

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

November 4 - November 10, 2019



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Highlights:

Camp Conditions:

- UN agencies will visit Bhasan Char to conduct a technical study of Bhasan Char, which will evaluate its 'technical, security, and financial' feasibility to serve as an additional locale for Rohingyas. The plan to move some Rohingya to the island has been delayed until after the Government of Bangladesh gets the "green light" from the UN.

High-level Statements:

- USAID officials have condemned Myanmar's inaction in creating conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Rohingya.
- India has made multiple statements about Rohingya repatriation today, through its Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar, who wrote a letter to the Foreign Minister of Bangladesh, and through Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who had a bilateral meeting with Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on the margins of ASEAN summit in Bangkok.

International Events:

- At the end of Asean's biannual summit last week, Asean's 10 member countries unanimously supported the formation of an ad hoc support team to carry out the recommendations of preliminary needs. That includes continued communication and consultation with affected communities, such as the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Country Visits:

- USAID deputy administrator Bonnie Glick and acting assistant secretary of State Alice G. Wells visited Bangladesh November 5-7. In a statement following a visit by two top US officials to Bangladesh, the country also underscored that it would continue its efforts to bring an end to the refugee crisis.

Developments:

[A dozen dead, fishermen missing after cyclone Bulbul lashes Bangladesh and India](#) Reuters (November 10)

At least 13 people were killed in Bangladesh and India after cyclone Bulbul lashed coastal areas this weekend, though prompt evacuations saved many lives and the worst is over. No major damage was immediately reported in the camps in southeast Bangladesh where hundreds of thousands of refugees from neighboring Myanmar are living.

Similar:

[Bulbul lashes Bangladesh, India, 12 dead](#) The Courier (Nov. 11)

[Tidal surge risk as Cyclone Bulbul nears India and Bangladesh](#) Oxfam America (Nov. 9)

[Myanmar, Bangladesh, India - Tropical Cyclone MATMO \(DG ECHO, GDACS, JTWC, NDRF, IMD, Government of Myanmar\)](#) ReliefWeb (Nov. 7)

[Myanmar's Neighbors Must Build Trust Among Rohingya Refugees](#) Pass Blue (November 10)

As the 35th Asean biannual summit ended in Thailand last week, only two paragraphs in the 17-page chairman's statement — a summary of the conference's consensus — were devoted to the Rohingya crisis. While much in those paragraphs repeated the language of the year before, the 2019 concluding statement showed that Asean was heeding the urgent need to garner more consistent political attention to the Rakhine problem. Most significantly, Asean's 10 member countries unanimously supported the formation of an ad hoc support team to carry out the recommendations of preliminary needs. That includes continued communication and consultation with affected communities, such as the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

Similar:

[Rohingya Crisis: Asean leaders for durable solution](#), The Daily Star (Nov. 5)

[Dhaka urges ASEAN to step up on Rohingya issue](#), Arab News (Nov. 4)

[Asean and Rohingyas](#) The Statesman (Nov. 5) [op-ed]

[Refugees, sport, and mental health](#) ABC News (November 10)

Australian researchers recently travelled to a large refugee camp in Bangladesh where around 500,000 Rohingya people are living. The researchers found that sports and exercise programs make a huge difference to these refugees' physical and mental health, and to their well-being.

[Myanmar SIMs in Rohingya camps pose security threats](#) New Age (November 10)

The government is likely to take measures to stop the use of mobile SIMs cards smuggled into the country from Myanmar for use in Rohingya camps, as they create security threats in Cox's Bazar and Bandarban. The national taskforce on Rohingya issues has asked the national security agencies to come up with solutions in coordination with the Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission on the use of data and voice services through mobile phone networks in Rohingya camps and bordering areas.

[Intensify diplomatic efforts to involve global leaders in solving Rohingya crisis](#) The New Nation (November 9)

The US has condemned Myanmar's inaction in creating conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Rohingyas. Following the recent visit of two top US officials to Bangladesh, the US underscored that it would continue its efforts to bring an end to the refugee crisis. Acting Assistant Secretary of the State Alice G. Wells stressed that the solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis lays in Myanmar and condemned the inaction by Myanmar authorities to create conditions for voluntary, safe, and dignified returns. She stressed that the US would continue its bilateral and multilateral efforts to bring a conclusion to the crisis.

