

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

September 9 - September 15, 2019



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Highlights:

Camp Conditions:

- As a part of the continuing crackdown on telecommunications in Cox's Bazar, the government of Bangladesh has blocked 3G and 4G service in the area indefinitely, prompting outrage among the Rohingya community and rights groups.
- Heavy monsoon rains have inundated shelters in Cox's Bazar, affecting over half a million children, and prompting WFP to launch its biggest response of the year.

High-profile Statements:

- The UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has said that a new wave of conflict, human rights violations, and displacement, is taking place in Rakhine state, making it harder for the Rohingya to return.
- Both the UNHCR and NGOs have issued statements this week against the government's crackdown on telecommunications in Cox's Bazar.

Accountability:

- The Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar has submitted its first report to the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, highlighting that the voluntary and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar will depend partly on a process of accountability for those most responsible for the crimes that uprooted them from their homes.

Country Visits:

- The US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl Robert Miller and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming visited Cox's Bazar this week, where they inspected camp conditions and met with Rohingya leaders.

Developments:

[Situation may worsen without more funding for Rohingyas, warns WFP](#), Dhaka Tribune (15 September)

The WFP has warned that the situation in regard to feeding hundreds of Rohingyas sheltered in Cox's Bazar could deteriorate 'rapidly' if the adequate funding is not made available. At a regular briefing in Geneva, WFP spokesperson Hervé Verhoosel explained that it costs the food-assistance branch of the global body \$16 million every month to feed almost 900,000 Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar

[US, China envoys visits Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar](#), Dhaka Tribune (15 September)

Delegations from the United States and China, including US Ambassador to Bangladesh Earl Robert Miller and Chinese Ambassador to Bangladesh Li Jiming, have visited the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar. Both delegations inspected the overall condition of the camps and talked to Rohingya leaders.

[UN suggests 'National Authority' to tackle human trafficking challenges in Bangladesh](#), BDNews24 (15 September)
The UN chief in Bangladesh, Mia Seppo, has suggested establishing a “coordination mechanism” such as the ‘National Authority’ to address the human trafficking challenges. She said the government has taken several initiatives to curb trafficking in Bangladesh.

[New EU funding helps WFP provide food assistance to Rohingya refugees and ensure their safety through the monsoon season](#), World Food Programme (15 September)

The WFP welcomes a contribution of EUR 2 million from the European Union for its emergency operation in Bangladesh. The new funding will help WFP sustain lifesaving food assistance to Rohingya refugees, addressing high rates of malnutrition among children and mothers, while protecting them from the monsoon season risks.

Similar:

[WFP: New EU fund to help ensure food assistance for Rohingya refugees](#), Dhaka Tribune (12 Sept.)

[UNHCR: Rohingyas should not be restricted from communicating with relatives](#), Dhaka Tribune (15 September)

In response to journalists’ questions about reported telecommunication restrictions in Cox’s Bazar, the UNHCR has said that Rohingyas sheltered in Cox’s Bazar should not be subjected to any restrictions which stop them from staying in touch with their relatives. In response, the concerned officials of the government of Bangladesh have said that there are no restrictions in place that prevent the displaced people from contacting their relatives.

[16 Rohingyas held while going to Malaysia from Cox’s Bazar](#), The Daily Star (15 September)

Bangladesh Coast Guard members detained 16 Rohingya people, including women and children, while they were trying to go to Malaysia through a river route from Cox’s Bazar. The Rohingyas, who have been living in a camp in Cox’s Bazar for the last two years, were returned to the camp.

Similar:

[16 Rohingyas on illegal Malaysia voyage held](#), New Age Bangladesh (15 Sept.)

[Bangladesh: Internet Blackout on Rohingya Refugees](#), Human Rights Watch (13 September)

New telecommunications and internet restrictions on Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh will disrupt critical humanitarian and emergency services. Officials should not use broad, indiscriminate shutdowns to curtail the flow of information, or to harm people’s ability to freely assemble and express political views. International law guarantees everyone, including non-nationals, the right to freedom of expression.

