

Developments related to Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh

August 10 - August 16, 2020



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NETWORK

Highlights:

Within Myanmar:

- Nearly 5,000 civilians displaced by fighting in western Myanmar's Rakhine state have taken refuge in the state capital, trekking 100 kilometers after camps near the conflict zone were too full to take them, refugees and officials have reported.
- A Rohingya man has been barred from standing in Myanmar's upcoming election, due to questions about his parents' citizenship. The decision has been decried by rights groups as discriminatory and a symptom of the "ongoing genocide" against the persecuted minority. He has said he will appeal the decision.

Accountability:

- Nicholas Koumjian, head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar, said Facebook has not released evidence of "serious international crimes", despite promising to work with investigators looking into abuses in the country including against the majority-Muslim Rohingya.
- The Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights has strongly rejected a recent government report on the 2017 massacre at the Gu Dar Pyin village in Rakhine state, which reported that a total of "19 terrorists" were killed in the operation. The Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights claimed instead that the operation ended with the killing of nearly 250 civilians.

Developments:

[Dhaka urges repatriation push](#) Bangkok Post (August 15)

Three years have gone by since massacres in Myanmar prompted hundreds of thousands of the Rohingya Muslim minority to flee the country. Bangladesh has since urged Thailand to help push for a repatriation plan after it was stalled by the coronavirus. In an interview, Nazmul Quanine, Bangladesh's ambassador to Thailand, said the pandemic has hampered delegation visits and sparked fears of a virus outbreak inside refugee camps in Cox's Bazar housing over a million refugees. Mr Quanine urged the international community, including Thailand, to highlight this issue given that not a single group of the Rohingya has returned to Myanmar, adding that stakeholders should create confidence and guarantee their basic rights.

[No More Lost Generations: Global Fund Provides Education for Children in Crisis](#) Inter Press Service (August 14)

Education Cannot Wait (ECW), a multilateral global fund, is now addressing the funding gap for education in crisis. According to a report, ECW has committed \$12 million to support Rohingya refugee children's education in Bangladesh, of which \$6 million has already been provided. The funding has so far helped 63,000 students enroll at various learning centres run by ECW partners and local communities. The goal is to reach 88,500 children, 51 percent of whom are girls.

[Home minister says will request data on Rohingyas residing in Malaysia from UNHCR, Wisma Putra](#) Malay Mail (August 14)

The Malaysia Home Ministry will seek information on the data of UNHCR card holders in the country, said its Minister, Datuk Seri Hamzah Zainudin. He said the data on the card holders were needed to enable the government to coordinate effort to ensure that everybody in the country had valid documents. "I will call them (UNHCR) together with Wisma Putra to ensure whatever data they own must be handed over to us," he told the media on the allegation on the deluge in excess of over 85,000 Rohingyas in the country who possessed a UNHCR card.

[Employment Office clarifies that Myanmareses and Rohingyas at Sadao are not workers in Thailand](#) Bangkok Post (August 14)

The Thailand Department of Employment assigned Songkhla Employment Office to inspect illegal Myanmarese and Rohingya workers hiding under a bridge near the new Sadao border checkpoint in Songkhla Province. Director-General Suchat disclosed that 25 people who are Myanmarese and Rohingya hid under the bridge not far from the new border checkpoint in Sadao, Songkhla Province, having snuck across the Thailand-Malaysia border. The group of people were heading to Myanmar after facing unemployment due to the pandemic.

[Building safer online spaces in Myanmar](#) Advox (August 14)

[op-ed] The ongoing civil wars in Myanmar and the state violence against the Rohingya put a spotlight on the potential for harm brought on by digital connectivity. Facebook was, and continues to be, the favored tool for disseminating hate speech and misinformation against the Rohingya people, Muslims in general, and other marginalized communities. Despite repeated warnings from civil society organizations in the country, Facebook failed to address the new challenges with the urgency and level of resources needed during the Rohingya crisis, and failed to even enforce its own community standards in many cases. The solution to all this is a multifaceted, multi-stakeholder, long-term effort to build strong legal and cultural institutions that disperses the power and the responsibility to create and maintain safe and inclusive online spaces between governments, individuals, the private sector, and civil society.

[Rohingya Candidate to Appeal Myanmar Parliament Candidacy Rejection](#) Radio Free Asia (August 14)

A Rohingya man who filed to run for a seat in Myanmar's parliament in November has been disqualified over questions about his parents' citizenship, a decision that he disputed and that activists say underscores pervasive official discrimination toward the Muslim minority. Election authorities told Abdul Rasheed that they accepted his account, but did not have the authority to verify his parent's citizenship. They also said he could file an appeal over the application rejection, which he said he would do.

