



(RESEARCH ARTICLE)



## 5 Decades of Rohingya refugees' crisis: A security quandary for Bangladesh

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### Abstract

The Rohingya refugee crisis stems from Myanmar's 1982 citizenship law, which excluded the Rohingya from national identity, leaving them stateless. This persecuted Muslim minority has sought refuge in neighboring countries, primarily Bangladesh, since 1978. Over 10,000 Rohingya now live in Bangladesh's makeshift camps, dependent on aid from the UN, the Bangladeshi government, and NGOs. However, their presence poses significant security challenges, including links to illicit activities, border security issues, environmental strain, and potential militancy, all of which burden Bangladesh's limited resources and economy. The Bangladeshi government acknowledges the crisis as a serious threat to national security. This study explores the complexities of the Rohingya predicament, assessing its historical background and current implications for Bangladesh. Utilizing both primary and secondary data, the research includes surveys and in-depth interviews with local residents, NGO representatives, diplomats, and border security personnel. The analysis employs descriptive and analytical methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the issue and its impact on Bangladesh's security landscape.

**Keywords:** Bangladesh; Rohingya; Security; Trafficking; Terrorism

### 1. Introduction

The United Nations recognizes the Rohingyas as one of the largest and most persecuted ethnic groups in the world. Despite residing in Myanmar for generations, they are systematically marginalized, denied citizenship, and subjected to strict regulations, including obtaining permission to marry, restrictions on the number of children they can have, and mandatory notification of authorities for travel beyond their villages. Both the Burmese government and military have subjected them to prolonged persecution. They have left in masse or become illegal migrants because of claimed persecution perpetrated by the Myanmar government to neighboring countries, primarily Bangladesh, where they have sought shelter since 1978. A subsequent major migration of more than 250,000 Rohingya refugees fleeing persecution in the Union of Myanmar resulted in their arrival in Bangladesh between 1991 and 1992. Living in makeshift camps, they are entirely reliant on outside assistance from the United Nations (UN), the Government of Bangladesh (GOB), and a variety of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) for their survival (NGOs). These exoduses were mostly addressed as a result of agreements on repatriation between the two countries, as well as assistance efforts by the United Nations and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Nevertheless, the Burmese military administration does not intend to accept those returning refugees as members of a national minority; instead, they are categorised as outsiders or illegal Bengali immigrants by the government. Furthermore, the Rohingyas in Bangladesh are involved in a slew of unlawful activities, which puts Bangladesh in a vulnerable position internationally. Furthermore, since they have been refused citizenship, these Rohingyas have placed an uneven strain on Bangladesh's limited resources. While the majority of research focus on explaining why and how instability leads to the influx of refugees, the process by which refugees cause conflict, dilemma, and insecurity in their home nation is also worth investigating. Taking these facts into account, this article tries to demonstrate that the Rohingya issue is no longer just a humanitarian catastrophe, but is also a possible danger to the internal security of the country of Bangladesh. Bangladesh finds itself in a difficult position

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as it tries to balance national objectives with the protection of Rohingyas' human security rights and safety. The purpose of this study is not to instill negative feelings against the Rohingyas, but rather to examine how Rohingyas are being drawn into criminal activities with relative ease. Bangladesh's security is jeopardised as a result of these unlawful activities.

## 2. Material and methods

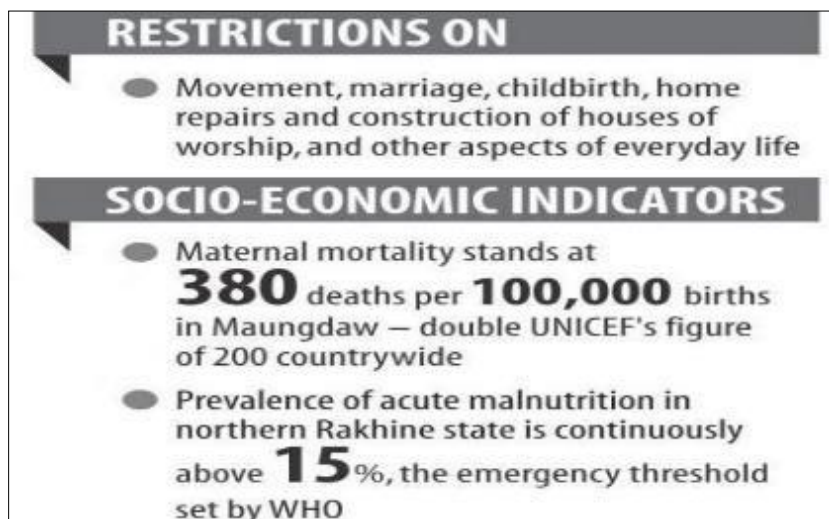
The Rohingya crisis, characterized by the mass displacement of the Rohingya Muslim population from Myanmar's Rakhine State, has posed significant humanitarian, social, and security challenges for neighboring Bangladesh. The literature review explores the security implications of the crisis for Bangladesh, examining the primary sources, scholarly articles, policy papers, and analyses that address the growing security concerns linked to the refugee influx. By synthesizing existing research, the review aims to shed light on the multifaceted security issues arising from the crisis, the responses from Bangladesh, and the broader implications for regional stability. Interviews, Books, journals, magazines, newspapers and others alike served as the sources of secondary data. In overall research process, the unit of analysis is not the Rohingyas but the Illegal works occurring by the Rohingyas.

