

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

June 29 - July 5, 2020



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK

Highlights:

Accountability:

- Three Myanmar military officers have been found guilty by a Myanmar court martial investigating atrocities against the Rohingya.
- Human Rights Watch has said this conviction is an effort to evade meaningful accountability and urged governments to demand that Myanmar open its doors to truly impartial investigators.

Camp Conditions:

- As of 28 June, 49 cases of COVID-19 and five related deaths have been recorded among the Rohingya in Cox's Bazar.
- Two special police battalions, formed to ensure the security of Rohingyas, have taken over the responsibility of ensuring law and order inside the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar.

High-level statements:

- The EU has pledged €32 million in aid for Rohingya refugees and their Bangladeshi host communities.
- In a conversation with the UN, Bangladesh Foreign Minister Momen expressed deep concern that there was no progress in repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar and pressed the UN to work with Myanmar more constructively.
- The Cox's Bazar Civil Society Organisations and NGO Forum has urged the UN to revise the conditions of allocating a \$4 million USD emergency coronavirus fund to ensure participation of local NGOs in the humanitarian response for Rohingyas.
- Bangladesh and the US renewed their commitments to support the voluntary and safe repatriation of the Rohingya people to Myanmar.
- The UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights has called on Myanmar to reform their policies toward the Rohingya to be more in line with the ICJ's provisional measures.

Developments:

[World must know story of curbing Covid-19 outbreak in Rohingya camps: speakers](#) The Daily Star (July 5)

Speakers at a virtual discussion on July 5 lauded the government's early planning and joint efforts with the UN and humanitarian partners to limit the transmission of coronavirus in the congested Rohingya camps in Bangladesh. "Despite constraints, we have managed Cox's Bazar quite well. This is a good story and must be shared globally," Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen said. The foreign secretary said the repatriation efforts have slowed down to some extent due to coronavirus and they are trying to expedite it.

[Australia supports COVID-19 response in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh](#) Relief Web (July 5)

The Australia Assists program has sent 47 experts, mostly Australians, to support the Rohingya Refugee Crisis response in Bangladesh and Myanmar since 2017. Australia's humanitarian assistance delivers essential support for the Rohingya people and host community in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. This includes providing food, clean water, health and sanitation services, education, counselling and medical services for women and girls who have experienced violence, and nutritional support primarily for children under five. With Australia's support, humanitarian agencies have been able to respond quickly to the impacts of COVID-19 in Cox's Bazar.

[China to support Bangladesh care of Rohingyas amid COVID-19 pandemic](#) Prothom Alo (July 5)

China says it will stand by Bangladesh to take care of Rohingyas who are in a difficult situation amid the COVID-19 pandemic. In order to further support the Bangladesh's efforts to shelter the Rohingyas, China has been providing humanitarian aid (rice) to the Bangladeshi government, the Chinese embassy in Dhaka said. Up to now, three batches of 1,318 tonnes of rice have been transported from China to Cox's Bazar, it said, adding that of which 700 tonnes have been distributed and 618 tonnes will be distributed soon.

Similar:

[COVID-19: China to support Bangladesh care of Rohingyas](#) United News Bangladesh (July 5)

[EU welcomes Indonesia's decision to help Rohingya refugees](#) Daily Express (July 4)

The EU has welcomed Indonesia's decision to provide a safe-landing and humanitarian assistance to 99 Rohingya refugees stranded off the northern coast of Aceh last week. "While we respect the humanitarian actions of the Indonesian government, the plight of the Rohingyas cannot be resolved with humanitarian actions from benevolent countries. The root cause of suffering of the Rohingya refugees is in the State of Rakhine, Myanmar, (from) where they were originally evicted by force," EU's Foreign Affairs and Security Policy spokesperson, Nabila Massrali stressed. The EU has said it hopes for the government of Myanmar to create conditions that would allow the people of Rohingya ethnicity to return safely, sustainably, with dignity, and in a voluntary manner to their place of origin.

