

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

October 21 - October 27, 2019



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK

Highlights:

Living Conditions:

- Rights groups have criticized the Bangladesh government's plans, announced last week, to relocate approximately 3,000 Rohingya to Bhashan Char island. The US also issued statements encouraging the postponement of the relocation plan.

High-level Statements:

- At the 18th Non-Aligned Movement Summit, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina said the voluntary return of the Rohingyas to their homes in the Rakhine State with security and dignity is the only solution to the crisis.
- Iran has said that it will mount pressure on Myanmar to secure conditions for Rohingya repatriation.
- Aung San Suu Kyi has criticized the lack of global scrutiny on extremism and "terrorists" inside Rakhine state.

Accountability:

- The head of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, Marzuki Darusman, has said again that Myanmar is failing in its obligations under the Genocide Convention to prevent, investigate and enact effective legislation criminalizing and punishing genocide.
- The UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, has urged the international community to refer the situation to the ICC, or set up an international tribunal to ensure justice and non-recurrence.
- Amnesty International has released a report with fresh evidence that the Myanmar military continues to commit atrocities against ethnic minorities in the north of the country, with civilians bearing the brunt of offensives against multiple armed groups.

Country Visits:

- The WFP executive board visited Bangladesh to see the agency's humanitarian response for families living in the camps in Cox's Bazar, and support to the host communities.
- Five New York State senators paid a week-long visit to Bangladesh to observe the country's development.
- US Assistant Secretary David Stilwell will visit Myanmar from October 27-30.

Developments:

[East Asia Summit draft statement skips over Rohingya crisis](#), Bangkok Post (27 October)

A draft of the statement to be issued after the East Asia Summit in Bangkok early next month makes no mention of the exodus of Rohingya Muslims from Myanmar's Rakhine state, according to a copy of the communiqués seen by Kyodo News. According to diplomatic sources of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, Myanmar strongly pressed that the issue not be included in the statement, which was drawn up by Thailand and will be issued after the Nov 4 summit, which includes major Asian nations as well as others such as the United States, Russia, China and Japan.

[WFP executive board visits Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar](#), Dhaka Tribune (27 October)

The World Food Program (WFP) governing body, the executive board, has visited Bangladesh to see the agency's humanitarian response for families living in the camps in Cox's Bazar, and support to the host communities.

Similar:

[Local WFP News Release: WFP Executive Board sees lifesaving work in Cox's Bazar](#), World Food Programme (27 Oct.)

[Rights group casts doubt on Rohingya relocation](#), Strait Times (27 October)

A global rights group has cast doubt on Bangladesh's claims that thousands of Rohingya refugees are ready to move to a new island site that critics say is prone to natural disasters.

Similar:

[Rights group casts doubt on island relocation plan for refugees](#), Mizzima News (27 Oct.)

[Rights group casts doubt on Rohingya island relocation](#), Yahoo! News (25 Oct.)

[Bangladesh: Halt Plans to Relocate Rohingya Refugee](#), Fortify Rights (26 Oct.)

[US senators propose more pressure on Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (27 October)

Five New York State senators, who provide strong support and cooperation to the Bangladeshi diaspora in New York in various matters, paid a week-long visit here from October 20 to 26 to observe the massive development in Bangladesh. "Hopefully, we will talk to our federal representatives to engage more in efforts to put pressure on Myanmar so the Rohingya people can return (to Myanmar)," New York State Senator Luis Sepulveda said.

Similar:

[US Senators mull more pressure on Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation](#), The Daily Star (27 Oct.)

[Singapore to take up Rohingya issue at ASEAN Summit](#), Prothom Alo English (25 October)

Singapore Foreign Minister Vivian Balakrishnan said his country would raise the Rohingya issue at the 35th ASEAN Summit that will begin in Bangkok on 31 October.

[Military atrocities 'ruthless' in northern Shan State: Amnesty](#), The Independent Bangladesh (25 October)

Amnesty International has gathered fresh evidence that the Myanmar military is continuing to commit atrocities against ethnic minorities in the north of the country, with civilians bearing the brunt of offensives against multiple armed groups. The conflicts show no sign of abating, raising the prospect of further violations.

Similar:

[Amnesty International Report Says Civilians in Myanmar's War-Torn Shan State Face Human Rights Violations From Both Sides](#), Radio Free Asia (24 Oct.)