## 3. Results and discussion

### 3.1. Rohingya: Identity itself a security dilemma

"Historically Muslim, the Rohingya community finds itself as a minority amongst an Arakanese Buddhist majority. There are approximately 1 million Rohingya Muslims in Myanmar, roughly 5% of the total population (Leider, 2018 May 24)." While not the sole Muslim population in the country, they represent the largest concentration within a single region. Sittwe, the capital of Rakhine State, previously had a Muslim community of 73,000, but now fewer than 5,000 remain. This shift highlights a broader regional trend, prompting the question: what caused this decline, and where have these people gone? According to a report by 'The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum', "Rohingyas face segregation, hate speech, physical violence, restrictions of movement, sexual violence, voting restrictions etc." Sophie Ansel says,

"They have no rights. Since the 1960's, a lot of programs have been put into place to push them out of Myanmar" she explained to RFI. "But in 1982, there was a special law that made them stateless. They lost all their rights to citizenship, and their rights became tough and unbearable. They lost their rights for marriage, to move to another village. They were also arrested and killed" (Yeasmin S. , 2016)



**Figure 1** Restrictions Imposed on Individuals

Figure 1 illustrates the various restrictions imposed on individuals in terms of citizenship, movement, employment, education, and other fundamental aspects of life. "Rohingyas are victim of persecution because they are a Muslim minority in a country where 80 to 90% of the population is Buddhist. Some Buddhist nationalists even believe that they are participating in what they call a Muslim invasion" (Yeasmin S. , 2016). Being persecuted for their Muslim identity Rohingyas flee from Myanmar and migrate to the nearest border countries like Bangladesh, Thailand, India, Srilanka, and Malaysia. "Wherever they go, these refugees are met with mixed receptions. Thailand, also a Buddhist majority

country, has documented problems with its own Muslim minority population in its southern provinces” (Yeasmin S. , 2016). Thailand, despite claims of its immigration facilities being overwhelmed, has faced accusations of turning away boatloads of Rohingya asylum seekers, forcing them back to perilous conditions at sea. Recently, a large mass grave was uncovered along the Thai coastline, highlighting the tragic end many Rohingyas face during their harrowing escape from persecution in Myanmar (Rahman, 2022). While Indonesia and Malaysia, both predominantly Muslim nations, express sympathy for the plight of their fellow Muslims, they remain hesitant to accept significant numbers of stateless refugees (Yeasmin S. , 2016). As a result, an entire generation remains trapped in a vicious cycle of poverty, deprivation of basic human rights, and lack of opportunity not only within Myanmar, the land they have historically called home, but also in foreign countries where they are relegated to the status of refugees (Yeasmin S. , 2016). “The general view of the Arakanese is that they are the sole original inhabitants of the area; Rohingyas are considered illegal Bangladeshi immigrants who settled in the Arakan province during British rule of Burma” (Bahar, 1982). Beside this, Since Bangladesh is a predominantly Muslim country and the Naaf River serves as the sole boundary between Myanmar and Bangladesh, Rohingyas often choose Bangladesh as their first destination for migration. So, Bangladesh has to face refugee Influx frequently.

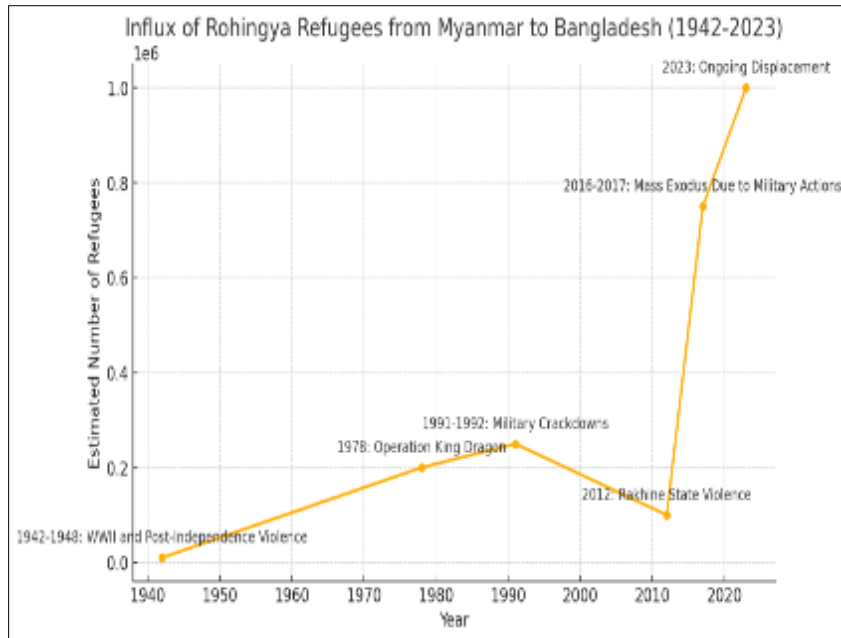


**Figure 2** Rohingyas Migration Route

Rohingyas are Muslim but they are not Bangladeshi and for this reason they face social negligence from the local people initially. Without this, 11 ethnic groups are living in the Chittagong hill tracks and most of them are non-Muslim. So we cannot think of a stable situation if Rohingyas start to live in Bangladesh permanently. So, Rohingyas are being persecuted also in Bangladesh for their identity.