[Monsoon destroys Rohingya shelters, sparking record UN emergency food agency response in Bangladesh](#), UN News (13 September)

Unusually heavy monsoon rains have inundated shelters in refugee camps in southern Bangladesh, creating “havoc”. The WFP has launched its biggest emergency response of the year for displaced Rohingya families, with 16,000 people receiving food assistance within 24 hours.

Similar:

[Major Effort Launched to Aid Rohingyas Hit by Monsoon Rains](#), Voice of America (14 Sept.)

[Monsoon rains and landslides cause ‘worst impact of year’ on Rohingya refugees](#), UN News (10 Sept.)

[Labour migration equals trafficking in Bangladesh](#), New Age Bangladesh (13 September)

Insufficient prospect for legal migration is leaving a negative impact on the practice of safe migration in Bangladesh. Trafficking is practiced in the guise of labour migration as rackets of traffickers continue to recruit aspirant migrants with the false promise of overseas employment. Despite at least 100 credible reports of forced labour and sex trafficking of Rohingya within Bangladesh, the government did not report investigating or prosecuting these potential crimes, and the Bangladesh High Court did not entertain anti-trafficking cases filed by Rohingyas.

[Every individual has the right to citizenship](#), Dhaka Tribune (13 September)

[op-ed] Today, there is much controversy in our South Asian neighbourhood regarding the protection of human rights. In recent years, most South Asian countries -- particularly India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka -- have seen a grave deterioration of the protection of human rights. The constitutions of South Asian states are imbued with principles of universal human rights and civil liberties. Yet, the reality is a stark contrast to our shared values and commitments for a free and democratic neighbourhood.

[Two more Rohingya shot dead over Bangladesh politician's murder](#), Channel News Asia (13 September)

Two more Rohingya men were shot dead by officers on Friday in a southern Bangladesh border town amid a clampdown on the refugees after the killing of a ruling party official. Police said the pair were accused of the murder of Omar Faruk, a youth wing official of the Awami League party, who was shot in the head by suspected Rohingya criminals late last month.

Similar:

[2 Rohingyas among 3 killed in Tekaf, Kushtia 'gunfights'](#), Dhaka Tribune (13 Sept.)

[Two Rohingyas shot dead in Bangladesh](#), The Hindu (13 Sept.)

[Jubo League leader murder: 2 Rohingya suspects killed in 'gunfight'](#), United News Bangladesh (13 Sept.)

[Save the Children: Over half a million children affected by heavy rains in Cox's Bazar](#), Dhaka Tribune (12 September)

Save the Children has expressed its concern as the week-long heavy monsoon rains in Cox's Bazar have led to landslides and waterlogging, affecting more than half a million children in the Rohingya refugee camps and the host community.

[Rohingya Repatriation Failure: PM blames Myanmar](#), The Daily Star (12 September)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has said Myanmar is dragging its feet on resolving the Rohingya crisis, although it signed bilateral agreements with Bangladesh following pressure from the international community, including the United Nations.

Similar:

[Bangladesh PM blames Myanmar for repatriation failure](#), MalayMail (12 Sept.)

[Rohingya plight worse than ever](#), Bangkok Post (12 September)

[op-ed] Southeast Asia's leaders will come together on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly this month and during the ASEAN Summit in November. ASEAN has been one of the few actors able to engage the Myanmar government since 2017. The region's leaders must show compassion for the Rohingya and push Myanmar to take steps to end the violence, discrimination and persecution that forced out the Rohingya.

[FM: Myanmar government yet to fix date for delegation to visit Rakhine](#), Dhaka Tribune (11 September)

Minister of Foreign Affairs AK Abdul Momen has said that the government of Myanmar is yet to confirm the date to take the Ambassador of Bangladesh and representative of other countries to show Myanmar's preparations for the return of Rohingya refugees from Bangladesh. Momen rejected the Myanmar government's claim that Bangladesh has repeatedly failed the repatriation process, and blamed Myanmar for not ensuring its own people a safe return.

Similar:

[Rohingyas wouldn't be forcefully repatriated: FM](#), The Independent BD (11 Sept.)

[Let Rohingyas return to Myanmar first, they will build hoes themselves: Momen](#), BDNews 24 (11 Sept.)