[Myanmar reaffirms commitment to working with UN on Rakhine](#), Myanmar Times (25 October)

Myanmar has reaffirmed its commitment to cooperate with UN Special Envoy for Myanmar Christine Schraner Burgener in finding a sustainable solution for the humanitarian crisis in Rakhine State. U Hau Do Suan, Myanmar's permanent representative to the UN, told the UN General Assembly on Wednesday that the country is committed to working with Burgener on the Rakhine crisis. The envoy said the Myanmar government appreciated Burgener's impartiality and constructive engagement in performing her job.

[ASEAN opting out of Rakhine efforts](#), Bangkok Post (25 October)

[op-ed] When ASEAN foreign ministers last met in Bangkok on 31 July and discussed the Rakhine crisis, their conclusions reflected the lowest common denominator of the bloc's membership. Since the foreign ministers'

meeting, Asean has continued to demonstrate that it is not only out of step on the Rakhine crisis, but also that its internal consensus is fraying. Asean as a group is being left behind as others move ahead.

[**Voluntary return of Rohingyas is only solution: PM to NAM leaders**](#), Dhaka Tribune (25 October)

Noting that the Rohingya crisis has the potential to destabilize Bangladesh and beyond, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said the voluntary return of the displaced Rohingyas to their homes in the Rakhine State with security and dignity is the only solution to the crisis.

Similar:

[Voluntary Rohingya, return only solution](#), The Independent Bangladesh (26 Oct.)

[Rohingyas, climate change major challenges for Bangladesh: Hasina](#), Northeast Now (26 Oct.)

[**Suu Kyi accuses Bangladesh of ‘faulty paperwork’ over Rohingya repatriation**](#), Prothom Alo (25 October)

Myanmar state counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi has accused ‘Bangladeshi authorities’ of faulty paperwork over Rohingya repatriation. “...there was some distrust of the Bangladeshi authorities, including over faulty paperwork they prepared for the refugees,” Suu Kyi was quoted to have said in an interview with the Japanese media outlet Mainichi Shimbun.

[**Rohingya crisis: Iran to mount pressure on Myanmar**](#), Dhaka Tribune (25 October)

Iranian President Hassan Rouhani has said his country will work to mount pressure on Myanmar from international side to resolve the Rohingya crisis. “We will work to create international pressure on Myanmar (to resolve the Rohingya crisis),” he said during a meeting with Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at the bilateral booth of Baku Congress Center where the NAM Summit is taking place.

[**US official Stilwell to visit Myanmar Oct 27 – 30**](#), United News of Bangladesh (25 October)

US Assistant Secretary of the Bureau of East Asian and Pacific Affairs, David R Stilwell, will visit Myanmar from October 27-30, apparently to see the situation on the ground in Rakhine State and hold meetings with the representatives of the Myanmar government. This visit is his first to Myanmar in his capacity as Assistant Secretary.

[**US gives the biggest aid package to support Rohingyas**](#), Dhaka Tribune (25 October)

While a request for \$920 million was made to carry on the humanitarian aid for the Rohingyas, so far 60% has come thru, with the most from the United States of America. This year alone, the US gave around \$274 million.

[**Malaysian PM demands trial of atrocities on Rohingya**](#), Dhaka Tribune (25 October)

Demanding trial for the atrocities against Rohingyas in Myanmar, Malaysian Prime Minister Dr Mahathir Mohammad has said Malaysia and other Asean nations would continue to do whatever is necessary to solve the Rohingya crisis. “I think that a genocide was committed against the Rohingyas in Myanmar, and its trial should be held,” he said during a bilateral meeting with Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at Baku Congress Centre in Azerbaijan, on the sidelines of the 18th NAM Summit.

Similar:

[Malaysia, ASEAN Members will work to resolve Rohingya crisis: Mahathir](#), United News of Bangladesh (25 Oct)

[**Rights groups want ASEAN to listen to Rohingya refugees as repatriation fails**](#), The Jakarta Post (25 October)

ASEAN’s failure to help repatriate Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh this year should be a lesson that an inclusive approach would be key to handling the crisis and ensuring the refugees would voluntarily return to Myanmar, rights groups have said. Myanmar is currently working with ASEAN to prepare for a safe, dignified and voluntary return of hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims who fled to Bangladesh to avoid persecution since 2017.

[**Myanmar Objects to Bangladeshi Minister’s Remarks Over Rohingya at NAM Meeting**](#), The Irrawaddy (25 October)

International Cooperation Minister U Kyaw Tin strongly objected to Bangladesh’s labeling of the Rakhine issue as ethnic cleansing and genocide during a ministerial meeting of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Baku.



[**US wants Rohingya relocation to Bhashan Char postponed**](#), Prothom Alo English (24 October)

Appreciating the country for opening its borders to huge Rohingya refugees, the United States has urged Bangladesh to “postpone” its Rohingya relocation plan to Bhashan Char until independent experts can determine it a suitable location.