[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from election](#) The Daily Star (August 13)

A Rohingya Muslim has been barred from standing in Myanmar's upcoming election, in a decision decried by rights groups as discriminatory and a symptom of the "ongoing genocide" against the persecuted minority. Three Rohingya-led parties had hoped to field at least a dozen candidates in November's vote, according to regional watchdog Fortify Rights. But Abdul Rasheed, 58, a member of the Democracy and Human Rights Party, said on August 12 that his candidacy was rejected by the district election commission in Rakhine state capital Sittwe a day earlier. The commission said this was because his parents were not Myanmar citizens when he was born -- even though he had proof his parents and grandparents were granted citizenship in 1957, four years before his birth. "This rejection is discriminatory and not unrelated to the ongoing genocide of Rohingya," said Matthew Smith from Fortify Rights. "The government of Myanmar must end its mass disenfranchisement of Rohingya."

Similar:

[Myanmar urged to ensure Rohingyas in polls](#) New Age Bangladesh (August 14)

[Myanmar urged to ensure Rohingya participation in polls](#) Dhaka Tribune (August 13)

[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from election](#) The Star (August 13)

[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from election](#) The Jakarta Post (August 13)

[Myanmar urged to ensure Rohingya participation in polls](#) United News of Bangladesh (August 13)

[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from election](#) New Age Bangladesh (August 12)

[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from contesting election](#) Al Jazeera (August 12)



[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from election](#) The Malaysian Insight (August 12)

[Myanmar bars Rohingya candidate from election](#) The Straits Times (August 12)

[Bangladesh wishes to host 10th D-8 summit virtually in Dec or Jan](#) Dhaka Tribune (August 13)

Bangladesh has expressed its interest to host the tenth summit of D-8, an organization for development cooperation among 8 developing Muslim-majority countries, in Dhaka virtually either in December, this year or January, next year. The summit, expected to be participated by the heads of state or government of Bangladesh, Egypt, Nigeria, Indonesia, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey, will be followed by a virtual leader's retreat, including a virtual visit to the Rohingya Camps in Cox's Bazar, according to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The summit was scheduled to be held in Dhaka in May, but could not take place due to the ongoing coronavirus pandemic.

[Livelihood Opportunities of Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh](#) Khabarhub (August 13)

Refugees are not legally entitled to work in Bangladesh. The inability to survive without employment leads many refugees, particularly men, to seek employment illegally. They are exposed to serious risks in doing so including unfair/unsafe work conditions, harassment, exploitation and extortion. In the future, with the increasing number of refugees sheltered close to the native citizens' settlements there is the likelihood of increasingly aggravating the local social and cultural harmony among the local citizens and the Rohingya refugees. While pressing for eventual repatriation, Bangladesh and the international community should move past short-term planning and work together to build safe housing, improve refugees' educational and livelihood opportunities, and support refugee-hosting communities.

[Three arrested for hoarding PDS rice in Hyderabad](#) Telegana Today (August 13)

The Balapur police on August 13 arrested three persons, including a Rohingya, on charges of illegally procuring Public Distribution System (PDS) rice and selling them to dealers in Karnataka. Thirty quintals of PDS rice was seized from them. According to the police, the suspects had lured legal beneficiaries of PDS rice into selling them the rice at lower rates, which they stored in a Rohingya camp in Royal Colony in Balapur. The arrested persons were produced before a court and remanded in judicial custody.

[Bangladesh, Switzerland for expanding trade, investment cooperation](#) United News of Bangladesh (August 12)

Newly appointed Ambassador of Switzerland to Bangladesh Nathalie Chuard has said she would work to further strengthen and expand the bilateral ties between Bangladesh and Switzerland. As a response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Switzerland has committed over 8 million Swiss Francs to help Bangladesh overcome and recover from this unprecedented crisis. Switzerland will also continue to work in partnership and solidarity with the government and people of Bangladesh to provide shelter, protection and assistance to the Rohingya refugees, and to constructively engage on a wide array of topics of mutual interest, including democratic governance and human rights, the embassy said.

Similar:

[Newly appointed Swiss envoy presents her credentials to president](#) Dhaka Tribune (August 12)

[Bangladesh, Switzerland for expanding trade, investment cooperation](#) The Independent Bangladesh (August 12)

[Myanmar 'underreported' 2017 Rohingya killing: Watchdog](#) Anadolu Agency (August 12)

A Rohingya rights body on August 11 disagreed with an "underreported" report of Myanmar government on the number of killed Muslims in a brutal military crackdown on a Rohingya village in 2017. Strongly rejecting a recent government report on the massacre at the Gu Dar Pyin village in Rakhine state, home to hundreds of thousands of the Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, which recorded a total of "19 terrorists" were killed in the operation, the Arakan Rohingya Society for Peace and Human Rights claimed the operation ended with the killing of nearly 250 civilians. The watchdog said it has been "monitoring, collecting and compiling data sourced directly from the families of victims and survivors in the Cox's Bazar refugee camp, Bangladesh." In a July 2020 report, the Human Rights Watch also said the

massive crackdown on the village -- in which "hundreds of heavily armed soldiers and police" took part -- killed an estimated 300 to 400 Rohingya civilians.