[Bangladesh, growing tired of hosting Rohingya refugees, puts new squeeze on the teeming camps](#), The Washington Post (11 September)

Bangladesh took in 750,000 Rohingya expelled from Myanmar in a military-led crackdown in 2017. Two years on, facing simmering conflict between natives and the recent arrivals, and after failed attempts to persuade some refugees to return, the host country is running out of patience for the Rohingya.

[3 held for making fake birth certificates of Rohingya](#), The Daily Star (11 September)

Three persons were detained in Narayanganj for making fake birth certificates of Rohingyas so that the refugees can obtain Bangladeshi passports.

Similar:

[Bangladesh detains six for allegedly helping Rohingya forge documents for passports](#), BDNews24 (12 Sept.)

[Six arrested for assisting Rohingyas acquire Bangladeshi passports](#), Dhaka Tribune (12 Sept.)

[Minister: Action taken against Rohingyas for trying to collect Bangladeshi passports](#), Dhaka Tribune (13 Sept.)

[DNCC officials helped Rohingyas manage BD passport: RAB](#), The New Nation (15 Sept.)

[Four Rohingya Muslims deported](#), The Hindu (11 September)

Four Rohingya Muslims, who had served out their prison term for entering India without valid documents, were ordered to be deported to Myanmar. After the Home Department ordered their deportation, a police team escorted them to Moreh, the border town, and handed them over to Myanmar officials.

[Dhaka wants Myanmar to be sincere about Rohingya repatriation](#), United News Bangladesh (11 September)

Saying that Bangladesh will not forcefully repatriate Rohingyas, Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen urged Myanmar to be sincere about the repatriation of these displaced people. "We won't forcefully repatriate or relocate Rohingyas but we hope Myanmar will show sincerity in resolving the issue," he said to reporters after attending a seminar on Sustainable Development Goal 3 arranged by Palli Karma Shahayak Foundation.

[Rohingya women in Bangladesh turn to prostitution](#), Deutsche Welle (11 September)

Life is grim for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh's sprawling camps. They are not allowed to work and are reduced to begging. Many women turn to the sex industry, while others are lured into prostitution abroad by empty promises of jobs and marriage.

[Mobile internet outage in Teknaf and Ukhiya as regulator bans 3G, 4G services](#), BDNews24 (11 September)

The government has blocked 3G and 4G telecom services in Teknaf and Ukhiya, affecting Rohingya refugees and local residents in those areas. The Bangladesh Telecommunication Regulatory Commission earlier ordered mobile phone operators to suspend 3G and 4G services for an indefinite period in Cox's Bazar's Rohingya camps, citing security of the state. The directive will remain effective until further notice.

Similar:

[BTRC suspends 3G, 4G services in Rohingya camp areas](#), United News Bangladesh (11 Sept.)

[No mobile internet in Rohingya camps](#), New Age Bangladesh (11 Sept.)

[The Bangladeshi government cracks down on Rohingya freedom of expression and movement](#), ASEAN Today (12 Sept.)

[Bangladesh Cuts Mobile Internet Access in Rohingya Camps After Failed Attempts to Repatriate Refugees](#), News18 (10 Sept.)

[3G, 4G services restricted in Ukhiya-Teknaf until further notice](#), The Daily Star (10 Sept.)

[Govt cuts mobile internet access in Rohingya camps](#), Prothom Alo (10 Sept.)

[Bangladesh Imposes Mobile Phone Blackout on Rohingya Refugees](#), Democracy Now (10 Sept.)

[BTRC verifying if 3G, 4G still available in refugee camps](#), The Daily Star (15 Sept.)



[14 Rohingyas detained in Chattogram](#), The Daily Star (10 September)

Fourteen Rohingya men, who fled from refugee camps in Cox's Bazar, were detained in Chattogram.

Similar:

[14 Rohingyas held over unauthorized movement in Chittagong](#), Dhaka Tribune (10 Sept.)

[14 Rohingyas detained in Chattogram](#), United News of Bangladesh (10 Sept.)

