

# Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

September 30 - October 6, 2019



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## Highlights:

### Camp Conditions:

- Bangladeshi troops have been accused of allegedly raping an underage Rohingya girl in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp. The Bangladesh military said it has launched an investigation.
- According to a UNHCR report, nearly 1,600 refugees and asylum seekers sailed the Bay of Bengal and Adaman Sea between January 2018 and June 2019, noting that the journeys resumed after a two-year lapse but have become more deadly than in previous years

### International Support:

- In an UN report circulated to the General Assembly, the UN independent investigator on Myanmar, Yanghee Lee, said it is not safe for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh to return in Myanmar due to its failure to dismantle its system of persecution of Rohingyas.
- Myanmar has rejected an offer by China to facilitate a visit by a group of Rohingya refugees to Rakhine State to investigate the situation there ahead of a possible repatriation from temporary camps across the border in Bangladesh.

### High Level Meetings:

- Prime Minister of Bangladesh Sheikh Hasina visited Delhi this week, where she met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi. They agreed on the need to expedite "safe, speedy, and sustainable" repatriation of Rohingyas.
- Hasina spoke with Deputy Prime Minister of Singapore Heng Swee Keat earlier in the week to discuss support for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh.

## Developments:

[International Conclave on Justice and Accountability for Rohingyas to be held in Hague](#), Dhaka Tribune (6 October)  
The International Conclave to bring focus on the issue of justice and accountability for the Rohingyas will be held in Hague. The Centre for Peace and Justice of BRAC University, Asia Justice Coalition, and the International Institute of Social Studies of Erasmus University Rotterdam will organize the event. The main themes of the international conclave are Atrocity, Accountability, and Justice.

[Unicef, EU launch peacebuilding initiative for adolescents, youth in Cox's Bazar](#), United News of Bangladesh (6 October)

Unicef and the European Union launched a peacebuilding program for 20,500 adolescents and youth from the Bangladeshi and Rohingya communities to strengthen social cohesion in Cox's Bazar. The first centres or "social hubs" for the peacebuilding program were inaugurated in Jamtoli and Shamlapur this week, with three more opening soon.

[Inclusion is key to Rohingya Crisis](#), New Age Bangladesh (5 October)

[op-ed] As a medical humanitarian organization providing health care for the Rohingyas in Malaysia, Myanmar and Bangladesh, the Medecins Sans Frontières witness the daily struggles Rohingya refugees face. In Bangladesh and Malaysia, the Rohingyas do not have refugee status and need some form of temporary legal stay. In Myanmar, they are denied citizenship and treated as foreigners. Statelessness is the root of their vulnerability.

[Myanmar is not safe for Rohingyas to return: UN investigator](#), The Daily Star (5 October)

The UN's independent investigator on Myanmar Yanghee Lee says it's not safe for hundreds of thousands of Rohingya Muslims who fled to Bangladesh to return because Myanmar has failed to dismantle its "system of persecution" of Rohingyas. Lee said in a report to the UN General Assembly that living conditions for the remaining Rohingya in northern Rakhine state "remain dreadful."

*Similar:*

[UN investigator: Myanmar is not safe for Rohingyas to return](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 Oct.)

[Myanmar is not safe for Rohingyas to return: UN investigator](#), DD News (5 Oct.)

[UN investigator: Myanmar is not safe for Rohingyas to return](#), The Washington Post (4 Oct.)

[PM seeks Singapore's cooperation for quick Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 October)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has sought cooperation from Singapore for speedy repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas. "Rohingya is the formidable burden for Bangladesh whereas Singapore has various engagements with Myanmar. Singapore can play a significant role for quick repatriation of Rohingyas," she said when Singaporean Deputy Prime Minister Heng Swee Keat paid a courtesy call on her in New Delhi.

*Similar:*

[Hasina urges Singapore to push Myanmar for taking back Rohingya refugees](#), BDNews24 (5 Oct.)

[Leaders Call for Greater Cooperation in South Asia and Southeast Asia](#), Eurasia Review News (4 Oct.)

[UN Human Rights Commissioner meets Rohingya refugees in Malaysia](#), WION (5 October)

The United Nations human rights chief Michelle Bachelet paid a visit to a school for Rohingya refugees in Kuala Lumpur during a visit to Malaysia. During her visit, Bachelet met with Prime Minister Mahathir Mohamed and other government officials to discuss efforts to protect and uphold human rights in the country. She expressed hope for Malaysia to ratify the UN Refugee Convention saying that refugees should be given access to health care, education and given the right to work.

