

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

May 25 - May 31, 2020



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK

Highlights:

Accountability:

- The ICJ has confirmed that Myanmar submitted its first report to the International Court of Justice on steps it has taken to prevent the genocide of Rohingya Muslims.
- Human Rights Watch has called for an urgent impartial investigation into the mass destruction of residential properties in a predominantly ethnic village in the Muslim minority Rakhine State of Myanmar, where satellite images showed more than 200 homes being burned down.

Camp Conditions:

- At least 15,000 Rohingya refugees are under quarantine in the camps in Cox's Bazar, as the number of confirmed coronavirus infections there rose to 29 as of May 26.

High-level statements:

- The IOM has said they are "increasingly concerned" about the plight of hundreds of Rohingyas believed to be stranded at sea, and has called for a coordinated regional response for rescue and safe disembarkation.

Developments:

[Rohingya Influx and its Economic Significance for Bangladesh](#) Modern Diplomacy (May 31)

[op-ed] The context of Bangladesh over hosting Rohingya refugees is portrayed in such a way that demonstrates they are solely an obvious danger for the country in the areas of its economy, politics, environment, health, and security. The above argument is true but it is a one-sided view which is enough to make hospitable Bangladeshis hostile against the Rohingya. Thus, it is crucial to explore in which areas the Rohingya have made positive contributions in Bangladesh. The Rohingya influx has immense significance on the thriving economy of Bangladesh.

[Stay and Deliver in Bangladesh: Rohingya Refugees Face Double Threat](#) UNHCR (May 29)

As countries around the world continue to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, the monsoon season risks worsening the already difficult situation of refugees in Bangladesh. Both host communities and refugees in Cox's Bazar, with a population density one and a half times higher than New York City, are considered to be among the most at risk globally in this pandemic. The area is also seasonally prone to both landslides and flash flooding. The UNHCR and partner organizations have further intensified its COVID-19 response in the Rohingya refugee camps in the Cox's Bazar area of Bangladesh, following the first confirmed cases of coronavirus among the refugee population there.

[Suspected Rohingya robber killed in Cox's Bazar gunfight](#) Dhaka Tribune (May 29)

A suspected Rohingya robber has been killed in a reported gunfight with Rapid Action Battalion in Cox's Bazar. The deceased Md Ishak, is a member of a Rohingya robber gang called 'Jocky Bahini', said an RAB official.

Similar:

[The monsoon scare amidst COVID-19 in Rohingya camps](#) Observer Research Foundation (May 29)

[Cyclone Amphan highlights Rohingyas' vulnerability](#) Arab News (May 29)

Cyclone Amphan — believed to be one of the strongest cyclones in living memory — raged over the Bay of Bengal last week, inflicting a huge amount of damage to human lives and settlements all along the coast of the bay. One of the places least equipped to cope with the onslaught of the cyclone was Cox's Bazar, where more than 1 million Rohingya refugees are huddling together in a very precarious situation, with poor infrastructure, cramped living conditions and, since the outbreak of the global coronavirus epidemic, increasing isolation from the rest of Bangladesh. The extent of the damage the cyclone has wreaked on the camps is not yet fully understood. Nor is it fully understood if the cyclone will have undermined the efforts to maintain a *cordon sanitaire* around the camps to prevent the spread of the virus into this immensely vulnerable population. But international observers fear the worst on both counts.

[Rohingya refugee crisis: 'The bodies were thrown out of the boat'](#) BBC (May 29)

Around one million Rohingya are housed in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh, and some among them, like Khadiza Begum, hold dreams of a better life in Malaysia, lying across the Bay of Bengal. But in Khadiza's case, the dream turned into a nightmare. She recounts how the crew - the human traffickers - tried to conceal deaths on their crowded boat. "Nobody knows how many people have died. It could be 50 or even more," recalls Khadiza. The 50-year-old was among 396 Rohingya Muslims who had tried to reach Malaysia but who finally returned to the Bangladeshi shore after the boat carrying them was stranded at sea for two months.