[Myanmar's Military Is Only Hurting Itself](#) Foreign Policy (November 8)

[op-ed] The genocide of the Rohingya, and the exodus of 700,000 of them in the face of persecution by the Myanmar military, is now public knowledge. But it is less well-known that an additional 600,000 Rohingya still remain in the Rakhine state of Myanmar—and they are perhaps even more at risk than those who were forced to flee. According to a 2019 report by U.N. investigators issued on Sept. 16, the Rohingya still inside Rakhine remain there in “deplorable” conditions and face a “serious risk of genocide.” The report explicitly accuses the Myanmar military of continuing to “harbor genocidal intent” in the treatment of the Rohingya and of renewed “war crimes” including forced labor and torture against civilians. By some accounts, the military has carried out mass killings and gang rapes. While the Myanmar military immediately rejected the report as “one-sided,” a broad consensus in the international community maintains that those Rohingya who remain in Rakhine continue to be in extreme danger. The situation described is appalling on almost every level.

[Bangladesh halts Myanmar's entry into IORA](#) Prothom Alo (November 8)

Myanmar has been denied membership of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA) amid its non-fulfilment of commitments regarding the Rohingya repatriation. Bangladesh opposed Myanmar's membership application at the 21st IORA Council of Senior Officials' meeting, stating that the ground reality of Myanmar's non-cooperation and lack of commitment to repatriate Rohingyas have not changed since the last meeting, that Myanmar has failed to demonstrate its willingness to be a responsible state, and that it lacks respect for international norms and rules.



[US looks forward to UN technical study of Bhasan Char](#) New Age Bangladesh (November 8)

The United States has said that it looks forward to the UN technical study of Bhasan Char, which will evaluate its 'technical, security, and financial' feasibility to serve as an additional locale for Rohingyas. United States Agency for International Development deputy administrator Bonnie Glick and acting assistant secretary of State Alice G. Wells, who wrapped up their three-day visit to Bangladesh on Thursday, discussed the Rohingya issue and ways to find a sustainable solution.

[Rohingya children locked up in Yangon for travelling without ID](#) Frontier Myanmar (November 8)

Rohingya children caught travelling outside of Rakhine State without identity documents are being detained in vocational schools and rehabilitation centres in Yangon, where they rarely receive family visits. [This article followed a boat of Rohingya who left an IDP camp and were intercepted and detained by Myanmar police.]

[US slams Myanmar over inaction](#) The Daily Star (November 8)

The US has condemned Myanmar's inaction in creating conditions conducive to a voluntary, safe and dignified return of the Rohingyas. In a statement following a visit by two top US officials to Bangladesh between November 5-7, the country also underscored that it would continue its efforts to bring an end to the refugee crisis. USAID Deputy Administrator Bonnie Glick and Acting Assistant Secretary of State Alice G. Wells travelled to Bangladesh to promote expanded US-Bangladesh bilateral relations, boost commercial and security ties, and address the ongoing Rohingya crisis, according to a statement released by the US embassy.

Similar:

[US continues to pressure Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 7)

[US condemns Myanmar inaction on Rohingya repatriation](#) Prothom Alo (Nov. 8)

[UN, Rohingya teams to visit Bhasan Char in Bangladesh](#) New Age Bangladesh (November 7)

The National taskforce on Rohingya repatriation has decided that technical teams of the UN agencies would visit Bhasan Char for seeing facilities developed to relocate a section of Rohingya people to the island. Delegations of Rohingya people would also be taken to the island to see for themselves facilities as a part of the government's move to help them to make informed choice on shifting their place of temporary residence from camps in Cox's Bazar to the island.

[Prolonged Rohingya presence to create radicals, Momen warns again](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 7)

The prolonged presence of Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar will result in the making of radicals, which will be bad not only for Bangladesh but also for the entire globe, Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen has warned again. The minister urged the international community and the partners of Dhaka to put more pressure on Myanmar so that it takes back its own people.

Similar:

[Refugee minorities more prone to Islamic terrorism](#) Stock Daily Dish (Nov. 8)

[Rohingya presence affecting our ecosystem, says Momen](#) The Daily Star (November 7)

Foreign Minister Abdul Momen yesterday said the global leadership, especially South Asian partners, need to do more to ensure quick repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar. Bangladesh has given shelter to forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Myanmar on 6,800 acres of forest land in Cox's Bazar. "It's in an extremely vulnerable location. Their presence is affecting our ecosystem," Dr Momen said. He said the voluntary return of Rohingyas to their homes in Rakhine state with safety, security and dignity is the only solution to the crisis.