[Hasina, Modi for expediting efforts for sustainable Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 October)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina and her Indian counterpart Narendra Modi have agreed on the need to expedite "safe, speedy, and sustainable" repatriation of Rohingyas.

*Similar:*

[India, Bangladesh stress safe return of Rohingya refugees](#), Star Tribune (5 Oct.)

[Hasina seeks India's help on Rohingya](#), Times of India (5 Oct.)

[There is need for 'greater effort' to persuade Rohingyas return home: India tells Bangladesh](#), United News of India (5 Oct.)

[Rohingya youths form football team in Japan, appeal for peace](#), Kyodo News (5 October)

As the Rohingya refugee crisis continues far away, the ethnic group's youths living north of Tokyo have formed a football team in a bid to prove peace can be achieved between groups regardless of religion and ethnicity.

[Army HQ forms probe committee over Rohingya girls' rape](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 October)

The Army Headquarters (HQ) has formed a high-level probe committee to investigate the raping of a teenage Rohingya girl by army troopers at the Nayapara refugee camp of Cox's Bazar. The Army HQ took the allegation very

seriously and has promised to give 'exemplary punishment' if the accusations are proven true, said a press statement by Inter Services Public Relations (ISPR) on Saturday.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh Army probing alleged rape of Rohingya girl by troops at refugee camp](#), BDNews24 (4 Oct.)

[Army men accused of raping Rohingya girl at Teknaf camp](#), Dhaka Tribune (4 October)

Bangladesh military yesterday said it has launched an investigation after a Rohingya family accused army troopers of raping a 12-year-old girl in a refugee camp in Cox's Bazar.

*Similar:*

[Bangladeshi soldiers accused of raping 12-year-old Rohingya refugee girl](#), Deutsche Welle (4 Oct.)

[Bangladeshi army accused of gang-raping 12-year-old Rohingya girl](#), The Star Online (4 Oct.)

[Bangladesh army accused of raping Rohingya girl](#), ASEAN Post (4 Oct.)

[Bangladesh troops accused of raping 12-year-old Rohingya girl](#), Gulf Today (3 Oct.)

[Bangladesh troops accused of raping Rohingya girl](#), Channel News Asia (3 Oct.)

[Bangladesh Troops Accused of Raping Rohingya Girl](#), International Business Times (3 Oct.)

[Bangladesh Troops Accused of Raping Rohingya Girl](#), Voice of America (3 Oct.)

[Myanmar Jails 21 Rohingya Caught Traveling to Yangon For Work, Emigration](#), Radio Free Asia (4 October)

A court in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady region sentenced 21 Rohingya Muslims from northern Rakhine state to two years in jail for trying to travel to Yangon and beyond without approved travel documents.

*Similar:*

[Rohingya Jailed After 30 Caught in Myanmar's Ayeyarwady Region](#), The Irrawaddy (4 Oct.)

[Can the refugees ever go home?](#), Dhaka Tribune (4 October)

[op-ed] "Can the refugees ever go home" was a headline in The Guardian newspaper on October 29, 1971, related to Bangladeshi refugees in India at that time, and this is the same question being asked in October 2019 related to the Rohingya from Myanmar. By September and October 1971, those of us who were working with international NGOs in some of the over 900 refugee camps in India had become frustrated with the United Nations and the international community who were still, then, referring to the crisis in Bengal as an "internal problem of Pakistan." With the Rohingya situation, the Bangladesh government is experiencing the same indifference that there was in 1971.

[China offer on repatriation rejected](#), Mizzima (4 October)

Myanmar has rejected an offer by China to facilitate a visit by a group of Rohingya refugees to its Rakhine state to investigate the situation there ahead of a possible repatriation from temporary camps across the border in Bangladesh.

[45 detained Rohingyas sent to jail](#), New Age Bangladesh (4 October)

A Chattogram court has sent 45 Rohingyas, who fled from refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, to jail.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh: Police arrest 45 Rohingyas from Chitagong](#), India Blooms (2 Oct.)

[Myanmar Rejects Rohingya Refugee Visit to Rakhine State to Inspect Conditions for Repatriation](#), Radio Free Asia (3 October)

Myanmar has rejected an offer by China to facilitate a visit by a group of Rohingya refugees to its Rakhine state to investigate the situation there ahead of a possible repatriation from temporary camps across the border in Bangladesh, a senior Myanmar foreign ministry official has confirmed.



