

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

September 2 - September 8, 2019



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Highlights:

Camp Conditions: The government of Bangladesh has shut down telecommunications and mobile phone services, including the internet, for all Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar. The government is also considering restricting the movement of Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar by building a security fence around the camps. These restrictions come following the failed repatriation attempt and mass protests in the camps commemorating the second anniversary of the genocide over the last couple weeks.

NGO Activities:

- Fortify Rights has published a report "Tools of Genocide: National Verification Cards and the denial of citizenship of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar", on the National Verification Cards Myanmar is attempting to force Rohingyas to accept as part of repatriation plans.
- Human Rights Watch has issued two statements this week relating to Myanmar and Bangladesh. The first expresses skepticism regarding Myanmar's recent announcements to prosecute members of the military. The second calls on Bangladesh to end restrictions on Rohingya refugees' freedom of movement and access to the internet and online communications.

High-level statements: Bangladesh has announced it will adopt the United Nations' Palermo Protocol on trafficking. Bangladesh has come under criticism for its failure to prevent and investigate several potential crimes of forced labor and trafficking against Rohingya refugees.

Country Visits: The Foreign Minister of Australia, Marise Payne, visited Dhaka and Cox's Bazar this week.

Developments:

[Malloch Brown: No quick-fix to Rohingya problem](#), Dhaka Tribune (8 September)

At a symposium on the relevance of the UN to Bangladesh in Dhaka, former Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations Lord George Mark Malloch Brown urged the international community to put pressure on Myanmar to resolve the issue, stating that there is no quick fix to the Rohingya crisis.

[Cox's Bazar pvt university suspends 'Rohingya girl'](#), United News of Bangladesh (8 September)

Cox's Bazar International University has suspended the studentship of a girl following media reports that she belongs to the Rohingya community. Dr Abul Kashem, Vice Chancellor of the university, said the authorities have decided to suspend the LLB (Hons) student Rahima Akhter alias Rahi Khushi following media reports identifying her as a Rohingya girl. A three-member probe committee was formed to investigate the matter.

Similar:

[Bangladesh university suspends student for being Rohingya](#), Yahoo! News (8 Sept.)

[China's fast-track solutions in Myanmar fail to take off](#), Bangkok Post (7 September)

[op-ed] The stand-off between Myanmar and Bangladesh over the planned repatriation of tens of thousands of Rohingya refugees continues. But things have just got a bit more complicated with China's intervention. Beijing is now trying to soothe the troubled waters, in part a result of their earlier misjudged involvement, having proposed a trilateral meeting of foreign ministers in New York in the coming weeks -- sponsored by the UN secretary-general -- to try to find a way out of the growing impasse. But China will only succeed if it takes a realistic approach to solving the problems and if the two countries directly involved are really prepared to compromise and not just pay lip service to cooperation. Beijing needs to understand there is a difference between meditating and using their "good offices" to help find a solution -- one that is agreeable and acceptable to all parties involved, including the refugees -- and meddling. Unfortunately, this subtlety seems to have been uncharacteristically lost in translation somewhere along the way.

[Bangladesh: Clampdown on Rohingya Refugees](#), Human Rights Watch (7 September)

The Bangladesh government should end restrictions on Rohingya refugees' freedom of movement and access to the internet and online communications, Human Rights Watch has said. Government restrictions have intensified following the recent failed attempt to repatriate refugees to Myanmar, a large rally by Rohingya refugees, and the killing of a local politician and four refugees.

Similar:

[Bangladesh Takes Steps to Control Movements of Rohingya](#), Radio Free Asia (6 Sept.)

[Bangladesh should end restrictions on movement, internet use of Rohingya refugees: HRW](#), The Daily Star (7 Sept.)

[HRW: Stop clampdown on Rohingya refugees](#), Dhaka Tribune (7 Sept.)

[The troublesome case of Rohingya trafficking](#), Dhaka Tribune (7 September)

Frustrated and desperate, Rohingya refugees are being trafficked abroad through a five-phase system, with locals involved in creating fake documents for the victims, investigators have said. The victims are primarily trafficked to Malaysia, Indonesia, India.

