

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

February 24 - March 1, 2020



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Highlights:

Camp conditions:

- The Bangladesh government has postponed (and appears to be reconsidering) its plan to move some of the Rohingya living in the camps in Cox's Bazar to Bashan Char island.

Country Visits:

- The German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development, Dr. Gerd Müller, visited Bangladesh this week. His visit involved some high-level meetings in Dhaka and a trip to the camps in Cox's Bazar.

High-level statements:

- Germany has said that it will suspend development cooperation with Myanmar until Myanmar allows the Rohingya to return safely to Rakhine State.
- Cambodia has expressed its commitment to support the safe return of the Rohingya to Myanmar through the ASEAN-led mechanism.

Accountability:

- The Maldives will formally join The Gambia in challenging Myanmar before the International Court of Justice, and has hired prominent human rights lawyer Amal Clooney to represent them before the court.

International support:

- Japan has pledged an additional US\$17m to support the Rohingya and host communities in Cox's Bazar.

Developments:

[Nordic countries eye stronger partnership with Bangladesh](#) Prothom Alo (March 1)

The ambassadors of three Nordic countries -- Denmark, Norway and Sweden -- have promised to have a stronger partnership with Bangladesh with a focus on green growth and increased investment flow to help Bangladesh grow in a faster way. The three countries also laid emphasis on ending the Rohingya crisis through the sustainable return of Rohingyas to their place of origin in Rakhine State safely, reminding Myanmar that the responsibility lies there.

['Myanmar army's clash with insurgents kills 5 Rohingyas'](#) Prothom Alo (March 1)

At least five ethnic Rohingya were killed, including a child, and several injured after troops clashed with insurgents in Myanmar's conflict-torn western state of Rakhine, a lawmaker and two residents have said. Saturday's fighting broke out after Arakan Army rebels attacked a military convoy passing the historic temple town of Mrauk U.

[**Prime Minister Narendra Modi likely to visit Bangladesh in March**](#) Times of India (February 29)

Prime Minister Narendra Modi is likely to visit Bangladesh from March 16 to 18, where he will hold talks with his Bangladeshi counterpart Sheikh Hasina, according to local media reports.

[**UN concerned over rights abuses in Bangladesh**](#) The Daily Star (February 29)

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet expressed concern over the continuing allegations of torture, arbitrary arrests and extrajudicial killings in Bangladesh last year while addressing the 43rd session of the UN Human Rights Council this week. She also called for reforming the Digital Security Act, which was criticised by rights groups and journalists who feared the act would curb independent journalism and freedom of speech. The UN human rights chief encouraged action to strengthen the independence and impartiality of the judiciary and National Human Rights Commission of Bangladesh. She also lauded the country for its commendable record of working with the UN -- particularly in receiving the Rohingya refugees.

[**Police intercept 44 Rohingyas on way to Malaysia**](#) New Age Bangladesh (February 29)

The police intercepted 44 Rohingya refugees and three suspected middlemen in separate raids on different places of Ukhiya and Maheshkhali in Cox's Bazar on Friday. Among the refugees, 28 were captured at Ukhiya and 16 at Maheshkhali. They were planning to reach Malaysia riding fishing trawlers through the Bay of Bengal, police claimed.

[**More Than 2,200 Rohingya Caught Trying to Leave Myanmar by Sea Since 2015: Detainee List**](#) Radio Free Asia (February 28)

Myanmar authorities have apprehended more than 2,200 Rohingya Muslims as they attempted to illegally leave the country by sea since 2015, according to a list of the detainees obtained from a naval officer by RFA's Myanmar Service. Nearly 1,500 Rohingya were detained in 2015, more than 500 were picked up in 2018, and roughly 250 have been apprehended so far in 2019, according to the list provided by the officer, who declined to be named because he is not authorized to give information to the media. The figures do not include Rohingya who fled by land from two military-led crackdowns in northern Rakhine state in 2016 and 2017.

[**Cambodia assures Bangladesh of support on Rohingya repatriation**](#) BDNews24 (February 28)

Cambodian Secretary of State for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation Eat Sophea expressed her country's commitment during a joint commission meeting in Dhaka. "The state minister spoke to me about the proposal that Bangladesh wished to have from Cambodia regarding the repatriation of people displaced from Rakhine state," she said at a joint press conference with State Minister for Foreign Affairs Shahriar Alam after the meeting. "I assured him that Cambodia will extend full support through the ASEAN-led mechanism to provide for safe return of these displaced people," Sophea added.

Similar:

[**Cambodia to support BD within ASEAN framework**](#) The Daily Observer (Feb. 28)

[**Repatriation of Rohingyas: India backs Myanmar, Bangladesh deal**](#) The Daily Star (February 28)

India expressed its support for the bilateral agreements signed between Bangladesh and Myanmar for the repatriation of Rohingya refugees from Cox's Bazar this week, and hoped that both countries would continue to work for their voluntary and speedy return. Without mentioning Rohingyas, a joint statement issued after Myanmar President U Win Myint's talks with Prime Minister Narendra Modi said, "India also expressed its support for the bilateral agreements signed between Myanmar and Bangladesh for the repatriation of the displaced persons from Rakhine state."