Similar:

[US wants postponement of Rohingya relocation to Bhashan Char](#), The Daily Star (24 Oct.)

[Postpone Rohingya relocation plan](#), The Daily Star (25 Oct.)

[US asks Bangladesh to postpone relocation of Rohingyas to Bhashan Char](#), DD News (24 Oct.)

[US for halting relocation to Bhashan Char](#), The Independent Bangladesh (25 Oct.)

[US wants BD to postpone Rohingya relocation to Bhashan Char](#), The New Nation (25 Oct.)

[**Myanmar’s UN Ambassador Rejects Damning Rohingya Rights Report**](#), The Irrawaddy (24 October)

Myanmar’s ambassador to the United Nations has rejected the recommendations of the UN Special Rapporteur and the UN fact-finding mission about human rights violations. Ambassador U Hau Do Suan accused Special Rapporteur Yanghee Lee of making several comments that lacked objectivity and disregarded the sentiments of Myanmar’s people.

[**Syed Hamid calls on government to sign UN Refugee Convention**](#), Malaysia Kini (24 October)

Former law minister and foreign minister Syed Hamid Albar has called for Malaysia to sign the UN Convention relating to the status of Refugees. According to him, Malaysia has a long history of assisting refugees. However, the assistance has thus far been ad-hoc and the Malaysian legal framework still does not provide legal status to refugees. "The lack of legal recognition means that refugees in Malaysia live in a legal vacuum; they are treated like undocumented migrants, denied access to basic services and legal work rights and left vulnerable to arrest, detention and deportation back to the war-torn countries from which they have fled," said Syed Hamid.

[**Rohingya crisis redraws fault lines in Myanmar politics**](#), Nikkei Asian Review (24 October)

The Rohingya crisis that has infuriated many abroad has defied Myanmar State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi's efforts to resolve it, in part because of an unusual alignment of the public and the military that leaves her with few options.

[**Rohingya crisis: 1982 citizenship law needs reform, UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy tells UNGA**](#), Dhaka Tribune (24 October)

Christine Schraner Burgener, UN Special Envoy for Myanmar, has said that the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, which denies Rohingya population citizenship, is in need of reform, as it fails to meet international legal standards related to non-discrimination, and prevention of statelessness. In response, the representative of Myanmar said that the citizenship of Rohingyas will be granted in accordance with the 1982 citizenship law, and verified returnees will receive a national verification card upon their arrival at the reception centre after biometric data is taken.

[**Suu Kyi calls for more cooperation to repatriate Rohingya refugees: Mainichi Interview**](#), The Mainichi (24 October)

Myanmar cannot resolve the Rohingya refugee crisis on its own, but needs cooperation, especially from neighboring Bangladesh, Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi said. "It's not enough for us to get everything ready" for the refugees' return, stated Suu Kyi. "Bangladesh also has to implement their part of the bargain."

[**UN human rights expert calls for targeted sanctions on Myanmar**](#), The Daily Star (24 October)

Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar Yanghee Lee told the UN General Assembly in New York that she sees no discernable improvement to the situation in Myanmar. Lee called for targeted sanctions against the Tatmadaw's companies and its commanders most responsible for serious violations.

[**Repatriation of Rohingya refugees should begin immediately, says foreign minister**](#), Malay Mail (24 October)

Malaysia, concerned with the Rohingya situation, believes repatriation should begin immediately in order to resolve the crisis. Foreign Minister Datuk Saifuddin Abdullah said Myanmar, however, was unable to do this due to the reluctance of refugees to participate in the process.



[Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi scolds world for lacking focus on Rakhine 'terrorists'](#), The Strait Times (24 October)
Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi has bemoaned the lack of global scrutiny on extremism and "terrorists" inside Rakhine state, where her country's army stands accused of committing genocide against Rohingya Muslims. The comments from the Nobel laureate are part of a longstanding defense of the army campaign against the Rohingya, which drove nearly three-quarters of a million of the minority into Bangladesh in 2017.

Similar:

[Suu Kyi scolds world for lacking focus on Rohingya 'terrorists'](#), Free Malaysia Today (24 Oct.)

[Suu Kyi scolds world for lacking focus on Rakhine 'terrorists'](#), Japan Today (25 Oct.)

[Myanmar's Aung San Suu Kyi scolds world for lacking focus on Rakhine 'terrorists'](#), Asia One (25 Oct.)