### 3.2. Reluctance to return

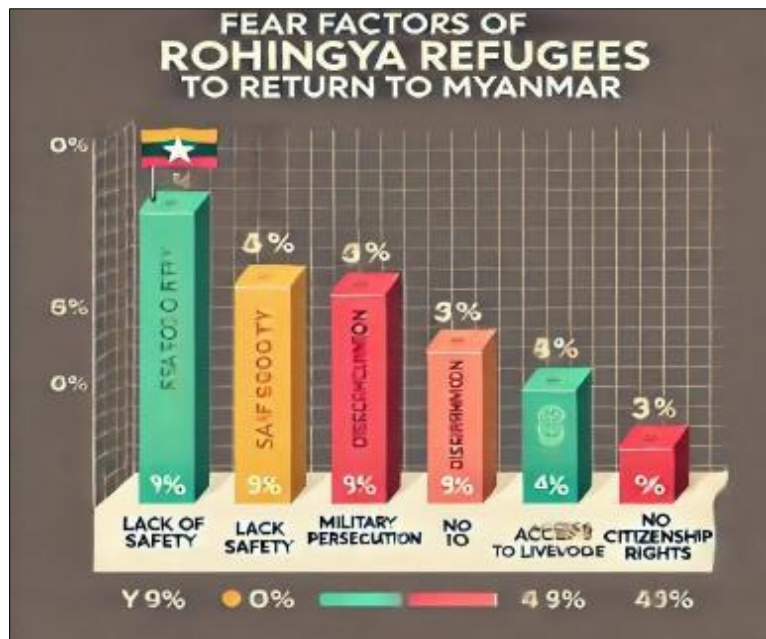
Since 1942, when a large number of refugees returned to Myanmar, the Rohingya refugees who fled to Bangladesh have been adamant about not returning (Hossain M. S., 2020). They claimed that there were a variety of reasons for their apprehension. The most fundamental is a lack of safety and security for their lives. They also mentioned the threat of persecution by the military. The Xchange Foundation conducted a focus group discussion in 2018 and found that 97.77 percent of respondents were unwilling to return to Myanmar. Almost everyone (98 percent) thought they would be discriminated against and tortured if they returned. Respondents were also given the chance to freely express their greatest concerns about going to Myanmar, in addition to whether they anticipated being persecuted. The findings of the inquiry, on the other hand, are listed on the table.



**Figure 3** Influx of Rohingya Refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh

Here's the graph illustrating the significant influx periods of Rohingya refugees from Myanmar to Bangladesh. Each major wave aligns with critical events, such as political and military actions, which triggered spikes in migration. This visual helps track the scale of displacement over time, reflecting the impact of specific historical events on the Rohingya population

### 3.3. Border security



**Figure 4** Fear Factors of Rohingya Refugees

In 2017, the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA), one of the terrorist organizations, was accused of murdering almost half a dozen security personnel in Myanmar's Rakhine State (Hossain M. S., 2020). The same organization may pose a significant danger to Bangladesh. ARSA made their first appearance along the Bangladesh-Myanmar border in Rakhine in 2017 (UNHCR, 2018). The Bangladeshi security establishment is worried that ARSA would attempt to mobilize inside Bangladeshi refugee camps and utilize them as a platform for cross-border combat. Is ARSA affiliated



with any other regional or worldwide terrorist groups? So far, the hints have been ambiguous. Al-Qaeda in the Indian subcontinent released a statement just before the New Year, encouraging Bangladeshi Muslims to launch an armed revolt in favour of the Rohingyas (Hossain M. S., 2014). It's difficult to say if such remarks were influenced by the two organizations' connections. However, the same extremist network (Al-Qaeda) has never previously been revealed in Bangladesh. Bangladesh does not foresee any unanticipated security issues during the time of economic growth, although everyone in America is aware of the events of 1/11.

Here is a graph visualizing the fear factors of Rohingya refugees in returning to Myanmar. It highlights the key concerns like lack of safety, military persecution, discrimination, lack of livelihood opportunities, and absence of citizenship rights.

### 3.4. Rohingyas involvement in criminal works

A 271-kilometer-long border with Myanmar separates Bangladesh from the country, and the boundary passes through hills, woods, rivers, canals, and the sea, making border control challenging. Because of its openness, the border is quickly becoming a conduit for international crime, including the smuggling of weapons and narcotics, as well as people trafficking.