[**16 Rohingyas rescued in Cox's Bazar**](#) Dhaka Tribune (February 28)

At least 16 Rohingyas, among whom were six women, were rescued while they were attempting to go to Malaysia through the Bay of Bengal in Moheshkhali upazila of Cox's Bazar. They were sent back to Ukhiya refugee camp and a case was filed with Moheshkhali police station.



[Playing cat and mouse on a Rakhine reporting tour](#) Frontier Myanmar (February 27)

The Annan commission was clear about the importance of unfettered media access to areas of Rakhine affected by violence. Instead of complying with the Annan commission's recommendations and allowing journalists to assess the situation in northern Rakhine themselves, the Myanmar government tries to convey a narrative that reflects its perspective. It wants the world to believe that the Rohingya community is safe – or, if it is not safe, that this is the fault of the Arakan Army. In an attempt to portray its version of the situation to journalists, the Ministry of Information organises tightly planned trips to northern Rakhine that are conducted amid heavy security. Frontier was among the media outlets, along with Al Jazeera, BBC Burmese, Radio Free Asia, state broadcasters MITV and MRTV, and state-run newspapers that participated in such trip in late January. For participating journalists committed to professionalism and the concept of a critical media, these contrived meetings could not have been more bizarre.

[Malaysian field hospital helps control Covid-19 in Bangladesh](#) The Sun Daily (February 27)

The medical team at the Armed Forces' Malaysian Field Hospital in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh has been entrusted to be involved in planning to control the outbreak of Covid-19, especially involving the Rohingya ethnic group. Op Starlight 4 commander, Colonel Dr Shahril Nizam Abd Jalil said he was working with the country's health team to monitor and take the necessary preventive measures to control the outbreak.

Similar:

[M'sian field hospital helps control Covid-19 in Bangladesh](#) Malaysiakini (Feb. 27)

[Some 70 More Rohingya Go on Trial For Trying to Leave Myanmar for Malaysia](#) The Union Journal (February 27)

A court in Myanmar's Yangon area has started listening to testimony in a case against approximately 70 Rohingya Muslims jailed a week ago for trying to leave the nation unlawfully for Malaysia, while the United Nations civils rights body released a record recording historical mistreatment towards the ethnic minority. The group, that includes minors, are being charged with breaking Myanmar's citizenship legislations since Rohingya are prevented from taking a trip without approval as well as because the individuals did not have identification cards, claimed their lawyer Thazin Myat Myat Win.

[UN: Myanmar's Rohingya Subject to Increased Prejudice, Violence](#) VOA News (February 27)

The United Nations says Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar are experiencing an upsurge in violations and abuse fueled by prejudice and hate speech. The U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights submitted a report on the root causes of abuse in Myanmar to the U.N. Human Rights Council in Geneva this week. Commissioner Bachelet urged Myanmar's government to de-escalate xenophobic, discriminatory practices and to promote inter-faith and inter-ethnic tolerance. Myanmar's ambassador to the U.N. in Geneva, Kyaw Moe Tun, said his government's efforts to achieve national reconciliation and peace with ethnic armed groups are advancing. But he added that transforming the country from authoritarian rule into a democratic federal union takes time.

Similar:

[UN to Myanmar: Repeal laws discriminating against Rohingyas](#) Dhaka Tribune (Feb. 27)

[Germany to suspend development cooperation with Myanmar until Rohingya repatriation](#) United News Bangladesh (February 27)

German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Dr. Gerd Muller has announced that development cooperation with Myanmar will be suspended until Myanmar allows the Rohingya to return to their homes in Rakhine State safely. "Myanmar must do all it can to protect the Rohingyas and to facilitate their voluntary return," he said wrapping up his two-day visit to Bangladesh. Muller said the plight of the Rohingyas is turning into one of world's greatest tragedies – second only to that of the Syrian refugees. He said the international community must act much more decisively in this matter, and take a greater interest in the Rohingya's fate. He also said Germany will use its development policy tools to step up its support for the Rohingya refugees and the communities hosting them.



Similar:

[Germany suspends development coop with Myanmar on Rohingya grounds](#) Prothom Alo (Feb. 27)

[German to suspend dev ties with Myanmar](#) The Daily Observer (Feb. 28)

[Germany seeks sustainable solution to Rohingya crisis, full compliance of ICJ order](#) United News Bangladesh (February 26)

German Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Dr. Gerd Muller has expressed his country's firm commitment to a sustainable solution to the Rohingya crisis and Myanmar's full compliance with the recent order of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The German Minister met Foreign Minister Dr. AK Abdul Momen at his Parliament office and discussed the Rohingya issue. Momen requested that Muller consider meaningful measures compelling Myanmar for creating a conducive environment in Rakhine for safe, dignified and sustainable return of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas.

