



# Security Council

## *Topic 1: The situation of the Rohingya minority in Myanmar*

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### 1. Definition of key terms:

**Rohingya:** An ethnic minority in Myanmar. They are primarily descendants of Arab traders and are the majority of the Muslim population of Myanmar. They are not officially recognised as Burmese citizens.

**Ethnic Cleansing:** The systematic killing or removal of a specific group of people by another.

**Muslim:** a person whose religion is Islam. Origin in the early 17th century from Arabics.

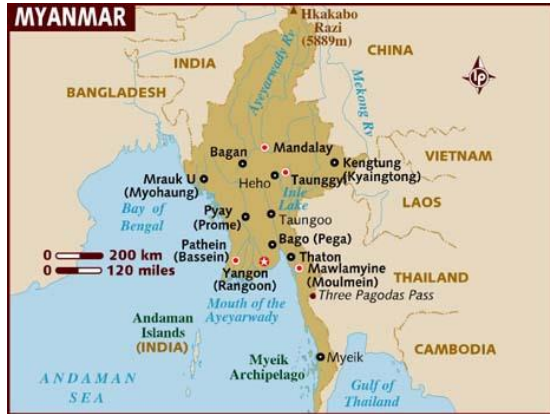
**Communal violence:** communal violence is a type of violence which is inflicted across communities and ethnic lines.

**Persecution:** persistent hostility towards people based on their religion or political beliefs.

### 2. Introduction

The situation of the Rohingya in Myanmar is said to be one of the “worlds’ fastest growing refugee crisis”. The Myanmar government, which is predominantly Buddhist, had refused to recognize the Rohingya people as citizens in fact they are considered illegal immigrants coming from Bangladesh. Since the 1970s Rohingya have migrated across the entire region to escape communal violence or alleged abuses, and to reach Muslim majority countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia. They have been one of the most persecuted communities in the world and most of the Rohingya are Muslims.

### 3. Background Information:



The situation in Myanmar, formerly known as Burma, has come to be known as a modern example of ethnic cleansing. Fueled by religious tensions, violence against the Rohingya, a religious minority in Myanmar, has been committed systematically in the state of Rakhine. Rakhine is where most of the Rohingya live, and the state of Rakhine borders Bangladesh. Since 2017 more than 700,000 Rohingya have fled Rakhine for Bangladesh. The UN has even cited the event as a “textbook example of ethnic

cleansing.”

The Rohingya identify themselves as descendants of Arab traders who have been around for centuries. The government of Myanmar, on the other hand, does not consider them citizens of the state going so far as to claim they are illegal immigrants from Bangladesh. The death toll one month after the eruption of violence was close to 6700 dead of which at least 700 were children under the age of 5, according to the Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF).

The ethnic cleansing or forced exodus of the Rohingya is caused by the deliberate destruction of Rohingya villages. Satellite images show villages side by side where the Buddhist villages remain intact while the Rohingya village has been turned to ashes. The tactic is quite similar to Scorched earth tactics, except with the sole aim of destroying any form of Rohingya property or habitation.

288 of the 866 villages in the state of Rakhine had been destroyed over the course of August and September 2017, and over a million people have been displaced. The UN calls this “the fastest growing refugee crisis in the world.” The issue only gets worse as the refugees migrate into camps. So far at least 100,000 people have been treated for malnutrition, and approximately 70% of all refugees live on aid.

The risk of disease spread is quite high, and as a preventative measure the refugees are getting vaccinated, but the probability of the spread of disease is still quite likely. Despite all this, there is yet to be any concrete action to be taken against Myanmar with no sanctions or tariffs implemented against the government of Myanmar. Some delegations such as China outright supporting the Burmese government with public statements such as “[the international community] should support the efforts of Myanmar in safeguarding the stability of its national development.”

There had also been a deal in November 2017 signed by Bangladesh that said it would return hundreds of thousands of refugees or that they could be accommodated in temporary camps set up in the Rakhine state. However, details of this deal are sparse.



The issue is so sensitive to the Burmese government that they have gone as far as to jail any reporters that write on the issue. Reuters reporters Wa Lone and Kyaw Soe Oo had been jailed in November 2017 under a colonial-era law called the “Official Secrets Act”. They were charged with the processing of sensitive documents. Later a police captain named Moe Yan Naing spoke out on the issue claiming that the reporters had been framed by the police and soon found himself in jail too.

The issue for most Rohingya is that they are stateless people with no official documentation, making them virtually impossible to track. This makes taking in refugees difficult and it becomes almost impossible to distinguish between a real refugee and an illegal immigrant. This is the reason countries such as Malaysia and Indonesia refused to take in refugees initially. Indonesia believes that only 30-40% of the refugees are actually Rohingya, and the rest are “illegal Bangladeshi laborers”.