**Figure 5** Unlawful Activities of the Rohingyas

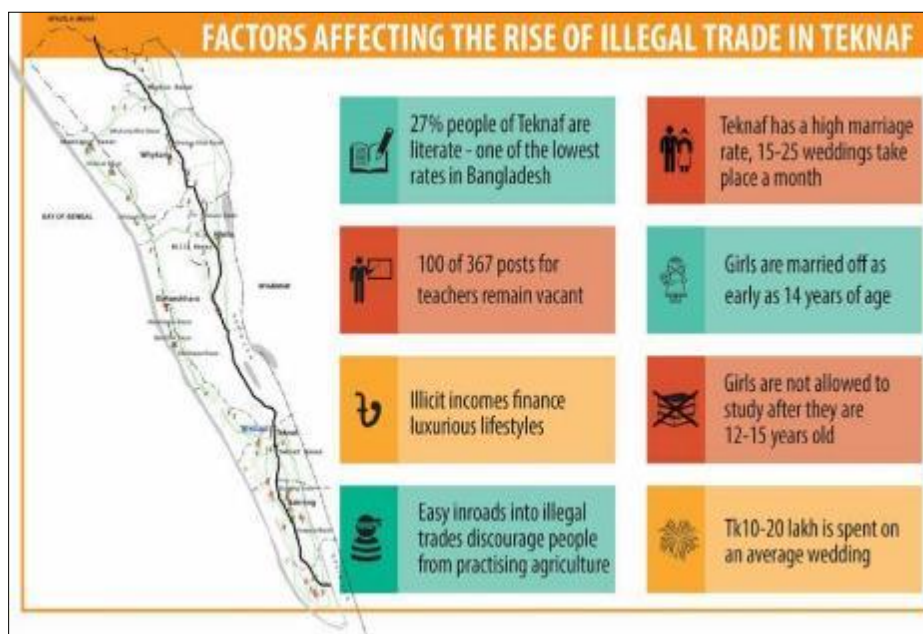
The Bangladesh Department of Narcotics Control has identified the Bangladesh-Myanmar border area as a key stop along the notorious Eastern route. There are at least ten facilities in Myanmar's border region that manufacture illicit narcotics that are trafficked into Bangladesh. The Rohingyas are used as smugglers, middlemen, and traffickers. "Bangladesh's security is threatened by terrorist organisations led by Rohingya Muslims. The ArakanRohingya Islamic Front (ARIF), Rohingya Solidarity Organization (RSO), Rohingya National Alliance (RNA), and ArakanRohingya National Organization (ARNO) are among the main organisations presenting a security concern to Bangladesh" (Hossain M. S., 2014). Within the Rohingya refugees and illegal migrants in Bangladesh, the organisations have members, followers, and sympathisers. They seem to have worked with Bangladeshi terrorist organisations including the Harkatul Jihad al Islami Bangladesh (HuJI-B).

Other Islamist, ethno-nationalist, and narco-terrorist organisations, such as the ARNO, RNA, the separatist Democratic Party of Arakan (DPA), and the narco-terrorist Arakan Liberation Party (ALP), are allegedly still active. In the heart of the Chittagong Hill Tracts, the ALP often coerces Bangladeshi indigenous people into cultivating poppies. The RSO and RNA are in cahoots with the DPA and operate outside of government authority. The Daily Star, a prominent Bangladeshi daily, stated that the Rohingya refugees' increasing criminal activities in Cox's Bazar have become a significant problem for the local government and population. According to intelligence sources, the migrants are presenting "security risks" to Bangladesh since they are reportedly involved with terrorist groups operating both within and outside the nation. Videos and pictures of Bengali-Muslim terrorists from RSO (Rohingya Solidarity Organization) Kalarzoes getting military training from local Bangladeshi officials and mosque-Imams in the region immediately adjacent to the Burma-Bangladesh border were published by Turkey's Islamist-controlled INCA News Agency. Narcotics trafficking and human

trafficking is a serious problem, supplying fake identification and passports, Terrorism is a word that comes to mind when we think about terrorism.

### 3.5. Rohingyas in drug trafficking

“A large number of Rohingyas are smuggling "Yaba" (an illicit narcotic) tablets in order to sell them” (Linah, 2018). The Yaba illicit market is thriving in South Asian nations, and Bangladesh is no exception. Carrying more than a hundred medications in a single cigarette package is extremely compact and handy. “The Rohingyas carry almost 92 percent of Yaba tablets, and more than 96 percent of Yaba pills enter Bangladesh through the Teknaf route” (Minar, 2021) “At the Kutupalong and Balukhali Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar, around 200 Yaba hats (small stores) are open. Bangladeshi security forces (Police, RAB, and BGB) have become tougher and have begun crackdown operations on narcotics since May 2018” (Mahmud, 2018). “Consequently, 50 million Yaba tablets have been confiscated, 400 Rohingyas and locals connected to Rohingya smugglers have been detained, and 72 smugglers have been killed in gun battles with Bangladeshi security forces” (Alo, 2019). However, the bulk of the Yaba smugglers are said to be female Rohingyas at the moment.