[Rohingya repatriation talks yet to start](#) Prothom Alo (July 4)

Fresh talks at a foreign secretary level between Bangladesh and Myanmar had been scheduled for February 2020, to discuss the Rohingya repatriation issue. At the request of Myanmar, the talks were postponed for two months and a fresh date was set for May. However due to the coronavirus outbreak, it has not been possible to hold these talks. So now even the start of talks on the repatriation issue has been stalled. There is little likelihood of the talks to begin in August either, given the prevailing situation. If the talks are not held in August, then these may not be held at all this year because Myanmar has its general election at the start of November. There are no signs that the country will be interested in talks on the Rohingya repatriation issue before the election.

[The solution they seek is voluntary repatriation](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 3)

[op-ed] We owe our deepest commitment to finding solutions for the Rohingya refugees, not only to them but also to the Bangladeshi people who have hosted them so generously for decades. For the Rohingya refugees, the solution they seek is voluntary repatriation to Myanmar. This is a hugely challenging task that is now complicated by the growing conflict between the Arakan Army and the Myanmar armed forces. UNHCR has made very concrete proposals to the government of Myanmar. Together with UNDP, they are implementing projects in Rakhine State to improve conditions for return. They are calling for the Myanmar government to make progress in areas that would send a positive signal to the refugees: Freedom of movement, a meaningful pathway to citizenship, and finding solutions for internally displaced people.

[Myanmar: Court Martial Latest Accountability Sham](#) Human Rights Watch (July 3)

On June 30, 2020, the Myanmar military announced that two officers and a soldier had been convicted for "weakness in following the instructions" during the "Gu Dar Pyin incident." Myanmar's court-martial conviction of three military personnel for crimes against ethnic Rohingya reflects ongoing government efforts to evade meaningful accountability, Human Rights Watch has said. Myanmar authorities have repeatedly failed to adequately investigate and prosecute

grave abuses against Rohingya in Rakhine State, including crimes against humanity. "Myanmar's farcical court martial is the latest attempt to feign progress on accountability in an apparent attempt to influence the United Nations and international tribunals," said Shayna Bauchner, HRW assistant Asia researcher. "Foreign governments should demand Myanmar open its doors to truly independent and impartial international investigators."

Similar:

[Myanmar convictions fake: HRW](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 5)

[Myanmar: Soldiers' court-martial latest sham, say Rohingya groups](#) The Muslim News (July 5)

[Soldiers' court-martial Myanmar's latest sham, say Rohingya groups](#) Anadolu Agency (July 5)

[UK: Accountability essential for Myanmar for atrocities](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 3)

UK's International Ambassador for Human Rights Rita French has said accountability for atrocities is essential for Myanmar to move towards peace and stability. "The UK is deeply concerned by the restrictions Rohingya face on their freedom of movement," Rita said while delivering a statement during the Interactive Dialogue on the situation of human rights of Rohingya people recently. The systematic discrimination facing the Rohingya in Myanmar prevents them from living safe and dignified lives. Rita said they welcome Myanmar's commitment to complying with the ICJ's provisional measures. "We call on the government to demonstrate that by significantly easing restrictions, reforming documentation and permission requirements in line with recommendations 18-23 of the Rakhine Advisory Commission and recommendation 16 of the Independent Commission of Enquiry," she said.

Similar:

[Accountability essential for Myanmar for atrocities: UK](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 4)

[Accountability essential for Myanmar for atrocities: UK](#) United News of Bangladesh (July 3)

[European Union pledges €32m in aid for Rohingya refugees in pandemic](#) BDNews24 (July 2)

The EU has announced €32 million or Tk 3.04 billion in aid for the Rohingya refugees and their Bangladeshi host communities in Cox's Bazar. Of this donation, €12 million or Tk 1.14 billion will be used in COVID-19 responses. The rest of the fund, €20 million or Tk 1.9 billion will address the need of both host communities and refugees through an integrated approach on improved access to basic services in education, food security and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene or WASH to enhance their resilience and protection. The €20 million action also includes a complementary small cross-border operation worth €1 million to enhance conflict sensitivity and mutual understanding among civil society organisations assisting the refugees, internally displaced people and host communities on the other side of the border.

