

## **The Rohingya Crisis and its Impacts on the Economy of Bangladesh: An Analysis of Humanitarian Response to the Repatriation Process**

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### **Abstract**

*The nature and reality of the Rohingya crisis have already turned into a protracted conflict that destabilizes regional security and development priorities, along with economic unsteadiness for Bangladesh. The objectives of this research article are to explore the instrumental factors that led Rohingya people to migrate to Bangladesh, to examine the financial impacts on the economy and sources of funds for the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh, to find the strategies of other countries to address the Rohingya people and incorporate them into human resource development, and to discover the ratios of Rohingya people who migrated to Bangladesh and the challenges of the repatriation process. The study followed qualitative research methodology to conduct this study by reviewing secondary sources and published documents. This study followed an inductive approach to a theoretical framework to analyze migration, refugee crises, and ethnic conflict, with a focus on the current study. This study reveals that Myanmar committed serious atrocities against Rohingya people that created an influx of refugees for neighboring Bangladesh. Basically, the Burmese army led Operation Nagamin (Dragon King) in 1978, whose intention was to displace so-called illegal migrations from the Rakhine province of Myanmar. Bangladesh is not a signatory state of the Geneva Convention that ensures refugees rights. However, it does not admit Rohingya people as refugees; rather, it calls them forcibly displaced Myanmar nationals. However, refugees, migration, and ethnic conflict are common phenomena in the global south due to colonial influence and international politics.*

**Keywords:** *Rohingya crisis, financial impacts, economy, Bangladesh, humanitarian response, and repatriation*

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## **1. Introduction**

The Rohingya problem has already rotated into a prolonged disagreement that poses a world disturbance. However, this global concern needs to be resolved with the consolidated efforts of world communities and conflicting parties (Islam, 2023). On the other hand, migration, displaced people, and refugees have some causal factors that do not simply occur in different parts of the world. It has long-term effects on society, the state, and human civilization. From the very beginning of human civilization, people migrated to different parts of the world for various reasons, and they formed societies, states, and civilizations.

European states have followed different types of domestic and international laws to address the ongoing migration crisis in their states (Victoria, 2015). The history of the UNHCR and its development has long episodes of diversified efforts for the stateless. UNHCR<sup>1</sup>, the UN Refugee Agency, is working to guard human beings who are deprived of nationality due to persecution and forced to escape conflict in different parts of the world. This global organization is trying to ensure a secure and sound future for stateless and persecuted people. This international organization was founded in 1950 with the consolidated efforts of the General Assembly of the United Nations to address the crisis of homeless people after the outbreak of the Second World War. At present, this organization operates its activities in 135 (one hundred and thirty-five) countries and offers medical care, water, food, shelter, and life-saving assistance to persecuted people for war and other natural and man-made disasters (UNHCR, 2024). However, the legal documents and key foundations of the UNHCR's work come from the 1951 Refugee Convention and its 1967 protocol. This legal convention clearly mentions refugees and their rights to standards of conduct for their shelter. This international protocol protects refugees, who are the most vulnerable people (UNHCR, 2001–2024).

The International Organization for Migration (IOM) is a prominent intergovernmental organization that takes care of migration in order to encourage humane and other benefits for migrated people. IOM, a UN migration, was launched in 1951 to make migration activities for all. It has 175 (one hundred and seventy-five) member states that coordinate with governments to enhance services to the migrated people. This intergovernmental organization works on migration problems and advocates for humanitarian assistance to migrants, displaced people, and refugees (IOM, 2024).

Myanmar had committed serious atrocities against Rohingya people that created an influx of refugees for neighboring Bangladesh. However, Myanmar got tremendous support from China and India, both from a diplomatic and

international perspective, to handle the Rohingya issue for mutual national and economic interests. On the other hand, some critics argued that Bangladesh recently signed a controversial bilateral agreement on November 23, 2017, with Myanmar that is unrealistic and ambiguous in terms of the repatriation process of Rohingya people to Myanmar. However, Bangladesh is facing serious challenges, followed by security challenges, economic effects, social strains, environmental degradation, etc., due to Rohingya people (Alam, 2018; Holmes, 2017).