[BGB pushes back 6 Rohingyas in Teknaf](#), Dhaka Tribune (7 September)

Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) has pushed back six Rohingyas, three women and three children who were trying to enter Bangladesh on Friday. They were sent back to Myanmar from the Nayapara border in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf upazila, in the early hours. Earlier, 22 Rohingyas were also sent back by BGB when they were caught trying to enter Bangladesh within a space of two weeks.

[Rohingya man held from Chittagong passport office](#), Dhaka Tribune (6 September)

A Rohingya man has been detained for reportedly trying to get a Bangladeshi passport by concealing his identity. The Rohingya man submitted all necessary documents for the passport, but forged his identity.

Similar:

[Syndicate helps Rohingyas get NID, passports](#), The Daily Star (7 Sept.)

[Why we need to include Rohingya perspectives into response efforts](#), Thomson Reuters Foundation News (6 September)

[op-ed] As we look to improve services for the Rohingya, address mounting tension with the host community in Cox's Bazar, and globally advocate for their rights, international actors should work to elevate the Rohingya's voices and participation in response efforts. Understanding how the Rohingya and host community members perceive their own needs will be paramount to ensuring their short- and long-term well-being.



[**Rohingya crisis: Government to take over all administrative duties in camps**](#), Dhaka Tribune (6 September)

The government has started a process to take over all administrative responsibilities in the Rohingya camps. A Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC) official, and Camp-in-Charge (CIC) Zahid Akhter said that government officials are currently being trained for administrative duties in the camps. RRRC Additional Commissioner Mohammad Mizanur Rahman explained that, as funding to look after the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar is on the decline, UNHCR has asked the Bangladesh government to take over all administrative duties in the Rohingya camps.

[**Australia to play important role in Rohingya repatriation, Marise Payne**](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 September)

During a visit to Bangladesh, the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne, said that Australia would play an important role in Rohingya repatriation.

Similar:

[Australia to continue pressuring Myanmar](#), New Age Bangladesh (7 Sept.)

[**Bangladesh signs up to UN treaty to combat human trafficking**](#), Reuters (4 September)

The government has announced it will adopt the UN Palermo Protocol on trafficking, which provides an international definition and guidelines on how countries should tackle the crime. Bangladesh's decision to adopt an international treaty that binds countries to strict anti-trafficking measures could help it avoid US sanctions.

[**2 NGOs banned for backing anti-Rohingya repatriation campaign**](#), Dhaka Tribune (4 September)

The government has banned operations of two non-governmental organizations in Bangladesh for allegedly financing and instigating an anti-repatriation campaign at the Rohingya refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

Similar:

[Bangladesh bans two aid agencies from Rohingya camps](#), Deccan Herald (5 Sept.)

[**Male rape survivors go uncounted in Rohingya camps**](#), The New Humanitarian (4 September)

Rights groups and aid agencies have documented widespread sexual violence against women and girls as part of the Rohingya purge. UN investigators say the scale of the Myanmar military's sexual violence was so severe that it amounts to evidence of genocidal intent in and of itself. But boys and men were also victims. Researchers who study sexual violence in crises say the needs of male survivors have largely been overlooked and neglected by humanitarian programs in Bangladesh's refugee camps.

[**Rohingya killed in suspected landmine border blast**](#), Yahoo! News (4 September)

A man believed to be a Rohingya refugee has been killed in a suspected landmine explosion along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border. Bangladesh officials have accused Myanmar security forces of planting mines along border areas to prevent the refugees from returning to their villages.

Similar:

[Rohingya Refugee Killed in Suspected Landmine Blast along Bangladesh-Myanmar Border](#), News 18 (4 Sept.)

[**Bangladesh seeks Japan's support for Rohingya repatriation**](#), The Daily Star (4 September)

State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam held a meeting with Japanese State Minister for Foreign Affairs Toshiko Abe on the sidelines of the 4th Indian Ocean Conference. Alam updated Abe on the latest status of the 1 million plus Rohingyas being sheltered by Bangladesh, including Bangladesh's concerns about security at the camps. He underscored that Bangladesh needs the support of Japan for repatriation of the Rohingyas in safety and dignity to Myanmar and to start moving them to Bhashan Char.