Similar:

[Myanmar 'underreported' 2017 Rohingya killing: Watchdog Yeni Safak](#) (August 12)

[From Cox's Bazar — how to address refugee needs amid COVID-19](#) Devex (August 12)

[op-ed] As of June 30, 50 cases of COVID-19 had been confirmed in the Rohingya settlements in Cox's Bazar, but the full extent of infection is not known. To address this extraordinary set of circumstances, BRAC — the largest nongovernment responder to the humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar — has developed a three-pronged approach that reflects its experience creating programs in the global south by listening to those most in need. First, one of the lessons learned is the importance of maintaining essential primary health services. Second, aid groups should prioritize adapting preventive measures for challenging contexts, such as facilitating hand-washing without running water in environments where water is scarce. Finally, the need to educate the public is essential and ongoing. This has two key components: conveying vital information about COVID-19 and dispelling myths that can become dangerous.

[Hyderabad: Rohingya man held for forging ID card](#) Times of India (August 12)

A 37-year-old Myanmar national was arrested for securing counterfeit documents including a driver's licence and aadhaar card to feign Indian citizenship. In 2012, the Rohingya man obtained an Indian voter card by submitting an electricity bill with the help of locals and was arrested. After being released from jail, he obtained an aadhaar card and driver's license with his wife's help.

Similar:

[Rohingya man held on charges of securing voter, Aadhaar card impersonating as Indian](#) Outlook India (August 11)

[Myanmar's General Election: Test for a Fledgling Democracy](#) Geopolitical Monitor (August 12)

Myanmar will hold its next general election on November 8th. Rohingyas — who the government rendered stateless in 1982 — are not allowed to vote unless the government grants special permission. This paradigm has created opportunities for the State to use voting rights as both an incentive and a threat to mobilize ethnic identity and guarantee specific voting patterns among communities in Rakhine. Civic space repression is another tactic employed to prevent minority groups from acquiring power. The international community should monitor the use of these tactics while working to open civic space and institutionalize equality in Myanmar.

[Refugees From Myanmar's Rakhine Conflict Spill Into State Capital](#) Radio Free Asia (August 11)

Nearly 5,000 civilians displaced by fighting in western Myanmar's Rakhine state have taken refuge in the state capital, trekking 100 kilometers (60 miles) after camps near the conflict zone were too full to take them, refugees and officials have said. The villagers huddling in Sittwe have fled a flare-up in the 20-month-old war between the Myanmar military and the rebel Arakan Army in Rakhine state's northern townships and a small patch of neighboring Chin state. The 5,000 are part of an estimated population of 200,000 internally displaced persons living in Buddhist monasteries and crowded camps in Rakhine after fleeing a war that has killed or injured hundreds of civilians.

[UN investigator says Facebook has not shared 'evidence' of Myanmar crime](#) BDNews24 (August 11)

The head of a UN investigative body on Myanmar said Facebook has not released evidence of "serious international crimes", despite promising to work with investigators looking into abuses in the country including against the majority-Muslim Rohingya. Nicholas Koumjian, head of the Independent Investigative Mechanism on Myanmar (IIMM), said the social media giant was holding material "highly relevant and probative of serious international crimes" but had not shared any during year-long talks. "Unfortunately, to date, the Mechanism has not received any material from Facebook but our discussions continue and I am hopeful that the Mechanism will eventually receive this important evidence," Koumjian said on August 10.



Similar:

[UN says Facebook has not shared 'evidence' of Myanmar crime](#) Al Jazeera (August 11)

[Facebook ignores plea to aid Rohingya genocide case](#) Arab News (August 10)

[How Rohingya Refugee Children Are Torn Between Languages](#) Qrius (August 11)

“We have a chaotic situation in the camps. Burmese and English are being taught, but the mode of teaching is a mix of Chittagonian, Bangla and Rohingya,” said A.K. Rahim, a sociolinguistic researcher with Translators Without Borders in Cox’s Bazar. “There are cognitive dissonance issues among the children, simply because they are being bombarded with so many different languages that are not standardized in any way. There is no way to foresee what is their academic educational future, so they don’t know which language to choose.” With both Bangla and Burmese being so politicized and not native to the Rohingya people, one recommendation by education experts and researchers is to develop a curriculum in English and include a component of mother-tongue education at the primary level.

[Digitizing the NGO Affairs Bureau](#) The Daily Star (August 11)

[op-ed] While the policy and regulatory framework of most developing economies have not yet adapted to an ideal model of e-governance, the government of Bangladesh has been proactive in the last decade in digitalising the government and non-government sectors, with major investments in high tech parks, establishment of data centres, etc. Several regulatory and legal reforms in the last decade have paved the way for crafting adjustment towards the new normal, by further digitising government and non-government institutions. With this end in view, it is necessary for the government to immediately take measures to digitise the registration process of the Non-Government Affairs Bureau (NGOAB). Owing to the complex procedure and an influx of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs) in Bangladesh to rehabilitate the Rohingya refugees, there has been a severe backlog of registration, with an average registration taking much longer than the stipulated time (which is supposed to be approximately a period of 5 weeks), and this backlog is expected to get worse with the Covid-19 pandemic.

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/>