**Figure 6** Factors Affecting the Rise of Illegal Trade in Teknaf

According to the Department of Narcotics Control, yaba controls half of the drug market in Bangladesh, which is worth about Tk 3000 crore. Teknaf is the sole route via which yaba may be smuggled out of Myanmar. Teknaf is a place where a great deal of illicit commerce takes place. One of the most significant sources of yaba transactions is the assistance provided to Rohingyas who have intruded into Bangladesh, providing them with refuge in Cox's Bazar and aiding them in the acquisition of passports and the issuance of national ID cards. The quantity of the black money transaction, on the other hand, could not be confirmed by a reliable source. Border Guard Bangladesh arrests Rohingyas with yaba on a near-daily basis, according to reports. Within the month of August 2015, BGB troops confiscated a large quantity of Yaba pills valued at more than Taka 123.75 million from the Burma-Bangladesh border.

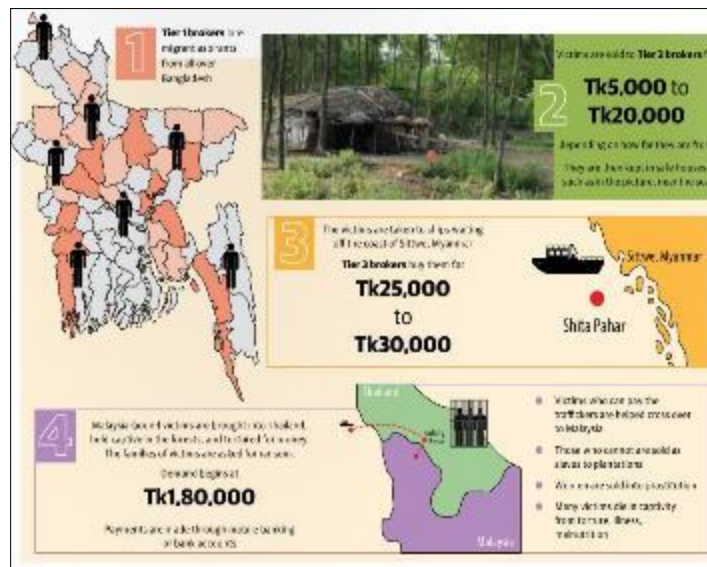


**Figure 7** Smuggling and Drug Trafficking Network Involving the Rohingya

Here is a visual representation of the smuggling and drug trafficking network involving the Rohingya people in Bangladesh.

### 3.6. Rohingyas in human trafficking

Because of the huge profits produced, people smugglers and traffickers who have thrived in Teknaf since 1996 have been able to extend their activities across the country. Following a recent investigation, it was revealed that a police-compiled list of people traffickers had been obtained, which identified 230 top brokers throughout the country. One hundred and twenty-one (210), or 133, of the local traffickers on the list are from the Cox's Bazar-Teknaf area, with 133 from Teknaf alone, 51 from Cox's Bazar, and 26 from Shah Porir Dwp. The remaining members are from diverse districts throughout the country.



**Figure 8** Human Trafficking from Bangladesh

One of the 11 foreign brokers on the list is Dil Mohammad, who is now residing in Myanmar, according to the list. People who live in the area claim it was a man called Ruhul Amin, who moved from Myanmar to Teknaf in the late 1980s, who was the one who initially found the path that would allow people to go from Bangladesh to Malaysia by boat across the Bay of Bengal (Yeasmin S. , 2016). The first trip was conducted in 1995 by a boat from the no.1 sluice gate beneath Jaliyapara in Teknaf, starting from the sluice gate. Mozammal Hoque, a long-time resident of the neighborhood, recalls- "The place was very close to my house and I heard the news from my family when I returned from Saudi Arabia"



(Yeasmin S., 2016). The route to Malaysia by water was first exclusively used by Rohingyas; however, the route grew more popular as time went on, and by 2011, individuals from all across the nation were flocking to Teknaf to embark on the trip. It didn't take long for the brokers to understand that they were sitting on a gold mine and that transporting illegal employees to Malaysia could be a lucrative business since it was inexpensive and did not need the use of a passport or a visa to do so. Rohingyas are easy victims for people traffickers, and there is no need for Rohingyas to trespass into Bangladesh, thus facilitating the use of the trafficking route by human traffickers more readily.

Many Rohingyas have lately attempted to leave the camps for better prospects in the Middle East, Malaysia, and Thailand. As a result, transnational human trafficking gangs use Bangladeshi fishing vessels to transport destitute Rohingyas to Malaysia or Thailand. Many Rohingyas have perished or are still dying in the sea on such hazardous boat trips. Around 84 Rohingya migrants attempted a hazardous boat trip to Malaysia in May 2019. After stopping a fishing boat carrying 17 Rohingyas and 5 Bangladeshi smugglers near Saint Martin's Island in the Bay of Bengal on May 18, 2019. Another issue is the fabrication of identities such as NID cards and passports. Many traders with bogus NIDs and 25,000 Bangladeshi passport duplicates were caught in Chittagong. Such illegal acts are one of Bangladesh's greatest dangers. Due to similar religious convictions, they are also likely to join global terrorist organizations for money (Hossain M. S., 2014).