Similar:

[€32m EU fund for host communities, Rohingya in Cox's Bazar](#) The Financial Express (July 3)

[EU commits € 32 mn for host communities, Rohingyas in Cox's Bazar](#) United News Bangladesh (July 2)

[EU announces to provide €32 million aid to Bangladesh](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 2)

[EU announces around Tk 300cr fund for Rohingya refugees in Cox's Bazar](#) The Daily Star (July 2)

[EU commits Tk304cr for Rohingyas, host communities](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 2)

[Dhaka seeks strong partnership with UN to keep dev endeavours on track](#) United News of Bangladesh (July 2)

While Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen thanked the UN agencies for their continued support on the Rohingya issue, he expressed deep concern that there was no progress in repatriation of Rohingyas to Myanmar. The ongoing violence and continued military offensive and resultant instability in the Rakhine province are forcing Myanmar nationals to flee and take perilous journeys by the land and sea in search for safety and security, said the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This has broader ramifications on the overall repatriation as Myanmar is failing to create conditions conducive for safe and sustainable return of the Rohingyas, it said. In this regard, the Foreign Minister pressed the UN to work with Myanmar more constructively under the framework of the existing tripartite mechanism.



Similar:

[Bangladesh seeks strong partnership with UN](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 2)

[Momen stresses strong Bangladesh-UN relations for recovery from virus crisis](#) BDNews24 (July 3)

[Covid-19: Dr Momen stresses Bangladesh-UN close partnership](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 2)

[UN assures BD of its support in absorbing Covid shock](#) The Financial Express (July 2)

[Bangladesh seeks UN's stronger partnership to manage Covid-19 impact](#) The Independent (July 2)

[Armed police battalions take charge of Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar](#) The Daily Star (July 2)

Two special police battalions, formed to ensure security of Rohingyas, have finally taken over the responsibility to ensure law and order inside the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. From now on, officials of the special battalions -- APBn 14 and APBn 16 -- will be on duty inside the 34 refugee camps in Teknaf and Ukhia. The Cox's Bazar District police officials have already handed over the duties and left the camps, according to officials. However, the responsibility of filing cases and investigation will be still under the jurisdiction of district police.

[What is the future of the Rohingya?](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 2)

[op-ed] Although the Rohingya from Rakhine have no status, many Rohingya said they would go back to their homes in Rakhine State if they were convinced it would be safe, their land was restored to them, and ownership was guaranteed, and they were given Myanmar citizenship. The international community has neglected the Rohingya problem for decades and now, with some countries, especially China, blocking negotiations, the way ahead is uncertain to say the least. Severe UN sanctions should have been clamped down on Myanmar a long time ago. The Bangladesh government has been far too polite in their negotiations with Myanmar. The government needs to increase the pressure on Myanmar and internationally to ensure that the recommendations of the Kofi Annan report are accepted and implemented as quickly as possible. In addition, the British government should still play a far stronger role now.

Similar:

[To delay justice is injustice: Rohingya crisis and Bangladesh's burden](#) Daily Sabah (June 30) [op-ed]

[UN, ASEAN should work together](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 1)

The UN and ASEAN should work together on establishing a civilian oversight mechanism in Rakhine to address the root causes of the Rohingya crisis as well as building confidence among the members of the community to go back home, local and foreign experts said on June 29 in an online discussion on Rohingya people and the role of the UN and ASEAN. The discussion "Rohingya Today", was organised by Centre for Peace Studies of South Asian Institute of Policy and Governance at North South University

[ASEAN countries sweep Rohingya issue under the rug](#) Arab News (July 1)

[op-ed] When the ASEAN countries met (virtually) for their annual summit, it seems they agreed to not put out any formal statement about the ongoing situation with the Rohingya in Myanmar, with Myanmar being a member state. This marks another betrayal of the Rohingya by the international community. The nominal reason for this decision is presented as adherence to a principle of non-interference in domestic affairs within the ASEAN community. The issue of the Rohingya was referenced in the ASEAN Chairman's Statement, but the bloc agreed to yield to Myanmar's internal investigations on the issue and has committed to there being no further formal action taken within the structures of the international organization.

[NGO network in Cox's Bazar asks for revised conditions for fund allocation](#) The Daily Star (July 1)

The Cox's Bazar Civil Society Organisations and NGO Forum (CCNF), a network of more than 50 local and national NGOs, has urged the UN to revise the conditions of allocating a \$4 million USD emergency coronavirus fund to ensure participation of local NGOs in the humanitarian response for Rohingyas. CCNF Co-chair Abu Morshed Chowdhury said



the conditions as set out in the fund allocation application are meant to fund the INGOs and drive out local NGOs from Rohingya humanitarian response.

