

Topic: The question of establishing peace and stability in Myanmar

Forum: Security Council

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Introduction

After the attacks by Rohingya militants on military and police in August of 2017, the Myanmar Rohingya crisis has only escalated. In response to the attacks, the military of Myanmar initiated several attacks on the Rohingya communities, including a “brutal crackdown on villages”¹. As a consequence of the attacks on the Rohingya people, Bangladesh has experienced a massive humanitarian crisis due to the extensive influx of migrants from Myanmar. The way the Rohingya have been treated has ultimately led to the United Nations accusing the Myanmar government of genocide against Rohingya Muslims in August of 2018.

Tension between Buddhist and Muslim communities, especially in Rakhine State, have, however, existed for a long time. The coastal state mainly consists of Buddhists but also has a minority group of Rohingya Muslims inhabiting it. The Muslim influence is believed to have reached Myanmar through Indian influence.

The conflict can in a simple manner be understood as the clash of two religions, and an ethnic cleansing of the minority, Rohingya Muslims. When

discussing solutions, delegates should consider the deep-rooted nature of the conflict, as the tensions have existed for long. It should also not be forgotten that this is a very urgent matter, and solutions should aim to make swift changes to the situation. This research report will aim to outline the conflict as a whole and take into the many aspects of the issue, which has now reached the point of being considered genocide.



¹ <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/rohingya-crisis-in-myanmar>

Definition of key terms

Burma - Burma is the previous name for the country now referred to as Myanmar. The name can still be seen in some ways in the current Myanmar, for example, the official language in Myanmar is still called Burmese.

Rohingya - A muslim community mainly inhabiting western Myanmar, in Rakhine state.

Rakhine state - Region in the north-west of Myanmar bordering Bangladesh. It had a growing minority population of Rohingya muslims, and ancestral buddhists of the are felt threatened by their expansion. The tension between the buddhists and muslims has its roots here.

ARSA - Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army, the militant group which committed a series of attacks against military and police forces. Operated in Rakhine state and claimed to work towards salvation and protection of Rohingya muslims, mainly in 2017. The Myanmar government regard them as illegal immigrants from Bangladesh.

Genocide - the murder of an entire group of people, principally of people with certain religious beliefs, a complete nation and or of a certain race.

Exodus - a massive departure of people from a specified place.

Autonomous state - a state which is not controlled by external governing body; it has the freedom to control and regulate its own affairs.

Ethnic cleansing - using violence to remove one or more ethnic groups of an area, making it ethnically homogeneous. There is no official definition under international law.

Militia - an army or group of soldiers lacking full military training or citizens of a nation which acts as a supplement to the regular army of a country

Background information

Myanmar was under British rule from 1824 until gaining their independence in 1948. During the period of colonialism, the Rohingya community expanded greatly. This was mainly due to policies implemented by the United Kingdom which supported migrant workers. The Rohingya people were also promised their own land by the colonial power, which led to them siding with the British during World War 2, whereas Myanmar population generally sided with the Japanese. The Rohingya were never given the state promised to them.

After the independence in 1948, conflicts between the ancestral buddhists of Rakhine state and the Rohingya muslim immigrants began to take place. The buddhists of Rakhine did not want to become a minority in their ancestral land and the Rohingya did not receive the autonomous state they were promised, which caused violent outbreaks between the two ethnic groups. The persecution of Rohingya has only escalated since then. For example, when a new citizenship law was established in 1982, the Rohingya were made stateless. The law recognized 135 ethnic minorities nationally, however, the Rohingya was not one of them. When the first census was held after more than 30 years in Myanmar, the Rohingya were once again excluded from it. Furthermore, they were not allowed to vote in the first democratic elections held in 2015. Essentially, the discrimination against the Rohingya has its roots in the fact that they have always been seen as foreigners and not as an actual part of the Myanmar population.

The event which sparked the crisis as a whole was the attacks by the ARSA in August of 2017. The militant attack killed 12 members of security forces². The Myanmar military claimed to be fighting dangerous rebels whereas the refugees claim that the military is, together with the Rakhine state buddhists, using violence to ethnically cleanse the region.

The total Rohingya population in Myanmar is now estimated to be at 1.3 million; 706,000 has fled the country since the attacks in August 2017 and 128,000 are internally displaced.³ The Human Rights Watch reports that “atrocities committed by Burmese security forces, including mass killings, sexual violence, and widespread arson, amount to crimes against

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-41082689>

³ <https://www.cfr.org/interactives/global-conflict-tracker#!/conflict/rohingya-crisis-in-myanmar>

humanity⁷⁴ the situation has evolved to become a complete crisis; a crisis which has even had consequences in neighbouring country Bangladesh, which has received an immense amount of Rohingya refugees. The crisis has also evolved from being referred to as ethnic cleansing, to be labeled as genocide.