[Bangladesh rethinks plan to move Rohingya refugees to island: minister](#) Reuters (February 26)

Bangladesh is reconsidering a plan to relocate Rohingya refugees to a flood-prone island located hours by boat from its coast, junior minister for disaster management and relief Enamur Rahman has said. "We have not taken a final decision yet, but we're no longer interested in moving them there," Rahman said. Dhaka was instead "focusing instead on a safe, dignified and sustainable repatriation", he added, saying China was actively engaged in talks with Myanmar to expedite this process. The proposal to move 100,000 people to Bhasan Char in the Bay of Bengal to ease overcrowding at camps near the Myanmar border had been opposed by many refugees, and some rights experts had warned it could spark a fresh humanitarian crisis. A United Nations investigator who visited last year expressed doubts whether the island was even habitable.

Similar:

[Bangladesh rethinks plan to move Rohingya refugees to island](#) Gulf Times (Feb. 26)

[Bangladesh Again Postpones Rohingya Refugee Island Relocation](#) The Globe Post (Feb. 26)

[Bangladesh Holds Off on Plan to Move Rohingya to Island](#) Radio Free Asia (Feb. 27)

[Bangladesh again postpones Rohingya refugee island relocation](#) Outlook India (Feb. 26)

[Bangladesh again postpones Rohingya refugee island relocation](#) Channel News Asia (Feb. 26)

[Maldives hires Amal Clooney to fight for Rohingya at UN court](#) Prothom Alo (February 26)

The Maldives has hired prominent human rights lawyer Amal Clooney to represent it at the UN's highest court in seeking justice for Myanmar's persecuted Rohingya Muslims. The Maldivian government has said it will formally join the mainly Muslim African state of The Gambia in challenging Myanmar's 2017 military crackdown that sent around 740,000 Rohingya fleeing into neighboring Bangladesh.

Similar:

[Maldives gets Amal Clooney to fight for Rohingya at UN court](#) Arab News (Feb. 26)

[Maldives gets Amal Clooney to fight for Rohingya at UN court](#) The Jakarta Post (Feb. 26)

[German minister Müller to visit Rohingya camps Wednesday](#) United news Bangladesh (February 25)

German Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and Development Dr. Gerd Müller will visit the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar to see the situation on the ground. The German Minister arrived on a two-day visit to discuss bilateral issues with special focus on RMG sector, trade union and Rohingya situation. The German minister, leading a delegation, is also scheduled to meet Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina at her official residence Ganabhaban. Germany has been providing financial and technical assistance for the development of Bangladesh since 1972, which amounts today to a total of over 3 billion EUR, according to the German Embassy in Dhaka.



Similar:

[German minister set to arrive Tuesday, visit Rohingya camps Wednesday](#) Dhaka Tribune (Feb. 24)

[Japan provides US\\$17m more for Rohingyas, host communities](#) Prothom Alo (February 25)

The government of Japan has decided to extend approximately US\$ 17 million as additional support to Rohingyas and host communities in Cox's Bazar, reports news agency UNB. Since the massive influx of Rohingyas into Bangladesh in August 2017, the government of Japan had granted approximately US\$ 95 million to international organisations and NGOs, said the Japanese embassy in Dhaka on Tuesday. With this additional support, the total amount of assistance has reached to a total of approximately US\$ 112 million. The government of Japan will extend assistance in Cox's Bazar through the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), International Organization for Migration (IOM), UN Population Fund (UNFPA), United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and Empowerment of Women (UNWomen), World Food Programme (WFP) and Japan Platform (JPF).

[PM: Mount more pressure on Myanmar for Rohingya repatriation](#) Dhaka Tribune (February 25)

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has called upon the international community, including Germany, for mounting more pressure on the Myanmar government to take back its Rohingya nationals from Bangladesh. "Rohingyas are a huge burden for us and they are creating social problems. Myanmar should take back its nationals from Bangladesh immediately," she said. The prime minister also particularly requested Germany to play role further in repatriation of the forcibly displaced Rohingyas, reports BSS. The prime minister made the remarks when visiting German Federal Minister of Economic Cooperation and Development Dr. Gerd Muller paid a courtesy call on her at her official Ganabhaban residence in Dhaka on Tuesday evening.

Similar:

[Rohingyas are a huge burden for us: PM Hasina](#) Prothom Alo (Feb. 25)

['Human trafficker' killed in 'gunfight'](#) The Daily Star (February 24)

An accused in three human trafficking cases was killed in an alleged gunfight with police in Cox's Bazar's Teknaf earlier yesterday. The deceased -- Abdus Salam, 30, from Noakhalipara in Teknaf -- was one of the main accused in a human trafficking case filed after a trawler capsized near St Martin's Island, which killed at least 21 Rohingya refugees recently.

[Angelina Jolie lauds Bangladesh's generosity to Rohingya refugees](#) The Daily Star (February 24)

American actress, filmmaker, and humanitarian Angelina Jolie has lauded Bangladesh for the generosity and leadership it has demonstrated in sheltering the Rohingyas. She appreciated the government for ensuring safety and security of the refugees, who came to Bangladesh after fleeing atrocities in their home country of Myanmar. Jolie, also special envoy of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), said this in a letter she wrote to Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

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/>

