

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

October 28 - November 3, 2019



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
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Highlights:

Camp Conditions:

- The Bhashan Char housing project is complete and ready to accommodate 1-lakh Rohingya refugees, but the relocation is uncertain after Bangladesh authorities failed to gain support for the plan from UN agencies.

High-level Statements:

- UN Secretary General António Guterres said Myanmar was responsible for ensuring a conducive environment for the safe, voluntary and dignified return of Rohingya refugees currently residing in Bangladesh.
- Responding to the UN Secretary General's remarks on the Rohingya issue, State Counselor Aung San Suu Kyi said the Myanmar government will not shirk from its responsibility and reaffirmed that the country will work with friends who approach the issue in a "practical and balanced way."

Accountability:

- Rohingya victims from the village of Tula Toli have submitted a victim statement to the ICC, requesting the case be allowed forward.

Developments:

[On Rohingya, Myanmar Will Not Shrink From Responsibility: Suu Kyi](#), The Irrawaddy (Nov. 4)

Responding to the UN Secretary General's remarks on the Rohingya issue, State Counselor Daw Aung San Suu Kyi said the Myanmar government will not shirk from its responsibility and reaffirmed that the country will work with friends who approach the issue in a "practical and balanced way." She added that the Myanmar government was fully committed to taking back verified returnees based on the bilateral agreement signed with Bangladesh and the trilateral agreement signed with the UNHCR and UNDP. She also expressed her appreciation to ASEAN, the ASEAN Secretariat and the ASEAN Coordinating Center for Humanitarian Assistance on Disaster Management for their assistance on the issue.

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

A speedy, safe and sustainable return of the Rohingya refugees sheltered in Bangladesh is in the interest of the region, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said when he met Myanmar State Counsellor Aung San Suu Kyi.

[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 camps. 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 camps.

[United Nations chief urges Myanmar to resolve Rohingya crisis, work on repatriation](#), Global News (November 3)
UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has expressed concern over the plight of the 730,000 Muslim Rohingya refugees from Myanmar's Rakhine state, calling on Myanmar's government to take responsibility by dealing with the "root causes" of their flight to Bangladesh and working toward their safe repatriation.

Similar

[UN chief urges Myanmar to ensure 'safe' return of Rohingya](#), France24 (Nov. 3)

[UN Chief Urges Myanmar to Resolve Rohingya Refugee Crisis](#), TIME (Nov. 3)

[UN chief urges Myanmar to resolve Rohingya crisis](#), Minneapolis Star Tribune (Nov. 3)

[Photo album on Rohingya refugees unveiled](#), Dhaka Tribune (November 3)

A photo album on Rohingya people titled 'Rohingya: the stateless refugees in Bangladesh' by Bayazid Akter was unveiled at an event at the Bangladesh National Museum in Dhaka. Prolific photo journalist Bayazid Akter took the varied images of the forcibly displaced Rohingya people; this is his 7th solo photography exhibition. Addressing the event, UGC Chair Kazi Shahidullah described Bayazid Akter's work as a piece of art, and emphasized that these captivating images have meticulously depicted the life of Rohingya people. He added that every single image of the photo album has a story to tell, and it will raise awareness among the international community to secure basic rights for stateless people.

[Reducing the cost of migration should be prioritized](#), The Daily Star (November 3)

Switzerland's Ambassador to Bangladesh, Dr. René Holenstein, recently shared his views on migration and the Rohingya crisis. Switzerland has been working in the area of migration in Bangladesh for some 10 years, knowing it is very important for the country's economy and people.

[Bangladesh Rohingya Island Relocation 'Uncertain' after UN Doubts](#), Voice of America (November 3)

Bangladesh said plans to relocate thousands of Rohingya living in overcrowded refugee camps to a remote island were "uncertain" after authorities failed to gain support from UN agencies.

Similar:

[Bangladesh Rohingya island relocation 'uncertain after UN doubts](#), France 24 (Nov. 3)

[Jaishankar: India remains supportive to resolve Rohingya crisis](#), Dhaka Tribune (November 3)

India has reiterated its "supportive" approach towards Bangladesh's efforts to resolve the Rohingya crisis that poses multidimensional challenges for Bangladesh and beyond. In a recent letter written to Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen, his Indian counterpart Dr S Jaishankar mentioned that the "safe, speedy, and sustainable" return of displaced persons to Myanmar is in the best interests of all concerned.

[Foreign minister seeks Indian support to resolve Rohingya crisis](#), Dhaka Tribune (November 3)

Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen has sought Indian cooperation in order to take steps for mounting strong pressure on Myanmar to resolve the Rohingya crisis while addressing the concluding session of India-Bangladesh Friendship Dialogue.