[Myanmar is 'ready' for the return of Rohingya](#), Bangkok Post (24 October)

[op-ed] Myanmar wants the Rohingya refugees to return, and preparations have been made to receive them, according to the minister in charge of the process. But many experts and analysts following developments in Rakhine believe the Myanmar government is in a state of denial, and that conditions in the Rohingya's home state are not yet ready for their safe return.

[Suu Kyi: Myanmar constitution must change for 'complete democracy'](#), Nikkei Asian Review (23 October)

In an interview, Myanmar's State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi said amending the constitution is needed for Myanmar to transition to a "complete democracy," but is unlikely to happen before next year's election. De facto leader called the Rohingya crackdown a response to a 'terrorist attack', and expressed her disappointment that the international community has ignored the "terrorist element of the problems in Rakhine".

['Refer to ICC or establish international tribunal to ensure justice for Rohingyas'](#), Dhaka Tribune (23 October)

United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, has urged the international community to refer the entire situation to the International Criminal Court, or set up an international tribunal to ensure justice and non-recurrence. She also called for imposing targeted sanctions against the companies run by the Myanmar military and its commanders most responsible for serious violations.

[Hold perpetrators to account to stop recurrence: FM on Rohingya crisis](#), BDNews24 (23 October)

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has urged the international community to hold the perpetrators of the Rohingya crisis to account, in order to prevent future incidents. "If we do not want to see a recurrence of the Rohingya crisis we should hold the perpetrators accountable," he told the NAM ministers ahead of the 18th Summit of Heads of State and Governments of the Non-Aligned Movement in Baku on Wednesday.

['Keep in touch with Myanmar to solve Rohingya crisis'](#), The Daily Star (23 October)

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has expressed dissatisfaction over the Rohingya repatriation issue and has urged the international community to keep in touch with Myanmar to reach a solution to the crisis. "Myanmar has not taken back any of the Rohingyas till date despite giving the commitment to ensure conducive environment in its Northern Rakhine State," Momen said today while addressing a preparatory ministerial meeting of the 18th Summit of Heads of State and Government of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) in Baku the capital of Azerbaijan.

[The roots of Myanmar's Rohingya crisis](#), The Daily Star (23 October)

[op-ed] The UN General Assembly in New York just ended recently, and while there was much talk of the Rohingya crisis—including important discussions on ongoing efforts to hold perpetrators of genocide accountable—the root of the crisis in Myanmar continues to receive inadequate attention: the denial of citizenship rights of Rohingya in Myanmar. Myanmar has denied Rohingya Muslims citizenship for decades, and unsurprisingly, Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh who fled genocidal violence in Myanmar in 2016 and 2017 say they will not return to their homeland in Rakhine State without restored citizenship.



[Pragmatism, not politics, the best way forward for Rohingya repatriation](#), Frontier Myanmar (23 October)
[op-ed] All stakeholders in the plight of the Rohingya stuck in camps in Bangladesh will need to show pragmatism, and spurn political maneuvering, if the refugees are to have any chance of returning home.

[UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar calls on UN Member States to remain vigilant in the face of the continued threat of genocide](#), Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (23 October)
The head of the UN Independent International Fact-Finding Mission on Myanmar, Marzuki Darusman, has told the General Assembly that Myanmar is failing in its obligations under the Genocide Convention to prevent, to investigate and to enact effective legislation criminalizing and punishing genocide. The harsh persecution of the Rohingya community in Myanmar continues unabated. The treatment of some 600,000 Rohingya remaining in Rakhine State is largely unchanged. Their situation has worsened, as they endure another year subjected to discrimination, segregation, movement restrictions and insecurity, without adequate access to livelihoods, land, basic services, including education and health care, or justice for past crimes committed against them by the Tatmadaw. This makes the return to Rakhine State of close to one million Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh simply impossible

Similar:

[UN mission head says risk of genocide recurring in Myanmar](#), The Washington Post (22 Oct.)
[UN mission head sees risk of Rohingya genocide recurring in Myanmar](#), The Japan Times (23 Oct.)
[Rohingyas in Rakhine: UN sees risk of genocide recurring](#), The Daily Star (24 Oct.)
[UN mission head says risk of genocide recurring in Myanmar](#), Associated Press News (22 Oct.)

[Bangladesh finds Myanmar's claim regarding 29 Rohingya repatriation as propaganda](#), Dhaka Tribune (22 October)
The Myanmar Embassy in Dhaka, in a Facebook post, claimed that 29 more displaced Rohingyas went back to Myanmar from Bangladesh, on their own volition, through the Taung Pyo Letwe Reception Center. However, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Md Mahbub Alam Talukder told Dhaka Tribune that it is a false propaganda by Myanmar.