Similar:

[International steps needed for Rohingya repatriation: Envoy](#), New Age Bangladesh (8 Sept.)

[US envoy: Myanmar needs to take action for Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (3 September)

US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl R. Miller has said Myanmar needs to take action and create the conditions necessary so that Rohingyas can return to their home in a safe, dignified manner. He said that the international community has stepped up pressure on Myanmar and that the US is working in partnership with Bangladesh to make sure the repatriation can happen as early as possible.

Similar:

[Myanmar needs to take action for Rohingya repatriation: Miller](#), New Age Bangladesh (3 Sept.)

[UN rights investigator on Myanmar lambasts Suu Kyi over Rohingya crisis](#), Channel News Asia (3 September)

Myanmar's civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi has washed her hands of the Rohingya crisis, a United Nations rights investigator said ahead of a meeting between South Korea's President Moon Jae-in and Suu Kyi this week.

[UN Officials, International NGOs acquiesced on NVCs for Rohingya, says report](#), Frontier Myanmar (3 September)

According to a new report released by Fortify Rights, senior UN personnel and some international humanitarian organizations have supported Myanmar government policies against Rohingya Muslims by backing their acceptance of National Verification Cards. The 102-page report, "Tools of Genocide: National Verification Cards and the denial of citizenship of Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar", was released in Bangkok on September 3.

[Myanmar forces Rohingya to accept cards that preclude citizenship](#), Thomson Reuters Foundation (3 September)

According to a new report released by Fortify Rights on September 3, Myanmar authorities are forcing members of the Rohingya Muslim minority at gunpoint to accept identity cards that categorize them as foreigners, stripping them of the chance to become citizens. Myanmar has drawn global condemnation for its treatment of the Rohingya, and Fortify Rights' latest report on the campaign to make Rohingya Muslims accept National Verification Cards is likely to compound concerns about their treatment.

Similar:

['Genocide card': Myanmar Rohingya verification scheme condemned](#), Al Jazeera (3 Sept.)

[National Verification Card: It's a scheme to erase Rohingya identity](#), The Daily Star (4 Sept.)

[Govt will never force Rohingya to go to Bhasanchar: Bangladesh FM](#), United News of India (3 September)

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen has said that the government would never force Rohingyas to go to Bhasanchar from Cox's Bazar. "Our general principle is not to force any issues (to Rohingyas)" he said while interacting with the executive committee members of the Diplomatic Correspondents Association.

[Bangladesh may 'force' 100,000 Rohingya to resettle on uninhabited island](#), Deutsche Welle (3 September)

DW was shown around the facility on Bhasan Char island that the government is building to house Rohingya refugees. DW encountered an eerily quiet city: Rows of identical bungalows made of hollow concrete blocks and steel, clustered around a central courtyard with a pond. There was also a rainwater harvesting system, solar power and biogas facilities. Police posts will provide security — and the Navy said it would soon install 120 cameras to monitor the camp. Despite the government's plans for relocation, the Rohingya do not want to go to the island, citing concerns about flooding and isolation. Foreign Minister Momen has said that the Rohingya "are coming up with problems. Again and again local people are getting killed. We cannot allow that. We need to maintain law and order. To do that, maybe we will force them to Bhasan Char."

Similar:

[Support Rohingya island relocation or leave the country: Bangladesh to UN](#), Daily Star (5 Sept.)

[Bangladesh to UN: Support Rohingya island relocation or leave the country](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 Sept.)

[BTRC asks mobile phone operators to stop services in Rohingya camps](#), Dhaka Tribune (2 September)

The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission (BTRC) has asked mobile phone operators to stop the sale of SIM cards and telecommunication services in the Rohingya camps of Cox's Bazar. The latest move of the BTRC came soon after Posts, Telecommunications and Information Technology Minister Mustafa Jabbar directed the commission to take urgent action to stop mobile phone services in the Rohingya camps, considering state security, for the sake of protecting law and order, and in the interest of public safety. The notice was issued following allegations of mobile phone operators selling SIM cards and providing mobile phone services to the Rohingya community in violation of a government ban.