[ASEAN leaders to do more for Rohingya refugees](#), NHK (November 2)

Leaders of ASEAN have agreed to do more to help resolve the issue of Rohingya refugees. Diplomatic sources say the leaders agreed to increase the bloc's involvement to assist Myanmar's government in repatriating the refugees and providing them with humanitarian support. ASEAN has been refraining from harshly criticizing Myanmar based on the bloc's principle of not interfering in member nations' internal affairs. But some members were urging the bloc to do more concerning the issue as there has been little progress in efforts to repatriate the refugees for the past two years.



Similar:

[Asean must lead in Rakhine crisis](#), Bangkok Post (Oct. 30) [op-ed]

[The refugee camp in Bangladesh – two years after displacement](#), Swiss Peace (November 1)

A large number of displaced persons sought refuge in Bangladesh in 2017 from the violence in Myanmar. The Swiss Red Cross (SRC) has been active in Bangladesh for almost 50 years and has also been in Cox's Bazar since 2017. In an interview with Swiss Peace Benedikt Kaelin, Program Officer for Bangladesh at the SRC, talks about the lives of people in the camps and assesses how they can move forward.

[Nearly 400 refugees return to Myanmar from Bangladesh, embassy says](#), Mizzima (November 1)

Around 400 Rohingya refugees have voluntarily returned to Myanmar from Bangladesh, Myanmar's embassy there said, but with previous repatriation attempts having failed, Dhaka was yet to verify the claim. Myanmar's embassy posted photos on Facebook that purported to show "46 more voluntary returnees" being "warmly received" in Myanmar, taking the total number going back to 397 in an unspecified timeframe.

Similar:

[More northern Rakhine refugees return home](#), Myanmar Times (Nov. 1)

[Nearly 400 Rohingya return to Myanmar from Bangladesh, embassy says](#), Eastern Eye (Oct. 31)

[Bangladesh to verify Myanmar's claim of 'voluntary' Rohingya repatriation](#), The Daily Star (October 31)

Bangladesh will verify Myanmar's claim over voluntary return of some Rohingyas to Myanmar as the country keeps spreading misleading information to the international community to avoid repatriation. "We'll issue a press statement after verifying the claim," Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen told reporters.

Similar:

[Bangladesh to verify Myanmar's claim over 'repatriation of 400 Rohingyas'](#), Prothom Alo (Oct. 31)

[Prove Rohingyas have returned: Bangla](#), Telegraph India (Nov. 2)

[CPJ arranges peace, civic learning course for Rohingyas](#), Dhaka Tribune (October 31)

The Centre for Peace and Justice (CPJ) of Brac University, and BRAC have jointly conducted a six-month long peace and civic learning course for Rohingyas. This project promoted peace, tolerance, and social cohesion among young volunteers by introducing peace and civic learning activities. The ending ceremony of the course took place at Ukhia's Kutupalong refugee camp in Cox's Bazar this week. In the graduation ceremony, CPJ and BRAC awarded completion certificates to 56 Rohingya and host community youth volunteers.

[Rohingya crisis: Bangladesh asks Europe to curb Myanmar's GSP privilege](#), Bdnews24 (October 31)

Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has urged European countries to use the GSP (Generalized System of Preferences) trade privilege as a tool against Myanmar in a bid to resolve the Rohingya crisis. Momen said "it looks odd that you always talk about human rights and humanitarian approaches and yet you are doing business and giving the GSP privilege to the country that committed genocide according to you and the UN."

[Facebook a 'megaphone for hate' against India's minorities](#), AlJazeera (October 30)

Facebook is failing to rein in a "tsunami" of hate posts inflaming ethnic tensions in India's Assam state, campaign group Avaaz has said, with content about "criminals", "rapists", "terrorists" and "dogs" shared almost 100,000 times. Avaaz said the dehumanising language - often targeting India's Bengali Muslims - was similar to that used on Facebook about Myanmar's Rohingya before an army crackdown and ethnic violence forced 700,000 Rohingya to flee in 2017 to Bangladesh. A Facebook spokesman said the company was proactively removing 65 percent of hate speech before it was reported globally, and that its content reviewers, working in at least nine Indian languages, were rigorously trained to "catch harmful content".



