the crisis, we will fail to ever resolve it.

*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/>*