[Rohingya repatriation: No third attempt without confirming success](#), Dhaka Tribune (3 October)

Following two failed attempts, Bangladesh will not make a third one to begin the repatriation of hundreds of thousands of Rohingyas sheltered in Cox's Bazar without the confirmation of success, concerned officials said. However, none of them could say as to when conditions may be created to make the third repatriation attempt.

[Smugglers Profit on Host Countries' Hostility Toward Refugees in Southeast Asia](#), The Globe Post (3 October)

[op-ed] The number of refugees in Southeast Asia has significantly dropped within the last year and a half, yet a report released by the UNHCR says refugees are facing an increase in violence and persecution especially when having to leave the country they initially sought asylum in. One example of hostility from a host country is in Bangladesh. One way to decrease these secondary movements is by allowing refugees to become self-reliant within their original country of asylum, said the report. This includes allowing refugees to safely work, own a business, and the ability to move freely within the country.

[Six Rohingya Arrested Without Travel Documents in Magwe](#), The Irrawaddy (3 October)

Four Rohingya men and two teenagers without proof of identity were arrested by immigration officers and the police in Minhla Township of Magwe Region. They were sentenced to two years in prison by Minhla Township Court.

[Myanmar should resolve Rohingya crisis](#), The Daily Star (3 October)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina once again said that the Myanmar government had created the Rohingya problem and they would have to solve it. "Whenever and whatever we've discussed with various countries and international organizations in different forums, all are sympathetic to this issue and all really mean that the Rohingyas are the citizens of Myanmar and they would return to their homeland," she said in a recent interview with Voice of America on the sidelines of the 74th session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York.

[President for putting pressure on Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (3 October)

President M Abdul Hamid has directed Bangladesh Ambassador to China Mahbub Uz Zaman to take steps so that China continues its pressure on Myanmar for the safe and dignified repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas from Bangladesh.

[Rohingya crisis may harm regional peace](#), The Daily Star (3 October)

Dhaka wants to convey a strong message to Delhi that a prolonged Rohingya crisis could heighten instability and hamper peace and development in the region. "India is a good friend of both Bangladesh and Myanmar. It has investments in both the countries. But if the Rohingya crisis prolongs, there may be pockets of radicalization," said Foreign Minister AK Abdul Momen. The PM's tour, the first after her re-election, comes after her visits to China in July and Japan in May. During those visits, Rohingya crisis was one of the main topics of discussion as Bangladesh faces a formidable challenge of sheltering more than 1.1 million Rohingyas.

*Similar:*

[Bangladesh to highlight Rohingya problem in region](#), United News of India (2 Oct.)

[Bangladesh PM in India to sign trade, investment accords](#), Chicago Tribune (3 October)

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina arrived in India for a visit during which she is expected to sign agreements on increasing trade and investment and improving regional connectivity. Hasina is also expected to seek support for her country's plan to push Myanmar to take back Rohingya Muslims who fled violence and repression there in what has become one of Asia's largest refugee crises in decades. Bangladesh is looking for cooperation from India, China and Japan to speed up the process.

*Similar:*

[PM leaves for Delhi tomorrow](#), The Daily Star (2 October)

[Rohingya crisis: 'Dhaka to convey strong message to Delhi'](#), The Daily Star (2 October)

[Rohingya, Teesta may feature in PM's talks with Modi](#), Dhaka Tribune (1 October)



[Rohingya girl sexually assaulted in camp](#), New Age Bangladesh (2 October)

A teenage Rohingya girl was sexually assaulted at Nayapara camp Sunday night, medical officials and Rohingya leaders have said. “We are aware of the reports. In such cases, individuals are entitled to medical, physical and psychological support as well as access to due process. We cannot provide further details on individual cases due to confidentiality, the rights of the individual as well as the ongoing investigation,” said Louise Donovan, spokeswoman for the United Nations high commissioner for refugees in Cox’s Bazar.

[Time is of the essence](#), Dhaka Tribune (2 October)

[op-ed] At the UN General Assembly this year, the representative of Myanmar accused Bangladesh of grandstanding. Kyaw Tint Swe, union minister for Myanmar’s Office of the State Counsellor, boldly proclaimed that pressuring Myanmar to change its laws and policies for minorities will be a “futile exercise.” His speech suggests that Myanmar wants to move at its own pace on democratization. Where does this leave the million refugees in Bangladesh? A lackluster process of reform at the expense of a million stateless people cannot be an acceptable approach. Myanmar should not keep the resolution of disputes between its government and ethnic minorities pending for an indefinite period.