Similar:

[Facebook Has Become a 'Megaphone for Hate' Against Muslims in India, Vice \(Oct. 29\)](#)

[Facebook Failed The Rohingya In Myanmar. Now It May Be Repeating Its Mistakes In Assam, BuzzFeed News \(Oct. 28\)](#)

[Facebook Was Used to Incite Violence in Myanmar. A New Report on Hate Speech Shows It Hasn't Learned Enough Since Then, TIME \(Oct. 29\)](#)

[Bangladesh to Regulate Facebook, YouTube Users, Minister Says](#), Benar News (October 30)

The Bangladesh government plans to require its citizens to obtain licenses to use social media platforms such as Facebook and YouTube, and has already installed software giving it the ability to remove online content, Telecommunications Minister Mustafa Jabbar told BenarNews. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's government has already faced criticism over a vaguely-worded Digital Security Law introduced in 2018. A Facebook spokeswoman did not immediately reply to a BenarNews email seeking comment.

[Asean must lead in Rakhine crisis](#), Bangkok Post (October 30)

[op-ed] Southeast Asia's leaders are expected to discuss the issue of Rohingya refugees and ways of enhancing Asean's role in facilitating the voluntary repatriation process at their regional summit in Bangkok later this week. As this year's Asean chair, Thailand has a critical leadership role to play in supporting durable solutions for Rohingya displaced in Myanmar as well as for those living in exile as refugees in Bangladesh and across the region. This must include prioritising refugee participation in decision-making. Thailand's leadership is needed to ensure Asean supports Myanmar to return to the table and continue consultations with refugees. Myanmar must also show tangible progress towards meeting basic requirements, including ensuring equal rights, that would support eventual return in line with refugees' priorities and international standards.

Similar:

[Asean must take a stand for the Rohingya](#), The Straits Times (Oct. 29)

[Inside the world's biggest refugee camp](#), CNN Philippines (Nov. 1)

[Dhaka awaits UN approval before relocating Rohingya to new home](#), Arab News (October 30)

Despite all preparations being in place, Bangladesh's government said that it was waiting for a "green signal" from UN agencies to begin relocating the Rohingya to Bhasan Char, an island in the Bay of Bengal. At a cost of nearly \$275 million, Bangladesh has built several hundred barracks, cyclone centers, community hospitals and mosques on the floating island where refugees will be able to earn a living by working in the agriculture, cattle breeding and fishing sectors. Several human rights agencies and the US have urged Bangladesh to postpone the Rohingya relocation plan "until independent experts can determine that it is a suitable location" as the island is remote and prone to devastation from cyclones.

[Bhashan Char project ready to house 1 lakh Rohingyas: Navy](#), The Daily Star (October 30)

The Bangladesh Navy has informed a parliamentary standing committee that the Bhashan Char housing project in Hatia upazila is complete and is ready to accommodate 1 lakh Rohingya refugees. Under the project, necessary infrastructure to secure the Bhashan Char island has also been constructed. The government, earlier on several occasions, said it is planning to relocate Rohingya refugees in Bhashan Char. The idea, however, has been met with criticism from different quarters.

[Bangladesh: Myanmar misleads int'l community with fabricated info](#), Dhaka Tribune (October 30)

Bangladesh has reacted sharply to Myanmar's persistent campaign to mislead the international community with fabricated information, misrepresentation of facts, unsubstantiated claims and undue accusations. In a statement, Dhaka made it clear that Nay Pyi Taw is doing so to avoid its obligations for the sustained repatriation and reintegration of the forcibly displaced Rohingya in safety and dignity.



Similar:

[Myanmar misleads int'l community with fabricated info to avoid repatriation: Bangladesh](#), United News of Bangladesh (Oct. 30)

[Stop concocted campaign, concentrate on obligations: Bangladesh to Myanmar](#), BDNews24 (Oct. 30)

[Rohingya crisis: Beset by mental health illness](#), Dhaka Tribune (October 30)

In a recent report, the World Health Organization (WHO) says that one in every 5 persons living in areas beset by conflict is having mental health problems. The horrific picture contradicts and overrides the previously published data of 2016 which suggested that one in 16 persons in conflict zones has mental health issues. Aid groups and humanitarian agencies working at the camps and places in Cox's Bazar said the severity of mental illness they have observed is more than what WHO research suggests.

Similar:

[Mental health issues cast doubt on Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (Nov. 3)

[1 in 5 Rohingya Child Refugees Suffer Severe Mental Health Issues](#), Voice of America (Oct. 30)

[QRCS builds capacity of medical professionals in Bangladesh](#), Relief Web (October 30)

Bangladesh health authorities, BDRCS, QRCS, the International Federation of the Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC), and WHO co-organized a training course on basic and safe blood transfusion services, for 120 professionals from health facilities as part of a project to develop the BDRCS field hospital in Cox's Bazar, which hosts around one million refugees from Myanmar, as well as the host community.