Similar:

[Revise conditions for emergency Rohingya response fund: NGOs to UNRC](#) United News Bangladesh (July 1)

[Another Rohingya exodus in the offing?](#) Prothom Alo (July 1)

[op-ed] The army-controlled regime in Myanmar has sketched out another military crackdown in the name of 'clearing the insurgents.' As per the Rakhine Ethnic Congress, the Kyauktan where the army has projected to conduct the operations 'is home to tens of thousands of people, from both Rohingya and Rakhine communities.' Any further escalation in the region will accelerate the Rohingya exodus. If the army operations are conducted and it ends as it was experienced in the past, this will have two serious consequences. Firstly, the Rakhine state will turn into a completely 'failed territory', meaning a huge influx of Rohingya civilians to the Bangladesh border, which will create a humanitarian catastrophe in the entire Asian region. Secondly, it may cause another 'boat people' crisis worsening the human trafficking level in this area like the one in 2015.

Similar:

[Myanmar's 'clearance operations' dimmers hope for Rohingya repatriation](#) Daily Times (July 4)

[Thousands flee in expectation of Myanmar military operation](#) Star Tribune (June 29)

[Myanmar finds soldiers guilty in Rohingya atrocities court martial](#) New Age Bangladesh (June 30)

Three Myanmar military officers were found guilty by a court martial investigating atrocities against Rohingya Muslims in conflict-ridden Rakhine state, the army has announced. Rights groups accused security forces of committing atrocities in various villages, including Gu Dar Pyin, where they alleged at least five shallow mass graves had been found. After initially denying the allegations, the military started court martial proceedings in September, admitting there had been 'weakness in following instructions' in the village. The commander-in-chief's office announced on June 30 that the court martial had 'confirmed the guilty verdict' and sentenced three officers. No details were provided on the perpetrators, their crimes, or sentences.

Similar:

[Myanmar finds soldiers guilty in Rohingya atrocities court martial](#) Channel News Asia (June 30)

[Myanmar Army Says it Has Convicted 3 Troops For 2017 Massacre of Rohingya](#) Benar News (June 30)

[Myanmar finds troops guilty in Rohingya atrocities court-martial](#) Al Jazeera (June 30)

[3 soldiers guilty for mass killings](#) Manila Times (July 2)

[Myanmar Finds Soldiers Guilty in Rohingya Atrocities Court Martial](#) Asharq Al-Awsat (June 30)

[Rescued Rohingya Grateful for Local Support, But Concerns Grow for Boats Still at Sea](#) IOM (June 30)

IOM Indonesia continues to provide round-the-clock care to the 99 Rohingya rescued and allowed to disembark in North Aceh last week, as concerns are being raised about another boat currently at sea with an estimated 500 Rohingya on board, according to authorities in Jakarta. Malaysian officials have also reported at least 300 are on a vessel off the coast of Koh Adang island in Thailand. No further details are available but roughly 1,400 Rohingya have been stranded at sea during the 2020 sailing season, which typically ends with the arrival of the monsoon in late May. According to various estimates at least 130 have died.

Similar:

[Rescued Rohingya grateful for local support after 120 days stranded at sea](#) European Commission (July 3)

[Rohingya find sanctuary in NW Indonesia](#) Anadolu Agency (June 30)



[Australia urged to help Rohingya refugees in limbo](#) The Sydney Morning Herald (June 30)

Australia and Indonesia have been urged to lead a push to avoid a humanitarian crisis after almost 100 Rohingya refugees were rescued when their boat broke down. Amnesty Australia's Refugee Coordinator, Graham Thom, said Indonesia and Australia — as co-chairs of the Bali Process — needed to step up and do more to manage the flow of Rohingyas fleeing persecution in Myanmar's Rakhine state. In practice, he said, that meant establishing search and rescue protocols for the countries in the region that would see people disembark boats at designated areas and, most importantly, a mechanism that would lead to people being resettled. Dr Thom said the best solution, in the longer term, would be for the Rohingya who fled Myanmar and are sheltering in Cox's Bazaar, Bangladesh, to return home. But at present that wasn't an option.