Similar:

[29 Rohingya Refugees Voluntarily Return to Rakhine](#), The Irrawaddy (23 Oct.)
[Twenty-nine refugees return to Rakhine from Bangladesh: government](#), The Myanmar Times (23 Oct.)
[Only 29 Rohingya refugees repatriated](#), Asia News International (24 Oct.)

[French film exposes roots of crime against Myanmar's Rohingya](#), Radio France International (21 October)
Two years after hundreds of thousands of Myanmar's Muslim ethnic minority were forced to flee in a military-led crackdown, a new film called Mechanics of a Crime reveals their persecution was premediated. It comes as thousands of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh agreed to be relocated to Bhashan Char island.

[Bangladesh – Meeting between Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne and Abul Kalam Abdul Momen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh](#), France Diplomatie (21 October)

Jean-Baptiste Lemoyne, Minister of State attached to the Minister for Europe and Foreign Affairs, met this morning with Abul Kalam Abdul Momen, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bangladesh, during his visit to France. This meeting provided an opportunity to discuss French-Bangladeshi trade relations, the situation of the Rohingya as well as climate change issues.

[Abe calls on Suu Kyi to ensure Rohingya can return to Myanmar](#), The Mainichi (21 October)
Prime Minister Shinzo Abe has urged Myanmar's leader Aung San Suu Kyi to create an environment in her country that will allow Rohingya Muslim refugees to return from Bangladesh.

Similar:

[Japanese Prime Minister Shinzo Abe Urges Swift Repatriation of Rohingya](#), Radio Free Asia (21 Oct.)
[Abe urges State Counsellor to allow refugees to return](#), Mizzima News (23 Oct.)
[Japanese PM Urges Military, Govt to Address Rights Issues in Rakhine](#), The Irrawaddy (21 Oct.)



[Bangladesh foreign minister: 'We're balancing our ties with China and India'](#), Deutsche Welle (21 October)
[video] Bangladesh's Foreign Minister A. K. Abdul Momen spoke about the Rohingya repatriation to Myanmar as well as his country's ties with China and India. He said his country wants to maintain good relations with everyone.

[Bangladesh Official: Rohingya Families Will Move to Bhashan Char](#), Radio Free Asia (21 October)
A group of Muslim-minority Rohingya refugees have agreed to leave their camps in the Cox's Bazar region and move to an isolated island in the Bay of Bengal as part of a government relocation program to address overcrowding, an official said. Enamur Rahman, the state minister in charge of disaster management and relief, said 350 Rohingya families or about 3,000 people have responded positively to the government's request that they relocate to Bhashan Char by early November.

Similar:

[Bangladesh to start moving 100,000 Rohingya to flood-prone island next month](#), The Japan Times (21 Oct.)

[Ignoring human rights activists, Bangladesh to start relocating Rohingyas to flood-prone island from early November](#), OpIndia (21 Oct.)

[Rohingya Refugees Agree to Move to Bangladesh Island](#), Newsweek Pakistan (21 Oct.)

[4,000 Rohingyas in Bangladesh camps agree to go to Bhasan Char](#), New Age Bangladesh (22 Oct.)

[Bangladesh to start relocating some Rohingya to island soon](#), Star Tribune (22 Oct.)

[Rohingya refugees agree move to Bangladesh island: official](#), Mpumalanga News (22 Oct.)

[Bangladesh to start relocating some Rohingya refugees to island in late November, December](#), The Globe and Mail (22 Oct.)

[Rohingya refugees agree to relocate to newly-built camp in Bangladesh](#), DD News (21 Oct.)

[Rohingya return urgent: Mustafa](#), New Age Bangladesh (21 October)

While addressing a roundtable discussion on refugee affairs at the World Bank headquarters in Washington DC on the sidelines of the Annual Meetings of the World Bank and the IMF, Finance minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said that there is no alternative to the repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas to Myanmar.

[Facebook, the Rohingya, and internet blackouts in Myanmar](#), The Interpreter (21 October)

The role of social media, particularly Facebook, in facilitating hate speech and spreading information in countries such as Myanmar has undermined assertions by Facebook CEO Mark Zuckerberg that his platform promotes "well-being." Nevertheless, the UN has argued that internet access is a "key means" by which individuals can exercise their right to freedom of opinion and expression. This makes internet blackouts a significant human rights issue around the world and as the world becomes more connected, they are becoming more common. Not surprisingly, the Rohingya, Myanmar's perpetually oppressed ethnic minority, are now facing internet restrictions on both sides of the Myanmar-Bangladesh border.

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/>