Similar:

[A Million Refugees May Soon Lose Their Line to the Outside World](#), The New York Times (5 Sept.)

[Bangladesh bans mobile phones for 1 million Rohingya refugees](#), The Economist (4 Sept.)

[Bangladesh bans mobile phone access in Rohingya camps](#), Al Jazeera (3 Sept.)

[Bangladesh bans mobile phone access in Rohingya camps, stunning refugees](#), Japan Times (3 Sept.)

[Bangladesh bans phone access for 1 million Rohingya refugees just in case they sell drugs](#), VICE (3 Sept.)

[Bangladesh cuts mobile access to Rohingya refugees](#), Wall Street Journal (3 Sept.)

[Bangladesh bans cellphone services in Rohingya camps](#), The Washington Post (3 Sept.)

[A Million Rohingya Refugees Are About to Be Cut Off From the World](#), Vice News (6 Sept.)

[Rohingya focus moves to summit](#), Bangkok Post (2 September)

Bangladesh Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen is urging Thailand, as the current chair of ASEAN, to deepen the bloc's engagement in the creation of a conducive environment in Myanmar's Rakhine State, after the second attempt to repatriate Rohingya Muslims stalled last month.

[Head of Bangladesh's Rohingya Relief Agency Replaced Days after Mass Rally at Refugee Camp](#), The Irrawaddy (2 September)

The head of Bangladesh's Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission (RRRC), Dhaka's primary agency assisting the Rohingya who fled to the country from Myanmar two years ago, has been replaced, just days after one of his deputies was transferred for allowing a Rohingya group to hold a mass gathering inside the refugee camp in Cox's Bazar last month.

Similar:

[Mahbub Alam Talukder appointed refugee relief and repatriation commissioner](#), BDNews24 (2 Sept.)

[Australian Foreign Minister Marise Payne to visit Bangladesh](#), Dhaka Tribune (2 September)

The Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Marise Payne, will visit Bangladesh from 3 September to 5 September to attend a ministerial meeting of the Indian Ocean Rim Association (IORA). She will also go to Cox's Bazar. Minister Payne's discussions with leaders of the Bangladesh government will focus on countering violent extremism, growing trade and investment links, promoting the Australian education sector, and addressing the Rohingya crisis.

Similar:

[Australian foreign minister due today](#), The Independent (2 Sept.)

[Australian FM due Tuesday to join IORA conf](#), United News of Bangladesh (2 Sept.)

[AL Delegation: Pressure from China on Myanmar can solve Rohingya crisis](#), Dhaka Tribune (2 September)

Awami League presidium member Abdul Matin Khasru said the party will urge China to mount pressure on Myanmar to solve the Rohingya crisis. Matin further said Bangladesh has sheltered the Rohingya people on humanitarian grounds, but that they will have to go back to their country as Bangladesh cannot afford to keep them forever.

[Rare photos of a Rohingya village, two years after the Myanmar army destroyed it](#), France24 (2 September)

Two Rohingya Muslims living as refugees in Bangladesh recently managed to return to Tula Toli, their former village in Rakhine State. The refugees filmed the ruins of their village, capturing rare images of Rakhine State, which the Burma government has tried to cut off from the rest of the world. When they returned to Bangladesh, the refugees shared their footage with the British Bangladeshi documentary filmmaker Shafiur Rahman, who has been reporting on the Tula Toli massacre since 2017. [The article includes film and photo footage of the village.]

[Rights group skeptical that Myanmar's military seeks justice](#), The Seattle Times (2 September)

Plans announced by Myanmar's military to prosecute soldiers for actions at a village where security forces reportedly killed as many as 400 members of the Muslim Rohingya minority drew skepticism from the New York-based rights group Human Rights Watch. Human Rights Watch has said that the announcement did not indicate a change of attitude by the military, which denies carrying out abuses in a self-proclaimed counter-insurgency campaign two years ago that resulted in more than 700,000 Rohingya fleeing to neighboring Bangladesh.

Similar:

[Rights Group Skeptical That Myanmar's Military Seeks Justice](#), Voice of America (2 Sept.)

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/>