To conclude this section, here is a timeline summarizing key events:

1824-1948	Myanmar is a British colony; during this time the muslim community expanded swiftly
1948	Myanmar becomes independent from the British rule
1962	Military junta takes power; Myanmar enters a state of military rule
1982	Citizenship law is established - excludes Rohingya muslims from the recognized national ethnic groups, essentially making the Rohingya stateless
2014	The first census in over thirty years is organized in Myanmar - Rohingya are not included
2015	Rohingya muslims are excluded from the first democratic elections held in Myanmar
2017	On August 25th, ARSA commits an attack against police and military officials which sparks atrocities against, for example, Rohingya villages
2018	The United Nations accuses the Myanmar government of genocide against the Rohingya muslims

Stakeholders

Bangladesh

Bangladesh is a main stakeholder as it is now in a humanitarian crisis as a consequence of the conflict.

⁴ <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>

United States of America

The United States has supported Bangladesh and the growing humanitarian crisis financially, and has previously claimed that sanctions may be imposed on individuals affiliated with the atrocities.

China

Chinese officials have stated that exerting international pressure would not be beneficial for resolving the problem. China has close relations with Myanmar and has previously backed the anti-rebel missions conducted by the Myanmar military. They have blocked resolutions on the topic in the Security Council.

Aung San Suu Kyi

Aung San Suu Kyi is a Burmese politician who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1991 for standing up to the Myanmar military and risking her own freedom. Now as the de facto leader, however, she has been accused of doing nothing to stop the exodus of Rohingya and the violence afflicted upon them.

Relevant UN treaties, resolutions and reports

- Resolution A/72/382 - Situation of Human Rights in Myanmar
- Resolution S/2007/14 - Draft resolution which was vetoed by China and Russia
- S/PRST/2017/22 - Statement by the President of the Security Council on the situation in Rakhine
- Press statement regarding the Security Council member visit to Bangladesh and Myanmar - SC/13331, 9/5 2018

Previous attempts to solve the issue

The Myanmar government has consistently denied doing anything wrong. A National Peace Conference was held in 2016 in Myanmar and strived towards creating a lasting peace between the armed forces and ethnic groups, however, the Rohingya were not invited. Furthermore, the United Nations has previously called for a Fact Finding Missions to investigate any human rights violations taking place in Myanmar, however, access to

complete the mission was denied by Myanmar. This is due to the fact that they are rejecting any accusations of ethnic cleansing and human rights abuses.

The Security Council has been encouraged by, for example, the human rights watch to allocate resources towards the prosecution of those responsible for the crimes, so that they can be held accountable for their actions.

A lot of focus has been put on the humanitarian crisis which has erupted as a consequence of the conflict, which means that a lot of resources, including finances, have gone here.

Possible solutions

As mentioned, it is of great importance that delegates realize that this is a matter of urgency and applies this to the policies they suggest. A good resolution on this topic needs to be well-balanced and include both long-term and short-term solutions which improves the situation in Myanmar.

Categories of solutions which can be considered includes:

- Measures which pressure the Myanmar government and military to stop discrimination and violence against the Rohingya muslims
- Different ways of assuring that the Rohingya muslims are included in the Myanmar society
- Actions which deal with the humanitarian crisis caused by the exodus of Rohingya muslims from Myanmar
- Prosecution of those responsible for the atrocities, for example, including the International Criminal Court (ICC)

The categories listed above are simply suggestions and delegates are encouraged to come up with their own categories, as long as they stick to the topic. Remember that effective operative clauses need to clearly present measures and actions.

Useful sources

UNHCR articles outlining the Rohingya crisis from a humanitarian perspective:

<http://www.unhcr.org/rohingya-emergency.html>

Article describing the involvement and position of China in the conflict:

<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-myanmar-rohingya-china/china-says-pressure-unhelpful-in-resolving-rohingya-issue-idUSKCN1LD0NB>

United Nations website for genocide prevention, can be used to understand the concept of genocide further:

<http://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide.html>

A UNHCR timeline of stories from refugees in the crisis:

<http://www.unhcr.org/news/stories/2017/12/5a1c313a4/100-days-horror-hope-timeline-rohingya-crisis.html>

BBC Myanmar country profile:

<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-pacific-12990563>

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