[Rohingya camp in-charge attacked in Ukhiya](#) Dhaka Tribune (May 29)

A group of Rohingyas attacked the Kutupalong (east) Rohingya camp in-charge in Ukhiya, Cox's Bazar, when he went to evict illegal establishments. During the incident, the camp in-charge and law enforcement had to fire several blank shots and left the area, said local Rohingya people. Md Khalilur Rahman Khan, camp in-charge (CIC) of Kutupalong (east camp) said around 20 to 30 Rohingyas attacked them with sticks and sharp weapons and also hurled brick-bats. "Some Rohingya volunteers were injured in the incident, and the attackers fled when ansar members fired blank shots." A Rohingya man was arrested in connection with the incident.

[Myanmar Parliament Approves Half-Million USD for ICJ Genocide Defense After Debate](#) The Irrawaddy (May 28)

The Myanmar Parliament has approved a budget of 680 million kyats (US\$484,000) for the country's defense at the International Court of Justice against genocide charges filed by The Gambia. Union Minister for International Cooperation U Kyaw Tin defended the government's budget before the vote, responding to criticism from a military-appointed lawmaker by saying that the budget was made in line with laws and procedures.

[We, the Rohingya, can't wait for justice from faraway courts](#) Frontier Myanmar (May 28)

[op-ed] Expectations of international justice are high among Rohingya refugees, but knowledge about the ICJ is low. Go to any mosque in our refugee camps and you will hear people praying for the ICJ to give citizenship to the Rohingya and help us return to our homes and livelihoods. People believe that the ICJ can force Myanmar to take Rohingya back within a year. Some hope that the ICJ will deploy international peacekeepers in Rakhine to keep us safe. Only now is the community beginning to understand that the ICJ has none of the powers that many thought it did. The international community should have been honest about this when they told us about the ICC and ICJ. They should have told us so we did not raise our hopes so high. If the ICJ is going to take five or 10 years, then we ask the international community: What are you going to do about the abuses and injustices that are happening today? What action will you take to help us go home? How can we be expected to wait for 5 or 10 years without education or livelihoods?

[Bangladesh opts for restricted reopening; COVID-19 tally crosses 40,000-mark](#) New Indian Express (May 28)

Bangladesh has issued an order allowing restricted reopening of the offices and transport services from May 31 despite fears of the intensified coronavirus onslaughts as the country recorded 2029 new COVID-19 cases - the highest number of infections in a single day. Bangladesh first declared a nationwide holiday from March 26 to April 4 while the country confirmed the first coronavirus death on March 18, ten days after the detection of the first three COVID-19 cases. Since its enforcement on March 26, coinciding with the Independence Day anniversary, the shutdown was extended in six phases until May 30.

[Rohingyas stranded at sea: IOM calls for rescue, safe disembarkation](#) United News Bangladesh (May 28)

IOM has said they are "increasingly concerned" about the plight of hundreds of Rohingyas believed to be stranded at sea, noting that cyclone Amphan signaled a ferocious start to the cyclone season in the Bay of Bengal and the Andaman Sea. "A coordinated response to this situation, inclusive of search and rescue operations and safe disembarkation, is urgently needed to ensure that those who are still stranded at sea can be brought to safety on land," said IOM's Director General Antonio Vitorino. With the world grappling with the Covid-19 pandemic, the IOM DG said they must work collectively to avoid a repeat of the 2015 crisis when thousands of men, women and children faced tremendous challenges in accessing life-saving care and support. IOM said it believes that as many as 500 others remain at sea unable to disembark at their intended destination.

Similar:

[Rohingyas stranded at sea: IOM calls for rescue, safe disembarkation](#) Dhaka Tribune (May 28)

[IOM calls for rescue, safe disembarkation of Rohingyas stranded at sea](#) Prothom Alo (May 28)

[IOM Calls To Rescue Rohingya Refugees Stranded At Sea In Bay Of Bengal Amid Cyclone Season](#) Urdu Point (May 28)

[Virus threat marks 'worst Eid ever' for Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh camps](#) Arab News (May 27)

Eid Al-Fitr celebrations for Rohingya Muslims in Bangladesh's refugee camps have been overshadowed by the specter of the deadly coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic. Some members of the ethnic group said fears of contracting the virus had turned the religious holiday into "the worst festival ever."