Similar:

[Momen: Rohingya presence affecting Bangladesh ecosystem](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 6)

[Global leadership, S Asian partners urged to act for quick return of Rohingyas](#) The Daily Star (Nov. 6)

[Rohingyas make Cox's Bazar 'more vulnerable', says foreign minister](#) BDNews24 (Nov. 6)

[Global leadership urged to act for quick return of Rohingyas](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 6)



[How Bangladesh And Myanmar Used The Rohingya Crisis To Direct Anger At Each Other](#) HuffPost India (November 7)
[book review] Joseph Allchin looks at Bangladesh's travails with extremism and politics in his book 'Many Rivers, One Sea: Bangladesh and the challenge of Islamist Militancy'. [This article contains an excerpt of the book.]

[Bangladesh Army Chief Set to Visit Myanmar](#) The Irrawaddy (November 6)

Bangladesh army chief General Aziz Ahmed will visit Myanmar for a week next month to boost military-to-military cooperation between the neighboring countries. It is said that top officials from army headquarters, Chittagong and Cox's Bazar will be traveling with the army chief.

[Bangladesh: Plan to Move Rohingya to Bay of Bengal Isle Delayed](#) Radio Free Asia (November 6)

In October, a Bangladeshi official announced that the government planned to begin moving Rohingya to Bhashan Char during the first week of this month. Since then, a spokeswoman for the UNHCR said technical assessments to evaluate safety and sustainability of life on the island needed to be done first. State Minister Rahman said that plans to relocate Rohingya were uncertain. "We had meetings with the U.N. agencies regarding the relocation. But we have yet to get clearance from the U.N. agencies and the international NGOs ... Unless they greenlight it, we cannot start the relocation."

Similar:

[UN stalls relocation plan for 100,000 Rohingya](#) Arab News (Nov. 6)

[FM: Rohingyas will not be forced to go to Bhashan Char](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 5)

[Clinic helps refugees and Bangladeshis in pain](#) Reliefweb (November 6)

A physiotherapy clinic in south-east Bangladesh treats Rohingya refugees and their Bangladeshi hosts side by side. The clinic was set up by UNHCR in July 2018 to serve both the host community and Rohingya refugees and does not charge patients any fees. Most of the patients at the clinic are Bangladeshi – 874, compared to 286 Rohingya between the July 2018 and October 2019. That reflects the population in the area: 16,319 Bangladeshis compared to 10,210 Rohingya. The clinic employs two physiotherapists and two assistants.

[Beyond A Safe Haven: Responding To The Refugee Crisis](#) Forbes (November 6)

Rotary International is hosting Rotary Day at the United Nations, a public event honoring six individuals who have figured out how to make a difference and are taking decisive action for refugees and displaced persons. One of these individuals is Hasina Rahman, who has made it her mission to aid mothers and children in the camp. Her work has driven the construction of an outpatient therapeutic center to provide lifesaving preventative and curative nutrition services for children, and pregnant and lactating women. The center has screened more than 500,000 Rohingya children and helped more than 7,800 severely malnourished children.

[State Department Official: US Seeks Closer Military Ties with Bangladesh](#) BenarNews (November 5)

The United States is seeking an expanded military relationship with Bangladesh under a security initiative that would help Dhaka build its maritime and border security capacity, Alice Wells, the U.S. acting assistant secretary of state for South and Central Asian Affairs, has said. The Bay of Bengal Initiative, a new U.S. State Department program, involves foreign military financing that would build maritime and border security capacity for Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and the Maldives. Momen said Wells also asked him about the nation's plan to relocate Rohingya refugees to Bhashan Char, an isolated island in the Bay of Bengal.

Similar:

[US wants to make big investment in Bangladesh](#) The Daily Star (Nov. 6)



[Film Review: 'Lost And Found' & 'Sea Of Shadows'](#) The Knockturnal (November 5)

[film review] "Lost and Found" follows Kamal Hussein, a refugee from Myanmar. Like 700,000 thousand other Rohingya refugees escaping the military campaigns in Myanmar, Kamal fled to Bangladesh as a child. While fleeing, Kamal was separated from his parents and never saw them again. Kamal grew up alone, spending the next 20+ years in the camps in Bangladesh. After helping a girl reunite with her family, he contacted the UN and got some supplies, and then set up a small shack and got to work helping reunite separated families in the camp. Any parent with a lost child or a lost child themselves can come to the booth and Kamal will use his microphone setup to broadcast missing person's reports in hopes the right people will hear them.