The issue has been recognised by Bangladesh itself who are aware of these “illegal laborers”, whom they call economic migrants. Bangladesh’s official stance on these “economic migrants” is that they discredit Bangladesh by leaving claiming that they have plenty of opportunities to succeed in Bangladesh. Recently, Malaysia and Indonesia have been open to accepting Rohingya refugees in addition to Thailand, and the Philippines. Despite this, the majority of the refugees flee on foot to Bangladesh who currently feels the most pressure from the crisis.

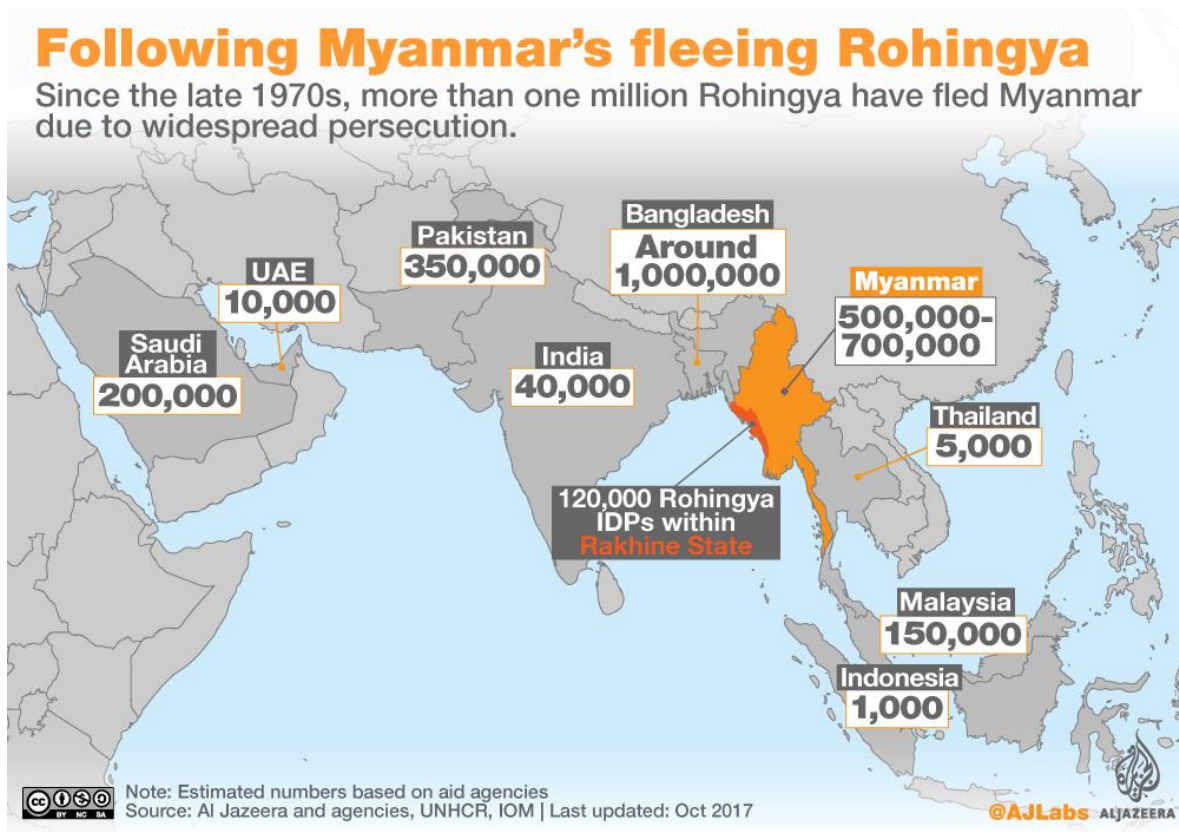
#### 4. Major Countries Involved:

The countries involved are Bangladesh, Myanmar, Indonesia, the Philippines, Thailand, Malaysia and the UK. All the aforementioned countries with the exception of the UK and Myanmar are accepting refugees, with Bangladesh being the nation with the largest refugee population of all the nations mentioned above. The UK has pledged 59 million pounds to the Rohingya and is currently in support the Rohingya refugees, being the only major power to publicly support the Rohingya as well as taking concrete action to solve the issue.

## Finding safe haven in Bangladesh

Hundreds of thousands of Rohingya have left their ethnic homeland of Rakhine State for the district of Cox's Bazar in Chittagong, Bangladesh.





### 5. UN Involvement:

The UN is yet to establish any peacekeeping force in the region but that is likely due to the fact that most of them UN peacekeepers are from Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and or Indonesia, all Muslim majority nations who may have conflicts of interest. This means that the responsibility would fall largely on Western nations to provide peacekeeping forces, and these nations tend to have a poor track record when it comes to protecting civilians. This can be seen in previous UN peacekeeping mission such as the ones in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, where peacekeepers failed to protect civilians and de-escalate the conflict.

Most of the UN's efforts are focused on the refugee camps, where they have begun distributing food and water as well as helping with the vaccination of common contagious diseases such as measles. They have also begun implementing preventative measures to ensure that diseases such as Cholera don't spread. Furthermore, the UN has begun relocating refugees in danger zones or areas prone to natural disasters during the monsoon season.

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