Similar:

[Australia urged to help Rohingya refugees in limbo](#) Brisbane Times (June 30)

[Measures scaled up for Rohingyas, locals in Cox's Bazar: WHO](#) United News of Bangladesh (June 30)

The WHO has said protection of the most vulnerable population is central to their efforts and they have scaled up measures to protect the Rohingyas and their host communities from COVID-19. WHO's early warning and response disease surveillance system in Cox's Bazar provides crucial information on diseases of outbreak potential to ensure timely response and containment measures. WHO has trained over 300 volunteers on contact tracing to allow for efficient and effective contact tracing of those persons who have been in contact with confirmed positive cases. To scale up diagnostic confirmation of COVID-19 cases in Cox's Bazar, WHO has provided necessary equipment, supplies, personnel and technical guidance to the Field Laboratory of Bangladesh's Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research.

Similar:

[WHO: Measures scaled up for Rohingyas, locals in Cox's Bazar](#) Dhaka Tribune (June 30)

[WHO & Partners Enhance Support to COVID-19 response in Rohingya Camps in Cox's Bazar](#) WHO (June 30)

[Human Rights Council Opens Forty-Fourth Regular Session, Hears High Commissioner's Update on the Human Rights Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic](#) UN Human Rights Council (June 30)

The UN Human Rights Council opened its forty-fourth regular session on June 30. It heard the presentation of an oral update on the human rights situation of Rohingya Muslims and other minorities in Myanmar by the High Commissioner for Human Rights Michelle Bachelet, in which she noted with regret that the human rights situation for Rohingyas in Rakhine state had not improved. In welcoming the recent release of hundreds of Rohingya people who had been imprisoned for traveling outside Rakhine, Ms. Bachelet expressed hope that this was a step towards restoring their freedom of movement. Speaking as a concerned country, Myanmar urged the international community, instead of imposing impediments, to extend helping hands in a constructive and sincere manner to Myanmar to support its efforts to find a sustainable solution towards a peaceful and prosperous country.

[Bangladesh, US renew commitment for safe, voluntary Rohingya repatriation](#) United News of Bangladesh (June 29)

Bangladesh and the United States have renewed commitments to support the voluntary, safe, dignified, and sustainable return of Rohingyas to Myanmar. US Secretary of State Michael Pompeo spoke with Foreign Minister Dr AK Abdul Momen on June 29 and discussed the issues. The two countries discussed the importance of transparency and access to information for long-term economic stability and sustainable development.

Similar:

[FM seeks US investment in Bangladesh under IDFC Fund](#) New Age Bangladesh (June 30)

[Pompeo, Momen discuss efforts to fight pandemic](#) BDNews24 (June 30)

[US, Bangladesh renew commitment to support safe return of Rohingya refugees to Myanmar](#) Eastern Eye (June 29)



[Detained Rohingya pose no additional virus risks, says medical body](#) Free Malaysia Today (June 29)

Medical charity Doctors Without Borders (MSF) has urged the Malaysia government not to deport Rohingya refugees in the country, saying they pose no additional Covid-19 risks as they have already been tested for the virus and quarantined. In a statement, MSF said any move to send 269 Rohingya back out to sea once their boat has been repaired would also violate the principle of non-refoulement under which Malaysia is bound by international customary law.

[Cox's Bazar refugee camps: where social distancing is impossible](#) The Guardian (June 29)

Social distancing simply isn't possible for the 1 million Rohingya refugees who live in Cox's Bazar refugee camp, in southeastern Bangladesh. Families live in close quarters inside flimsy bamboo shacks, using communal toilets and water facilities. Sometimes the most basic items, such as soap, are lacking. The UN, and other agencies, have raced to open new facilities in Cox's Bazar, but equipment is still extremely limited, and it is feared medical centres could be quickly overwhelmed. As of 28 June, 49 cases and five deaths have been recorded. This article takes a look at the conditions in two of the camps and the experiences of the people living there.

Similar:

[Rohingya face danger of coronavirus amid desperate conditions](#) Daily Sabah (July 2)

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/>