[Thailand can 'do more' for Rohingya](#) Bangkok Post (November 5)

Muhammad Faruk Khan, chairman of Bangladesh's parliamentary committee on foreign affairs, shared his views on the repatriation of Rohingya refugees in light of the 35th Asean Summit and Related Summits in Bangkok and Nonthaburi in an exclusive interview with the Bangkok Post.

[Rohingya crisis: An effective playmaker in the reserved bench](#) The Daily Star (November 5)

[op-ed] Rohingya refugees are hitting Bangladesh hard. International support for a strong measure against the recalcitrant Myanmar seems a far cry. While we have tried almost every possible leeway within traditional executive driven diplomacy, this piece argues that the parliament's potential in the ongoing crisis is being unwisely subdued. A very old-fashioned perception of parliament-foreign affairs interplay unfortunately accounts for this.

[Is it Bangladesh's burden alone?](#) New Age (November 5)

[op-ed] Is the burden of hosting 1.2 million Rohingya refugees, who fled their country of origin, Myanmar, after being subjected to its security forces' genocidal activities, Bangladesh's alone if the crisis is not resolved soon? Is Bangladesh capable of managing the multifarious needs of a huge refugee population including the potential security risk factor for the country as well as for the region? Certainly not. Rohingyas must return to their country of origin for the sake of humanitarianism as well as their historical claim as citizens and one of the ethnic groups of Myanmar recognised 135 ethnic entities. And the world must pressurise Myanmar to create a conducive environment so that they can return with security, citizenship, identity and livelihood. But the developments in Myanmar and the response of International Community and those of Bangladesh's close neighbours, India and China, indicate otherwise.

[Modi's initiative to end Rohingya crisis](#) The New Nation (November 5)

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that a speedy, safe and sustainable return of the Rohingya refugees sheltered in Bangladesh should be done immediately for the interest of the region. Modi made the remarks in a bilateral meeting with Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi on the margins of ASEAN-India summit in Bangkok.

Similar:

[Bangladesh: Modi says Rohingya return best for region](#) The Japan News (Nov. 6)

[It's needed in regional interests](#) The Daily Star (Nov. 4)

[Modi tells Suu Kyi to take quick steps in Rohingya repatriation](#) Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 4)

[Two senior US officials due today, tomorrow](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 4)

Bonnie Glick, Deputy Administrator of USAID and Alice Wells, Acting Assistant Secretary of Bureau of South and Central Asian Affairs under the US State Department will visit Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar this week.

Similar:

[2 top US officials to visit Rohingya camps](#) New Age Bangladesh (Nov. 4)

[US state dept official arrives tomorrow](#) The Daily Star (Nov. 4)

[Acting Assistant Secretary Alice Wells Travels to Thailand and Bangladesh](#) STL News (Nov. 1)



[Franciscan Health doctors treating refugees in Bangladesh](#) The Daily Journal (November 4)

In an effort to provide care for Rohingya refugees, a team of physicians from Franciscan Health Indianapolis have traveled to Bangladesh to work in the camp. The six doctors will see 30 to 40 patients each day over the course of two weeks, treating everything from common maladies such as respiratory illnesses to diseases such as dengue fever or cholera to providing ultrasounds for women in the camp.

[Vietnam to play positive role over Rohingya issue](#) Dhaka Tribune (November 4)

Vietnam is likely to take over as the Asean chair from January 2020, and has expressed its wish to play a positive role as the next chair of Asean for a "safe, secured and dignified" repatriation of Rohingyas to their place of origin in Rakhine State.

[‘Our only aim is to go home’: Rohingya refugees face stark choice](#) The Guardian (November 4)

Life in the world’s largest refugee camp has grown harder in the past few months, and with citizenship in Myanmar still denied, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh must either live under severe restrictions or move to an isolated island. Life in the world’s largest refugee camp has grown harder in the past few months. The Bangladeshi government has launched a crackdown in the camp, shutting shops run by refugees, blocking internet services, confiscating mobile phones, putting up fencing and setting an 8pm curfew, meaning people can’t leave their homes at night. Politics is turning and it has been reported that locals in Cox’s Bazar are running out of patience. The government is finalising plans to move 100,000 refugees to an island in the Bay of Bengal and refugees wonder if it is all connected.

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/>