[Put more pressure on Myanmar](#), The Daily Star (10 September)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina urged Japan, through the outgoing Japanese Ambassador Hiroyasu Izumi, to mount pressure on Myanmar to take 1.1 million Rohingyas back from Bangladesh. The Japanese envoy mentioned that his country's sympathy is always with Bangladesh, and highly appreciated that Bangladesh gave shelter to the refugees. The Japanese envoy also said his country was committed to continuing its long-term support for the overall development of Bangladesh.

Similar:

[PM Hasina urges Japan to mount pressure on Myanmar for Rohingyas repatriation](#), Prothom Alo (9 Sept.)

[PM urges Japan to mount pressure on Myanmar](#), New Age Bangladesh (10 Sept.)

[Rohingya crisis: Villages destroyed for government facilities](#), BBC News (10 September)

Entire Muslim Rohingya villages in Myanmar have been demolished and replaced by police barracks, government buildings and refugee location camps, the BBC has found. On a government tour, the BBC saw four locations where secure facilities have been built on what satellite images show were once Rohingya settlements.

Similar:

[Rohingya crisis: Villages destroyed for government facilities](#), BDNews24 (10 Sept.)

['Inadequate' online birth database 'failing' checks for passports, Rohingya arrests reveal](#), BDNews24 (10 September)

Police, government officials and public representatives have blamed "weaknesses" in the system that are failing checks on data in the online birth database to issue passports as many Rohingya refugees are found to have obtained fake certificates.

['Rohingya return to Myanmar depends on accountability of perpetrators' Says Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar](#), The Daily Star (10 September)

The voluntary and sustainable return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar will depend partly on a process of accountability for those most responsible for the crimes that uprooted them from their homes, said the Independent Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM). In its first report submitted to the 42nd session of the UN Human Rights Council, IIMM's head Nicholas Koumjian said that each day that passes without accountability for international crimes brings concomitant sufferings for the hundreds of thousands of stranded in makeshift refugee camps outside Myanmar.

[August 25 Rohingya rally: Contradictory findings out of two inquiries](#), Dhaka Tribune (10 September)

Two different probes into the mass rally held by Rohingya refugees on August 25 have presented contradictory findings regarding the hows and whys behind the rally. One of the inquiry teams, formed by former refugee relief and repatriation commissioner Abul Kalam did not find any involvement of NGOs operating in the Rohingya refugee camps in instigating the Rohingyas to hold the rally. Another probe committee formed by the district administration of Cox's Bazar, however, named some NGOs, local Rohingya leaders, a number of lawyers, teachers, RRRC officials, and police members who allegedly instigated mobilizing Rohingyas to hold the rally.

Similar:

[Probe report: Instigators of Rohingya mass rally in Ukhiya identified](#), Dhaka Tribune (9 Sept.)



[Bangladesh halts new SIM card sale in Rohingya camps](#), Yahoo! News (9 September)

Bangladesh mobile operators have, on government orders, stopped selling new SIM cards to Rohingya refugees, in a further sign of Dhaka's impatience following the latest failed repatriation move.

[Rakhine experiencing new wave of conflict: Michelle Bachelet](#), The Daily Star (9 September)

Rakhine state is now experiencing another wave of conflict and human rights violations and displacement, making it harder for the Rohingya to return, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet has said. The new round of conflicts between so-called Arakan Army and the Myanmar army and human rights violations is affecting both ethnic Rakhine and Rohingya communities.

[US Backs Dhaka's steps over Rohingya repatriation: Quader](#), New Age Bangladesh (9 September)

US ambassador in Dhaka Earl R Miller extended his country's support towards the steps taken by the Bangladesh government over the repatriation of Rohingyas to their homeland Myanmar. The envoy conveyed the US's support when he paid a courtesy call on road transport and bridges minister Obaidul Quader at his office at the secretariat.

[Bangladesh not to let in Rohingyas anymore](#), Dhaka Tribune (8 September)

Against the backdrop of many incidents, especially the much-talked about August 25 rally, the government has hardened its stand on Rohingyas and decided to fully enforce an earlier decision not to allow any more of them into the country, senior government and Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) officials told Dhaka Tribune. Government officials say it has been the country's policy since months after August 25, 2017, while some call it policy shift due to recent incidents

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/>