[45 Rohingyas detained from house in Chattogram](#), The Daily Star (2 October)

Law enforcers detained 45 Rohingya men from a house in Sitakunda upazila of Chattogram early in the morning. Further details about the detainees is not known.

[UN-led monitoring a must: experts](#), New Age Bangladesh (1 October)

A well-set mechanism for international monitoring led by the United Nations would be essential for sustainable repatriation of the Rohingya people to Rakhine as Myanmar dismissed the possibility of establishing a safe zone in the country. “Myanmar’s position, according to the statement made at the UN, is not encouraging for resolving the Rohingya crisis,” Bangladesh Enterprise Institute acting president Humayun Kabir said.

[UN: Refugees Sailing from Bangladesh, Myanmar Face Greater Perils at Sea](#), Radio Free Asia (1 October)

Nearly 1,600 refugees and asylum seekers sailed the Bay of Bengal and Adaman Sea between January 2018 and June 2019, UNHCR has said in a report, noting that the journeys resumed after a two-year lapse but have become more deadly than in previous years.

*Similar:*

[Refugee movements in South East Asia decrease, but threats on their journey rise](#), UNHCR (1 Oct.)

[Rohingya refugees continue to risk lives to seek safety: UNHCR](#), Al Jazeera (1 Oct.)

[Refugees, asylum seekers risk their lives in search for safety: UNHCR](#), United News Bangladesh (1 Oct.)

[‘Bilateral approach without powerful underwriting will not solve the Rohingya crisis’](#), The Daily Star (1 October)

[op-ed] Professor Abdur Rob Khan, Dean, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, North South University, engaged in an interview with the Daily Star on the Rohingya crisis, focusing on its resolution, its economic and environmental impacts, and the role of the international community.

[Bangladesh urged to halt Rohingya camp fencing](#), UCA News (1 October)

Rohingya refugees, church officials and rights groups have urged Bangladesh’s government not to go ahead with a plan to increase security at Rohingya camps. The government plans to construct barbed wire fences and guard towers around 30 Rohingya refugee camps.

[Myanmar’s misleading hyperbole at UNGA](#), The Daily Star (1 October)

[op-ed] Myanmar’s minister for the office of the state counsellor, Kyaw Tint Swe’s comment that Myanmar wants to repatriate the Rohingya refugees is preposterous and misleading. Kyaw Tint Swe also said that the country shares “the concern of the international community over the violence that affects communities in Rakhine” and that its “priority now is to expedite repatriation and to create a more conducive environment for verified returnees.” These statements are in complete contrast to the recent report released by a UN fact-finding mission that said the repatriation of





Rohingya refugees who were forced to flee the country by its military remains “impossible”, and the remaining Rohingyas in the country face a “serious risk of genocide”.

[In Myanmar, underground poetry nights build bridges between Rohingya and Burmese writers](#), PRI (1 October)

In June this year, a small group of Myanmar residents crowded around a projector screen in an apartment loft in downtown Yangon, Myanmar’s largest city, to listen to poetry read via video call by Rohingya poet and refugee, Mayyu Ali, who was over 600 miles away in Cox’s Bazar, Bangladesh.

[UN told that Myanmar is ‘prioritizing Rohingya repatriation’](#), UCA News (30 September)

Kyaw Tint Swe, Myanmar’s union minister for the office of the State Counsellor, told the UN General Assembly that repatriation should be implemented in line with a November 2017 agreement with Bangladesh.

[Bangladesh: Halt Plans to Fence-In Rohingya Refugees](#), Human Rights Watch (30 September)

The Bangladesh government’s plans for barbed wire and guard towers around Rohingya refugee camps in Cox’s Bazar violate refugees’ rights to freedom of movement, Human Rights Watch has said. Home Minister Asaduzzaman Khan announced the plan on September 26, 2019, saying it was specifically ordered by Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. While the authorities have a duty to protect camp residents, security measures should not infringe upon basic rights and humanitarian needs. The proposed measures do not meet the standards of necessity and proportionality for restricting free movement under international human rights law.

