

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

July 6 - July 12, 2020



REFUGEE SOLIDARITY
NETWORK

Highlights:

Camp Conditions:

- After receiving reports of poor living conditions on Bhasan Char island, Human Rights Watch has urged Bangladesh to move all the Rohingya there back to the refugee camps in Cox's Bazar. But Bangladesh officials have said that the Rohingya will stay at Bhasan Char until repatriated to Myanmar.
- Bangladesh officials have declared that the COVID-19 outbreak in the refugee camps is "successfully contained."

Accountability:

- The UK has imposed sanctions on the Myanmar military's commander-in-chief and his deputy for alleged human rights abuses against the Rohingya people.
- The Organization of Islamic Cooperation called on Myanmar's government to comply with the resolutions of the International Court of Justice and the UN Human Rights Council and stop violations against the Rohingya.

High-level statements:

- The United States has released a statement commending Indonesia's recent response to the arrival of Rohingya refugees.
- India's external affairs minister has noted the need for a speedy repatriation of Rohingya to Myanmar, and emphasized India's commitment to stand beside Bangladesh.
- Human rights groups have urged the Myanmar government to restore Rohingyas' citizenship and voting rights ahead of November's election.

Developments:

[Rohingya man killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) The Daily Star (July 12)

A Rohingya man, allegedly involved in yaba smuggling, was killed in a reported gunfight with paramilitary force Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Cox's Bazar early on July 12. Two BGB members were also injured in the incident.

[Malaysia's changing policy on Rohingya refugees](#) Bangkok Post (July 11)

Malaysia's criticism of Myanmar over the Rohingya issue has been vocal, especially in recent years. However, things have visibly changed in recent months, particularly following the Covid-19 pandemic. Kuala Lumpur has not only changed its tone but also its policy and actions toward the people it had stood up for. Its actions have indicated that Kuala Lumpur has transformed from being a vocal critic of violence against the Rohingya community to a country of refusal. Not only is it refusing to accept the boat people, but Malaysia's tone has changed with heightened hate speech and xenophobic treatment in recent months.

[United States Commends Indonesia's Response to Rohingya Refugees](#) STL News (July 10)

The US Secretary of State, Michael Pompeo, has released the following statement: "The United States commends the Government of Indonesia and local authorities in Aceh for their response to the arrival of 99 Rohingya refugees on June 24 in Indonesian waters and recognizes Indonesia's close coordination with UNHCR and IOM. We applaud Indonesia's humanitarian actions with respect to this vulnerable population and for serving as a leader within ASEAN on this pressing issue...At the same time, we are deeply disturbed by reports that the Burmese military has undertaken an offensive in Rathedaung Township, Rakhine State, that appears to have displaced thousands, including ethnic Rakhine and Rohingya...We underscore our previous calls for a cessation of fighting, peaceful dialogue, renewed efforts to protect local communities, and access for humanitarian organizations."

[Rohingya refugees shifted to new shelter in Lhokseumawe](#) Antara News (July 10)

The Indonesian government on July 10 shifted 99 Rohingya refugees from the old immigration office in Lhokseumawe, Aceh, to the city's Meunasah Mee vocational training center. Their move was carried out under strict implementation of COVID-19 protocols, Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said. The Indonesian government has provided hygiene kits and logistics as well as health services to the refugees. It has also dispatched medical workers to take care of them at their new accommodation. The refugees were rescued by three Acehnese fishermen, for humanitarian reasons, after their boat was stranded in the waters off Seunuddon, North Aceh, on June 24. As of July 10, some 90 refugees have been registered by the UNHCR. The registration process is expected to be completed by July 11.

Similar:

[25 Rohingya children arrived in Aceh without parents: Retno Marsudi](#) Antara News (July 9)

[Organization of Islamic Cooperation urges Myanmar to stop violations against Rohingya](#) Arab News (July 10)

The secretary-general of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation has called on Myanmar's government to comply with resolutions of the International Court of Justice and the UN Human Rights Council and stop violations against the Muslim Rohingya minority. Dr. Yousef Al-Othaimeen urged the international community to provide further support for legal efforts to seek justice for the Rohingya, and to intensify efforts to ensure their rights, security and safety, and the immediate cessation of all forms of violence.

[300,000 yaba worth Tk15cr seized in Cox's Bazar](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 10)

Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) on July 10 detained two Rohingya yaba dealers with 300,000 yaba pills worth around Tk15 crore during a raid in Cox's Bazar. RAB also seized three machetes and handed over the yaba dealers to Teknaf Model police station after filing a case under the Narcotics Control Act.