### 3.7. Acts of violence resulting in death or injury

Homeless, vulnerable Rohingyas cross the border into Bangladesh and settled at the Rohingya camps in Cox's Bazar District. After settlement, the Rohingya's are gradually arrested for attempting to robbery by the Police and RAB with lots of handmade arms. Generally, the groups operate early in the morning and after becoming a security challenge for Bangladesh. "They are threatening other Rohingyas for money or valuable goods. There are rumors that a number of groups are active inside the camp areas. At first, the victims or the victim's family members receive death threats for money or valuable goods or join ARSA" (Star, Regugee Camps: Crime Spikes While Rohingyas despair, 2019). If victims disagree with such illegal requests, they are being attacked by the terrorist Rohingyas. "The scenario is not only evident inside th ecamps but outside also. Around 47 Rohingyas and local people have been killed as a result of internal clashes several times" (Network, 2019). "Later, investigations found involvement of ARSA with many of those incidents but ARSA had refused all complains. Furthermore, majority of the victims cannot even take police helps due to the fear of threat" (Hossain M. S., 2020).

### 3.8. Combat involving arms and illicit arms trafficking



Figure 9 Arms Fighting and Dealings of the Rohingya

According to Bangladesh Police in 2019, at least 328 cases have been filed against thousands of Rohingyas from August, 2017 to July 2019 (Star, Rising Criminality in Regugee Camps, 2018). Among those cases, around 31% were related to arms fighting and arms dealing where the majority percent of arms were handmade but some of those arms were highly automatic. According to a recent report, two extremist groups led by two Rohingyas named Nasrullah and Yunus



engaged in frequent clashes in order to establish dominance at the refugee settlements in Cox's Bazar (Star, Refugee Camps: Crime Spikes While Rohingyas despair, 2019). In June 2019, Bangladeshi elite force Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) had arrested 5 members of extremist Rohingyas with handmade arms near Thainghola Rohingya camp area in Ukhiya Sub- District. During another incident, around 10 to 12 Rohingyas were arrested in 2018 at Maheskhali Island with a lot of handmade local arms and some of high regulations arms like AK- 47, Sniper, some kind of sharp swords and knives (Hossain M. S., 2020).

Here is a flowchart visually depicting the arms fighting and dealings involving the Rohingya people in Bangladesh.

### **3.9. Hijack and robbery**

Hijacks and robberies have increased at the Rohingya refugee camps area in Cox's Bazar during night time and even sometime during the day [10]. There are many selected spots where hijacking is a regular incident such as bus stations, local markets, tourist spots and other quiet places with no or inadequate lighting. From December 2017 to September 2019, around 12 Rohingyas have been the sunset. They work as a team targeting any person carrying money or something valuable with them. Cox's Bazar Police had already filed more than 328 cases from December 2017 to September 2019 and almost 56 members of them have been arrested [10]. Another tendency is attacking those who come to the camps for donating grants or collecting news. In 21 February 2019, 6 journalists (3 of them were German) went to Ukhiya Rohingya camp to collect and observe the circumstances were attacked by the Rohingya extremists (Tribune, 2019).

### **3.10. Inter-marriage between Rohingyas and local communities**

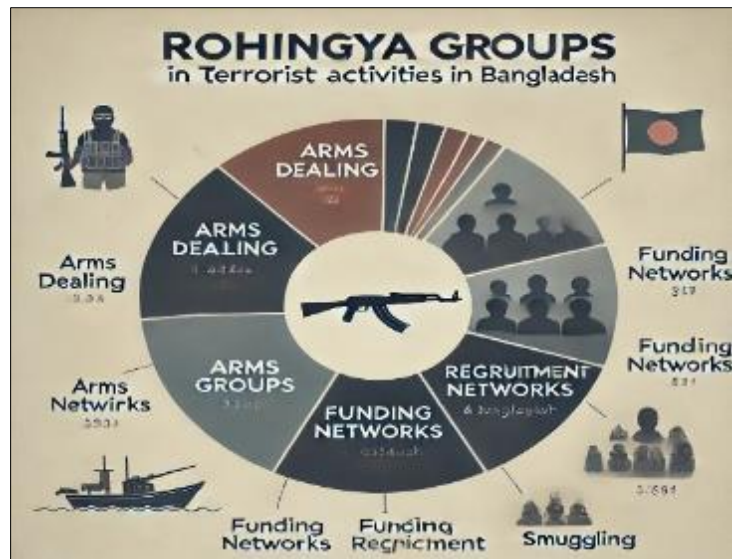
There are many evidences that some Rohingyas are trying to build the relationships with the local people through marriage [36]. As noted earlier, Rohingyas have similar religious beliefs (Islamic) as the local people have. Some desperate Rohingyas are trying to get into the marital relationship with local Bangladeshi people by making fake NIDs and Passports. Such relationships can be considered as one of the major security threats to the national identity

### **3.11. Chaotic displacement**

Although the Rohingya refugees are concentrated on several camps, they often flee and mix themselves up with the local people. As a matter of fact, they can disguise easily among the local people (Chittagongians) as both those people (Chittagongians and Rohingyas) have similarities in body structure, facial structure, language and attire. Such attempts can be considered as one of the serious national identity threats.