[Moving Rohingya to Bhashan Char is not the solution](#), Arab News (30 September)

[op-ed] Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina announced a plan to move some of the Rohingya refugees from Cox’s Bazaar to the island of Bhashan Char in the Ganges Delta. Given the population pressures in the refugee camps in Cox’s Bazaar, this seems like a good idea. But Bhashan Char is unstable land emerged from the sea in 2006, it is extremely vulnerable to monsoons, and it will certainly not allow for the development of stable, self-sufficient communities in the long term.

[I want peaceful solution to Rohingya crisis: Hasina](#), United News of India (30 September)

Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said she wanted a peaceful solution to the Rohingya crisis and wanted to evade confrontation with anyone over the issue. “I don’t want to fight with anybody. I want a peaceful solution, because they (Myanmar) are my next door neighbor.” She, however, said if the international community thought sanctions against Myanmar could work to resolve the crisis that could be fine, well and good, “[b]ut I can’t suggest that.”

*Similar:*

[For a peaceful solution, don’t want to fight](#), The Daily Star (1 Oct.)

[A call for action](#), Dhaka Tribune (5 October)

[PM: Myanmar should comply with agreements over Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (30 September)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon Myanmar to take action to ensure the Rohingya’s return, safety and security. She also urged Myanmar to live up to previous agreements made with Bangladesh over the return of refugees.

*Similar:*

[Myanmar should comply with agreements over Rohingya repatriation: PM tells WSJ](#), The Daily Star (30 Sept.)

[The Rohingya crisis can’t stay Bangladesh’s burden, prime minister says](#), The Washington Post (30 September)

[op-ed] About two years ago, Bangladesh let in some 750,000 Rohingya people fleeing a military-led campaign of ethnic cleansing on the other side of the border. Authorities in Myanmar view the Rohingya, a predominantly Muslim minority, as interlopers and noncitizens — a position largely rejected by the international community. Marooned in squalid camps, the Rohingya in Bangladesh face a hopeless situation. Do they contemplate returning home to a country where their political rights will not be guaranteed and threats of violence remain? Or do they remain in limbo in the camps, eking out a bleak existence in a country that is straining under their presence?



[It's a shame for Myanmar, says PM about Rohingya issue](#), New Age Bangladesh (30 September)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said it is a matter of shame and disgrace for Myanmar that its citizens have taken shelter in another country as refugees. The prime minister said Myanmar had created the crisis and it must take its responsibility.

[EU reassures support for Bangladesh until Rohingya repatriation](#), Dhaka Tribune (30 September)

Finance Minister AHM Mustafa Kamal said that the European Union (EU) would support Bangladesh in its global campaign to build an international coalition, and garner public opinion to force the Myanmar authorities to take back the Rohingya refugees.

[Bangladeshi Officials Await PM's Approval For Barbed Wire Fencing at Rohingya Camps](#), Radio Free Asia (30 September)

Bangladesh's army chief has said he expected that his branch would be tasked with erecting barbed-wire fencing around 34 Rohingya refugee camps in and around southeastern Cox's Bazar district, pending approval from Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

[UNHRC vote on Rohingya: Bangladesh's diplomatic failure exposed yet again](#), Dhaka Tribune (30 September)

A September 26 vote on a resolution titled "Situation of human rights of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar" at the United Nations Human Rights Council has once again exposed Bangladesh's failure in diplomacy. Although the resolution was passed by an overwhelming majority, Bangladesh failed to convince any of its neighbors to support it. The draft of the resolution was introduced by Pakistan on behalf of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation and the European Union. The resolution expressed grave concern at continuing reports of serious human rights violations and abuses in Myanmar, against Rohingya Muslims and other minorities.

[Over 20 displaced persons return to Myanmar from Bangladesh](#), Xinhua (30 September)

Some 27 displaced persons have returned to Myanmar from Bangladesh, arriving at a reception camp in Maungtau, Rakhine State, according to immigration authorities. The Myanmar authorities managed their repatriation process, providing them with humanitarian assistance and issuing them national verification cards after interrogation in accordance with immigration and security rules.

*Similar:*

[Twenty-seven refugees return to Myanmar](#), Mizzima (1 Oct.)

[Two more Rohingya men killed in BGB 'gunfight'](#), Prothom Alo English (30 September)

Rohingya men were shot dead in what members of Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) called a gunfight with them in Teknaf of Cox's Bazar early Monday. They were reportedly involved in the narcotics trade.

*Similar:*

[2 'Rohingya drug traders' killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#), The Independent BD (30 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](mailto:advocacy@rsn.ngo). For more information about RSN and our work, please visit <https://refugeesolidaritynetwork.org/>*