[No end in sight to the suffering of the Rohingya](#) Arab News (July 10)

[op-ed] While the world has been in lockdown as a result of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19), and the media focused on the economic and social effects of the pandemic, the Rohingya continue to suffer under a ruthless regime in their homeland, Myanmar, and in cramped refugee camps in Bangladesh. Even the risky prospect of attempting to escape on treacherous rough seas in search of a better life is no longer an option. There must be a way for the international community to help resolve this crisis, and other cases involving blatant violations of international law and human rights, otherwise the credibility and standards of international organizations are in doubt.

[Myanmar urged to ensure voting rights, restore citizenship rights for Rohingya](#) United News of Bangladesh (July 10)

The government of Myanmar should ensure all voting-age Rohingya—including Rohingyas in Bangladesh—have the right to vote, said Fortify Rights on July 10 as Myanmar is heading for next national elections. Citizenship is a requirement for voting in Myanmar, and the Government of Myanmar has long denied Rohingya access to full citizenship rights—most recently through the National Verification Card (NVC) process. The government currently has access to multiple forms of documentation of Rohingya. In collaboration with international humanitarian organizations, the Government of Myanmar and the Embassy of Myanmar in Bangladesh could use these forms of documentation as well as alternative forms of evidence, such as testimonial evidence, to determine eligibility to vote

in November's election and as evidence to restore Rohingya citizenship. The government should abolish the NVC process and amend the 1982 Citizenship Law to restore equal access to full citizenship rights and all rights that extend from citizenship, including the right to vote, to Rohingya and others, they said.

Similar:

[Myanmar urged to ensure voting rights, restore citizenship rights for Rohingya](#) Prothom Alo (July 10)

[Myanmar urged to ensure voting rights for Rohingyas](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 10)

[Rohingya-based Party Urges Myanmar to Allow The Muslim Minority to Vote And Run For Office](#) Radio Free Asia (July 9)

[Covid-19 pushed Rohingyas towards hunger, malnutrition: Experts](#) United News of Bangladesh (July 10)

Experts at an e-symposium organised by Refugee and Migratory Movements Research Unit (RMMRU) in collaboration with Free Rohingya Coalition on July 9 said the lockdowns and economic slowdown for Covid-19 pandemic in different countries have robbed Rohingya refugee communities further of their livelihood opportunities and pushed them into hunger and malnutrition. The pandemic has also exposed them to exploitation, hate and xenophobia. They urged the international community, particularly the UN and powerful states to take effective actions to create enabling conditions for Rohingya repatriation under protected conditions and to take actions to see that Myanmar abides by the ICJ directive to stop its genocidal acts against the Rohingya. Participants urged the international community to ensure Myanmar pays appropriate reparations to the countries that are adversely affected by refugee flows. They also demanded coastal states of Andaman Sea and South China Sea to immediately allow the drifting boats to dock. Speakers also noted that there is an urgent need for states and donors to recognise the Rohingya community's agency and create opportunities for self-empowerment and entrepreneurship. They called for global civil society to stand in solidarity with Rohingyas to establish their rightful claims to Myanmar citizenship.

Similar:

[Myanmar should pay reparations to countries hosting Rohingyas](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 10)

[3 Rohingyas killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 9)

Three Rohingyas, suspected to be drug traders, have been killed in an alleged gunfight with the Border Guard Bangladesh (BGB) in Cox's Bazar. Later BGB men seized around 300,000 pieces of yaba pills, two locally made pipe-guns and five-round bullets and took the three injured to the Upazila Health Complex, where the on duty doctors declared them dead.

Similar:

[Three Rohingyas killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 9)

[Three suspected Rohingya drug traders killed in gunfight: BGB](#) Prothom Alo (July 9)

[3 'drug traders' killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) United News of Bangladesh (July 9)

[3 drug traders killed in Cox's Bazar gunfight](#) The Independent Bangladesh (July 9)

['Gunfight' with BGB: 3 Rohingya 'yaba dealers' killed in Cox's Bazar](#) The Daily Star (July 10)

[Dhaka says Rohingyas to stay at Bhasan Char until repatriated to Myanmar](#) Prothom Alo (July 9)

Hundreds of Rohingya refugees on a flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal will not be allowed to leave unless they agree to return home, Bangladesh authorities said on July 9. The 306 Muslim Rohingya from Myanmar were put on Bhasan Char island in April after being taken off two boats trying to traffic them to Malaysia. Their plight has been taken up by the UN, an international rights group and community leaders, who want them moved to more established refugee camps on the mainland. "They will stay at Bhasan Char until they are repatriated to Myanmar," said Mohammed Khorshed Alam Khan, administrator for the district covering the island.