### **3.12. Rohingyas involvement in terrorist activities**

Terrorists from the RSO (Rohingya Solidarity Organization) have been carrying out horrific cross-border incursions inside Burma's Arakan region on a regular basis. One of their most effective actions was an ambush of a Burmese police patrol within Duchiyardan Bengali-Muslim Village on the 13th of January, 2014. It was established in the early 1980s when radical forces among the Rohingyas broke away from the more moderate primary organization, the Rohingya Patriotic Front, and formed the Rohingya Student Organization (RSO) (RPF). It was founded by Muhammad Yunus, a medical practitioner from Arakan who rose to prominence as the largest and most violent group among the Rohingyas in Bangladesh and along the border with Myanmar. Because of its stricter religious stance, the RSO quickly gained the backing of like-minded organisations across the Muslim world. Since the OIC (Organization of Islamist Cooperation) with the financial assistance of Turkey and Saudi Arabia formed the so-called Rohingya umbrella organization ARU (Arakan Rohingya Union) in May 2011, the RSO terrorists have increased their activity. In addition to the kidnapping and murder of three unarmed Burmese military engineers along the border on November 6, 2012, they also carried out a number of other successful terrorist activities. Both the Bangladeshi government and the Rohingya lobby have maintained their denials of the RSO's atrocities against unarmed Burmese engineer-soldiers over the last year. Those three abducted Burmese troops have been photographed by the RSO, and the pictures have been published with pride by the INCA News newspaper in Turkey.



**Figure 10** Involvement of Rohingys in Terrorist Activities

Here is an effective pie chart illustrating the involvement of Rohingya groups in terrorist activities in Bangladesh.

The RSO and other Rohingya groups have never had camps inside Myanmar; they have only ever had camps on the opposite side of the border in Bangladesh. The American cable television network CNN acquired more than 60 videotapes from al-archives Qaeda's in Afghanistan in August 2002, including one labelled "Burma" (Myanmar), which claims to depict Muslim "allies" training in that nation. The camp shown in the film is situated near the town of Ukhia, southeast of Cox's Bazaar, and not all of the RSO's "fighters" are Rohingyas from Myanmar, as is implied in the movie's subtitle.

### 3.13. Security concerns and associated facts

**Demographic Shifts:** The Rohingya population, with a growth rate of 4.3%, is significantly altering the demographic composition of areas like Teknaf. Many reportedly have more children to increase their share of rations provided by UNHCR and other international organizations within refugee camps.

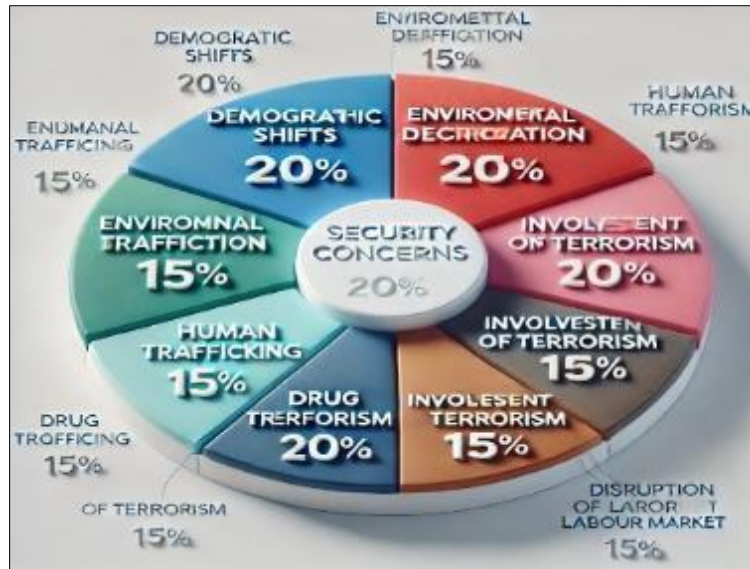
**Environmental Degradation:** The Rohingyas are contributing to environmental damage by cutting down forests near their camps and settlements. Their activities also lead to the destruction of mountains, which increases the risk of landslides in surrounding areas.

**Human Trafficking:** Rohingyas are implicated in activities such as human trafficking, smuggling, and abduction. Networks facilitating the illegal movement of Rohingyas to countries like Malaysia extend from Dhaka to Chittagong.

**Drug Trafficking:** Rohingyas play a significant role in drug trafficking, with an estimated 80% of undocumented refugees acting as couriers for drugs like yaba. Recently, a Rohingya individual was caught with 150,000 yaba tablets. There is a strong collaboration between unregistered Rohingyas and certain Myanmar nationals, who use cross-border mobile networks to conduct these illegal activities.