Similar:

[Rohingya mark joyless Eid in camps](#) Anadolu Agency (May 26)

[WHO Should Intervene to End Internet Shutdowns amid Pandemic](#) Human Rights Watch (May 26)

The World Health Organization (WHO) should press four governments that have shut down the internet to minority populations during the Covid-19 crisis to restore internet access, Human Rights Watch and 47 other organizations said on May 26. As part of the KeepItOn Coalition, the groups asked WHO Director-General Dr. Zsuzsanna Jakab to urge the governments of Bangladesh, India, Myanmar, and Pakistan to restore full access to the internet.

Similar:

[Internet Shutdowns in South Asia: WHO asked to play its role amid pandemic](#) Global Village Space (May 28)

[Yale survey of refugees in Bangladesh aims to help prevent COVID-19 spread](#) Yale News (May 26)

Yale researchers recently surveyed 909 households in Cox's Bazar to better understand the prevalence of COVID-19 symptoms among the refugees and their host communities and how best to stop the disease's spread. Informed by the survey data, the researchers are working with the UNHCR to develop and implement evidence-based policies to protect the Rohingya community and its neighbors in Cox's Bazar.

Similar:

[Yale survey of refugees in Bangladesh aims to help prevent COVID-19 spread](#) India Education Diary (May 28)

[15,000 Rohingya under quarantine as coronavirus cases rise](#) AlJazeera (May 26)

At least 15,000 Rohingya refugees are under quarantine in Bangladesh's vast camps, as the number of confirmed coronavirus infections there rose to 29. Narrow roads to three camp districts - where the majority of the infections were detected - have been blocked off by authorities. The 15,000 Rohingya inside these so-called blocks faced further restrictions on their movement.



Similar:

[15,000 Myanmar Rohingya under coronavirus quarantine as cases hit 29](#) The Star (May 26)

[ASEAN must act to save Rohingya refugees in the Bay of Bengal](#) Reuters Foundation News (May 26)

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Expelled from their homes and targets of a sustained campaign of ethnic cleansing, sexual assault and murder by the Myanmar armed forces, almost a million refugees now live a precarious existence in neighbouring Bangladesh and are desperately vulnerable to the spread of Covid-19. It is small wonder that many of them seek shelter elsewhere in the region. Today, thousands of displaced Rohingya are struggling to find sanctuary in the Bay of Bengal. The Rohingyas' plight today threatens to repeat the tragedy seen in 2015, when an estimated 4,000 refugees died at sea, while countries squabbled over where they could disembark. But unlike in 2015, the region now has an agreement and a framework for responsibility-sharing and collaboration to rescue those at sea, through the Bali Process. At this critical time, I urge the Bali Process Co-Chairs, Indonesia and Australia, to activate the Consultative Mechanism to convene affected countries and facilitate a timely and regional resolution of the crisis in the Andaman Sea.

[HRW: 200 homes burned down in Rakhine State of Myanmar](#) Dhaka Tribune (May 26)

US-based rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW) has called for an urgent impartial investigation into the mass destruction of residential properties in a predominantly ethnic village in the Muslim minority Rakhine State of Myanmar, where satellite images showed more than 200 homes being burned down. In a statement on their website, HRW said satellite imagery showed that about 200 homes and other buildings were destroyed by fire on May 16, 2020, in the predominantly ethnic Rakhine village of Let Kar in the Mrauk-U township of Myanmar's embattled Rakhine State. It also said the damage analysis of 200 buildings being burned was most likely an underestimate as internal damage to buildings were not visible.

[Myanmar files first Rohingya case report to top UN court](#) New Age Bangladesh (May 25)

Myanmar has submitted its first report to the International Court of Justice on steps it has taken to prevent the genocide of Rohingya Muslims, the top UN court has said. The contents of Myanmar's report, of which a copy is to be sent to The Gambia, however, will remain confidential until its judges decide to make it public, court officials said.

Similar:

[Myanmar updates UN court on measures to protect Rohingyas](#) Prothom Alo (May 25)

[Myanmar updates to UN court on measures to protect Rohingya minority](#) BDNews24 (May 25)

[Myanmar submits first report to ICJ on Rohingya measures](#) The Straits Times (May 26)

[Myanmar Submits First Report To ICJ Concerning Rohingya Genocide](#) The Organization for World Peace (May 28)

[A Voice for Justice for Rohingyas, Rwandans and Gambians](#) VOA News (May 27)

[Myanmar's violent civil war makes it hard to obey ICJ orders to protect the Rohingya](#) ASEAN Today (May 30)

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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/>