Similar:

[Dhaka looks the other way as rights groups push for Rohingya relocation](#) Arab News (July 12)
[Bangladesh says Rohingya refugees can't leave island](#) Wion News (July 10)
[Bangladesh refuses to move Rohingya refugees from flood-prone island to mainland](#) Daily Sabah (July 9)
[Bangladesh says Rohingya refugees can't leave island](#) SBS News (July 9)
[Bangladesh not to return Rohingya quarantined at islet](#) Anadolu Agency (July 9)
[Bangladesh forbids Rohingya refugees from leaving island](#) New Straits Times (July 9)

[Bangladesh: Move Rohingya from Dangerous Silt Island](#) Human Rights Watch (July 9)

Bangladesh authorities should immediately move over 300 Rohingya refugees, including at least 33 children, from the silt island of Bhasan Char to the Cox's Bazar refugee camps to be with their families, Human Rights Watch said on July 9. Despite pledges, the Bangladesh government has yet to allow UN officials to provide protection services and aid to the refugees detained on Bhasan Char, who had been stranded at sea for several weeks. The authorities said that the rescued refugees needed to be temporarily quarantined on Bhasan Char to protect against the spread of Covid-19 in the crowded camps. However, more than two months later, the refugees remain on the island. Families in Cox's Bazar told Human Rights Watch that relatives on Bhasan Char are being held without freedom of movement or adequate access to food or medical care, and face severe shortages of safe drinking water. Some refugees have alleged that they were beaten and ill-treated by Bangladesh authorities on the island.

Similar:

[NGO calls for moving of refugees from Bangladesh silt island](#) Mizzima (July 12)
[Bangladesh: Move Rohingya from dangerous silt island, Human Rights Watch](#) India Blooms News (July 11)
[HRW urges Bangladesh to move 300 Rohingyas from Bhasan Char](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 9)
[Move Rohingya from flood-prone island: HRW urges Bangladesh](#) Al Jazeera (July 9)

[Rohingya Jailed in Myanmar's Rakhine State for Illegal Border Crossing from Bangladesh](#) The Irrawaddy (July 9)

Courts in northern Rakhine have jailed 23 Rohingya under the Immigration Act for illegal entry after returning to Rakhine State from Bangladesh after Myanmar closed the border due to COVID-19. There are more than 70 people on the list to be sued for illegal entry with some still held at quarantine centers. Some of the illegal returnees tested positive for coronavirus and are receiving treatment. Three have recovered and are in quarantine.

[India for speedy Rohingya repatriation](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 8)

Indian external affairs minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has said that his country felt, as a neighbour of Bangladesh and Myanmar, the need for speedy repatriation of forcibly displaced Rohingyas to Myanmar. A speedy, safe and sustainable repatriation of Rohingyas from Bangladesh to Myanmar would be good for all, he said in a letter to Bangladesh foreign minister counterpart AK Abdul Momen. He reiterated the commitment of the Indian government the stay beside the Bangladesh government and the people to overcome challenges due to COVID-19.

Similar:

[India assures support for Rohingyas' repatriation: B'desh](#) India Post (July 12)
[India backs Bangladesh efforts to repatriate Rohingya home](#) Hindustan Times (July 9)
[Quick and safe Rohingya repatriation good for all: India](#) Prothom Alo (July 8)
[Quick and safe Rohingya repatriation good for all: India](#) United News of Bangladesh (July 8)
[Dhaka 'diverges' from India on Rohingya issue](#) The Hindu (July 8)
[India backs sustainable Rohingya repatriation](#) The Financial Express (July 8)

[Myanmar air raids 'that killed children amount to war crimes'](#) Al Jazeera (July 8)

In a report on July 8, Amnesty International said it collected new evidence showing Myanmar's military bombed several villages in Chin state in March and April, killing more than a dozen people. Myanmar's military has killed

civilians, including children, in indiscriminate air attacks amid worsening conflict in the country's western Rakhine and Chin states, the prominent rights group said, urging the UN Security Council to launch a war crimes investigation.

[UK Imposes Sanctions on Myanmar Military Chief, Deputy for Abuses Against Rohingya, Others](#) The Irrawaddy (July 7)

The British government on July 6 imposed sanctions on the Myanmar military's commander-in-chief and his deputy for alleged human rights abuses against the Rohingya people in Rakhine State and other groups in the country. Along with the Myanmar military, another 47 individuals and organizations involved in some of the most notorious alleged human rights violations have been targeted under a powerful new sanctions regime established by the UK.

Similar:

[Britain imposes sanction on Russians, Saudis, Myanmar over rights abuses](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 7)

[Virus outbreak in Rohingya camps 'contained'](#) Prothom Alo (July 7)

A coronavirus outbreak among Rohingya refugees has been "successfully contained", Bangladesh officials have said after fears that the disease spread rapidly in overcrowded camps. Some 724 Rohingya have been tested in the Bangladesh camps, with 54 found positive since the first cases were detected in May, officials said. "We have successfully contained the outbreak," Bangladesh refugee commissioner Mahbub Alam Talukder said, adding that only five Rohingya have died from the virus so far. It was not clear, however, if some Rohingya avoided testing because of fears they would be moved to an isolated and flood-prone island in the Bay of Bengal, where other refugees were taken to after being found at sea.