**Involvement in Terrorism:** Some Rohingyas have been linked to crimes such as theft, robbery, and professional killings, with evidence suggesting connections to terrorist organizations like ISIS. Their vulnerability also makes them potential targets for recruitment by extremist groups.

**Disruption of Labour Market:** Using fake Bangladeshi passports, Rohingyas have been migrating to the Middle East, Malaysia, and other countries. Their unlawful activities abroad harm Bangladesh's international reputation.



**Figure 11** Security Concerns Associated with the Rohingya Crisis

The pie chart above represents the breakdown of security concerns associated with the Rohingya crisis, as outlined in the text. Each segment is clearly labeled to reflect the proportion of each concern.

### **Recommendations**

This paper seeks to present actionable recommendations for resolving the Rohingya crisis and achieving a permanent solution to such challenges. The proposed recommendations, outlined in the following subsections, are based on insights from national and international security experts, social scientists, and political leaders.

**Safe Return to Myanmar:** The primary resolution to the refugee crisis lies in facilitating the Rohingyas' safe return to their homeland. However, without guaranteeing secure and habitable conditions, voluntary repatriation remains unlikely. Myanmar should establish a safe zone within its territory, under the supervision of UN peacekeepers, to create a conducive environment for return. Additionally, Myanmar must grant unrestricted access to the UN, international NGOs, and media in northern Rakhine State to deliver critical humanitarian aid and enable independent monitoring of on-ground conditions.

**Engagement and Pressure:** The Bangladesh Government and its international partners should strengthen political engagement with the Rohingya refugees and involve them in discussions about their future a process that has been notably absent so far. Simultaneously, diplomatic, economic, and political pressure should be maintained on Myanmar to compel the government to accept the Rohingyas back and ensure their safety. Measures such as a global arms embargo, bilateral sanctions targeting countries supporting Myanmar's military, and referrals to the International Criminal Court should be considered as additional leverage. However, such measures, as evidenced by Gambia's recent efforts, should remain as a last resort.

**UN Access and Accountability:** The UN must demand access for fact-finding missions, follow-up mechanisms, and it's Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Myanmar, alongside independent media, human rights organizations, and humanitarian agencies. Moreover, targeted sanctions should be expanded against Myanmar's military officials responsible for human rights violations, including Senior General Min Aung Hlaing, following precedents set by the United States and the United Kingdom.

**Appointment of a Presidential Envoy:** A high-level presidential envoy for Myanmar should be appointed, possibly as a dual-role official within an existing government. This envoy would collaborate with like-minded nations to lead international efforts aimed at ending abuses, supporting refugees, and fostering conditions that allow the safe and voluntary return of the Rohingyas to Myanmar.

**Bangladesh's Role and the Need for Long-term Solutions:** Ultimately, the only sustainable solution to this crisis is the repatriation of the Rohingyas to their homeland. As a middle-income nation, Bangladesh cannot indefinitely bear the burden of hosting refugees, given its densely populated territory and the significant impact on its environment,

economy, society, and culture. Furthermore, the international donations sustaining the Rohingya population are unlikely to continue over the long term. In conclusion, the authors believe that the successful implementation of these recommendations could pave the way for a lasting resolution to the Rohingya crisis.

#### 4. Conclusion

The Rohingya refugee crisis has evolved into a multifaceted challenge for Bangladesh, intertwining humanitarian concerns with critical security threats. Rooted in the 1982 Myanmar Citizenship Law, which rendered the Rohingya stateless, the crisis has escalated due to successive waves of migration, particularly since 1978, forcing Bangladesh to accommodate a substantial refugee population in makeshift camps. While the international community views the crisis as a humanitarian catastrophe, its implications for Bangladesh extend beyond human rights to severe national security dilemmas. The influx of Rohingyas has strained Bangladesh's already limited resources, disrupted the demographic balance in border areas, and exacerbated environmental degradation. Additionally, the Rohingyas' involvement in criminal activities, including drug and human trafficking, arms dealing, and associations with extremist organizations, poses significant risks to Bangladesh's internal security. Groups like ARSA have exploited the situation, potentially using refugee camps as operational bases, while transnational criminal networks profit from the desperation of the displaced population. These dynamics not only harm Bangladesh's security but also tarnish its international image. The ultimate resolution of the crisis lies in the safe and voluntary repatriation of the Rohingyas to Myanmar, a solution contingent upon ensuring their security, citizenship, and human rights within Myanmar. Until then, Bangladesh must navigate the delicate balance between safeguarding its national security and upholding humanitarian obligations. Regional cooperation, coupled with international pressure on Myanmar to address the root causes of the crisis, is essential for achieving a sustainable solution. Strengthening border security, enforcing anti-trafficking measures, and promoting development in the Rakhine State are pivotal steps toward mitigating the crisis. Last but not the least; the Rohingya crisis represents a complex intersection of humanitarian needs and security concerns. While Bangladesh shoulders the immediate burden, the onus lies on the global community to support sustainable solutions that address the crisis's root causes, ensuring stability and dignity for the Rohingyas and safeguarding Bangladesh's sovereignty and stability.

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