Similar:

[QRCS takes part in medical training programme in Bangladesh](#), Gulf Times (Nov. 4)

[WFP Bangladesh: Rohingya Refugee Response | Situation Report #31](#), Relief Web (October 30)

The Executive Board of WFP visited Cox's Bazar from 21-23 October, led by the President, H.E. Hisham Mohamed Badr of Egypt and representatives from Australia, Brazil, Germany, Indonesia, Poland, and Switzerland. They visited programme sites and interacted with beneficiaries to better understand needs and forthcoming challenges to ensure uninterrupted service delivery to the affected population.

[Dhaka denies ARSA militants' presence at Rohingya camps](#), Daijiworld (October 30)

Bangladesh has denied presence of the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) in its territory and accused Myanmar of making hollow promises and unsubstantiated claims regarding the Rohingya crisis. Bangladesh also denied Myanmar's allegation of non-cooperation on Rohingya repatriation, saying no one agreed to return on two previous attempts, as Rohingyas are not assured of safety, security and sustainable livelihoods in Rakhine province.

[Bangladesh to bolster relations with Turkey](#), AlJazeera (October 29)

A Bangladeshi high official has said that bilateral relations between Bangladesh and Turkey is based on a firm and common sentiment of establishing peace and prosperity everywhere. Addressing the 96th anniversary of the proclamation of the Republic of Turkey celebrated in capital city Dhaka, Bangladesh's Health Minister Zahid Maleque said that Turkey has been supporting Bangladesh for a long time in development and peace-building processes. Hailing the friendship between Turkey and Bangladesh, he also said that Turkey has been playing an outstanding role in the Rohingya crisis since the very beginning.

[Atrocities against Rohingyas: Tula Toli victims ask ICC judges to allow investigation](#), Dhaka Tribune (October 29)

A total of 86 Rohingya victims of the Tula Toli massacre carried out by Myanmar military at the end of August, 2017, have asked judges of the International Criminal Court (ICC) to allow Fatou Bensouda, the ICC prosecutor, to launch an investigation into the atrocities against them. In a 32-page submission to the ICC judges, two legal representatives from London also said that the crimes committed against the Rohingyas in Bangladesh should be taken into account for the investigation.

[UAE- Dar Al Ber launches new relief campaign for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh](#), MenaFN (October 29)

The Dubai-based philanthropic and charitable organisation, Dar Al Ber, has launched a new humanitarian campaign to help the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh in cooperation with the competent authorities in both countries. Abdullah Ali bin Zayed Al Falasi, Executive Director of Dar Al Ber Society, said that various types of charitable and humanitarian assistance will be provided to refugees, including health care, medicines, medical equipment and food, customised needs of children.

[Bangladesh's troubling Rohingya relocation plan](#), Asia Times (October 28)

[op-ed] Last week, the Bangladeshi government announced that in November it will begin to relocate up to 100,000 of those more than 740,000 Rohingya refugees to Bhasan Char, a remote island in the Bay of Bengal. The looming relocation to Bhasan Char is only the latest in a series of restrictive measures the Bangladeshi government has imposed on its Rohingya over the past two months. The Bangladeshi government has justified those measures as a response to criminal activity in the camps. Increased Bangladeshi security presence in the camps have posed its own risks to the safety of the refugees who live there. Bangladesh can and should do better by its Rohingya refugee population. However, the plight of the Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh won't significantly improve until Myanmar's government guarantees a safe, dignified and voluntary repatriation of those refugees back to Myanmar.

Similar:

[Rights group casts doubt on Rohingya island relocation](#), Eastern Eye (Oct. 28)

[Bangladesh's Troubling Rohingya Relocation Plan](#), Physicians for Human Rights (Oct. 28)

[Stop the forced relocation of the Rohingya](#), Jewish World Watch (Nov. 1)

[Rohingya repatriation: Bangladesh, Myanmar, China joint mechanism begins work](#), Dhaka Tribune (October 28)

The joint mechanism among Bangladesh, Myanmar, and China, aiming to expedite the repatriation of Rohingya refugees to their homes in Rakhine, Myanmar, has begun its operation, with its maiden meeting held at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs last week, according to diplomatic sources. The second meeting is scheduled for next week.

[Rohingya youth held with 800,000 yaba in Cox's Bazar](#), Dhaka Tribune (October 28)

The Bangladeshi Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) has arrested a Rohingya youth with 800,000 yaba pills in Cox's Bazar. He was arrested from Inani beach area of Ukhiya upazila in the district while he was smuggling the contraband inside Bangladesh through a waterway.

Similar:

[Rohingya man arrested in Bangladesh after \\$5m drug haul](#), AlJazeera (Oct. 28)

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/>