Similar:

[UNHCR hails Bangladesh's efforts to curb coronavirus at Rohingya camps](#) BDNews24 (July 6)

[Bangladesh claims COVID-19 outbreak contained in Rohingya camps](#) Daily Sabah (July 7)

[Virus Outbreak in Rohingya Camps 'Contained', Says Bangladesh](#) Naharnet (July 6)

[Coronavirus outbreak in Bangladesh Rohingyas camps 'contained'](#) The New Arab (July 7)

[Rohingya scapegoated as Bangladesh battles COVID-19](#) Nikkei Asian Review (July 7)

[op-ed] The novel coronavirus pandemic has exacerbated resentment in densely populated Bangladesh toward the Rohingya refugees, and also brought further uncertainty to their chances of repatriation. Locals are fretful because Rohingya come out into their communities to work and shop. In a report based on interviews, advocacy groups quoted a woman who said people in her community avoid contact with the Rohingya because they are perceived as having brought the deadly pathogen. There has been increasing anger at the Rohingya over the damage to farmland and forests, perceived inflationary pressure on essentials, and depressed wages caused by more competition. The Rohingya are also being blamed for a crime wave. UNHCR's spokesperson in Cox's Bazar said the UN and its partners have been monitoring social tensions around the camps, and working with government authorities to minimize risks to refugee and host communities.

[2 Rohingyas killed in Teknaf 'gunfight'](#) Dhaka Tribune (July 6)

Two Rohingya refugees have been killed in a gunfight with Border Guard Bangladesh in Cox's Bazar. Fifty thousand pieces of yaba, a Chinese pistol and two rounds of ammunition were recovered from the spot. As of July 5, 2020, 50 people have been killed in gunfights with law enforcement this year, according to law enforcement sources. Among them were 26 active robbers. The rest were drug dealers.

Similar:

[2 Rohingya youths killed in Teknaf 'gunfight'](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 7)

[2 Rohingya 'drug peddlers' killed in Cox's Bazar 'gunfight'](#) The Daily Star (July 6)

[Bangladesh: 2 Rohingya 'drug peddlers' killed in Cox's Bazar gunfight](#) India Blooms (July 6)

[Internal conflicts in Myanmar harm Rohingya return efforts: FS](#) New Age Bangladesh (July 6)

Bangladesh foreign secretary Masud Bin Momen on July 5 said that conflicts between the Myanmar military and Arakan Army in Rakhine are not helpful for building confidence among Rohingya people to go back to their home. 'Conflicts have created instability in Rakhine,' he said in an online discussion organised by the Centre for Research and Information in Dhaka. The spread of COVID-19 also slowed down the attempts for repatriating Rohingya people, he said, adding, 'It does not mean that Rohingya people would stay in Bangladesh for an indefinite period.'

Similar:

[Rohingya repatriation slowed due to COVID-19: FS](#) Prothom Alo (July 6)

[Japan's Kirin Should Stop Supporting Myanmar Military](#) Asia Times (July 6)

[op-ed] In 2019, the UN Fact-Finding Mission published a report citing Japanese conglomerate Kirin's business relationship with Myanmar military-owned Myanmar Economic Holdings Ltd (MEHL), saying that "any foreign business activity" involving Myanmar's military and its conglomerates poses "a high risk of contributing to or being linked to, violations of human-rights law and international humanitarian law." The report added that "at a minimum, these foreign companies are contributing to supporting the Tatmadaw's financial capacity," and thus called for their "financial isolation" to deter continuing and future violations of international human-rights and humanitarian law. Kirin should promptly end its business partnerships with the military-owned conglomerate and disclose the details of the independent review when it is completed.

Similar:

[Japan's Kirin Should Stop Supporting Myanmar Military](#) Human Rights Watch (July 6)

[Advance planning, joint efforts were key: speakers](#) The Daily Star (July 6)

Speakers at a virtual discussion lauded the government's advance planning and joint efforts with the UN and humanitarian partners to limit the transmission of coronavirus in the Rohingya camps, saying that this story must be heard globally. They vowed to continue working together to keep Rohingyas and the host community safe. CRI hosted the live discussion titled "Let's Talk on Rohingya Response and Covid-19". Foreign Secretary Masud Bin Momen, UNHCR Representative in Bangladesh Steven Corliss, Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commissioner (RRRC) Mahub Alam Talukder, Medical Officer and IPC focal for Leda ITC Sumaya Tasnim and Rohingya representative Jane Alam took part in the discussion moderated by Showvik Das Tamal.

Similar:

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

[Story of limiting COVID-19 transmission in Rohingya camps must be heard globally: Speakers](#) United News Bangladesh (July 5)

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/>