The impacts of the Rohingya refugee crisis are, respectively, economic, social, cultural, environmental, and political factors that create different challenges for local Bangladeshi people (Khan, 2024). The Rohingya crisis was started intentionally by the military personnel of Myanmar in 1978. Basically, the Burmese army led Operation Nagamin (Dragon King) in 1978, whose intention was to displace so-called illegal migrations from the Rakhine province of Myanmar. However, Rohingya people sheltered in Bangladesh and other parts of the world from Myanmar's persecution against ethnic and religious minorities in Myanmar after the state-sponsored operation (Ansar and Khaled, 2021).

## **2. Literature Reviews**

### ***2.1 International Migration and Refugee Politics***

Victoria (2015) cited that the European Union (EU) is confronting the complex challenges of the influx of migration in Europe after World War II. Basically, people have migrated to Europe due to the following factors: a secure and sound life in developed countries, internal and regional instability in their countries of origin through unconventional and illegal routes. They left their home countries for developed states to seek humanitarian assistance and support. The people of Eritrea, the Central African Republic, Nigeria, Mali, Afghanistan, South Sudan, Somalia, and Iraq left their states due to protracted conflicts and other hurdles and migrated to Europe and other parts of the world.

Sherrill Hayes, Brandon D. Lundy, and Maia Carter Hallward (2016) identified the key themes in conflict-induced migration. The instrumental factors of conflict-induced migration are, respectively, economic instability, disputes over identity politics, apprehension, dispossession, environmental challenges, war, and violence. The people of Syria, Afghanistan, and Somalia left their countries due to a food crisis, prolonged poverty, and protracted conflicts from their countries. Some countries, like Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon, and Europe, have accommodated 3.6 million refugees. There are some debates about voluntary migration, forced migration, asylum seekers, humanitarian factors, and security issues. On the other hand, international communities and institutions have faced serious criticism due to their double standards in handling this global refugee crisis.

Vrânceanu et al. (2023) found that there is a mixed outlook on asylum seekers among European citizens. The researchers reviewed the refugee context from the triangular perspectives of Turkey, Greece, and Germany, adding international relations issues. This study finds that European states made some agreements and policies with Turkey and other European nations to control the refugee crisis. Basically, international migration occurs through the 'East Mediterranean Route,' the Aegean Sea between Turkey and Greece, to reach European countries. This study suggests that public preferences have mixed arguments about the cross-country cooperation of refugees. Some Greek and German voters are not welcoming the pro-policy for the refugees; rather, they prefer aid policies for the refugees only. On the other hand, Greek and German respondents agree to strong borders by the Turkish authorities, whereas Turkish respondents reject these policies rather than offering monetary aid to refugees. Martin (2016) accomplished a study on the new models of international agreements for refugee protection. This study shows that 65 million people have left their countries of origin due to conflict and other persecution, as per the statistics of UNHCR by June 2016. Abdul Kadir Khan (2024) conducted research on a critical analysis of the factors influencing peaceful coexistence between Rohingya refugees and host communities in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. He used some theories and methods to analyze the study. It is a qualitative approach with some semi-structured key informant interviews. The researcher exposed five sectors followed by economic, social, cultural, environmental, and political factors.

Newland (2016) cited that about 1 million refugees crossed the Mediterranean Sea in 2015, which exposed the anomalies of the international humanitarian system. The UN organized different summits and seminars to address the crisis of refugees and migrants. The outcomes of these international conferences augment funds and relief for the persecuted and stateless human beings.

## ***2.2 Rohingya Crisis and Myanmar's involvement in regional anxiety***

Arnab Roy Chowdhury (2019) conducted research on international domestic linkages with reference to the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. He followed the in-depth interviews of relevant stakeholders through Skype and other modes of personal interviews to conduct this study. He exposed that Bangladesh developed different types of policy advisory and refugee management systems with some controversies, as it is not a signatory state of the Geneva Convention, along with an apathy to give refugee rights.

According to Ahsan Ullah (2016), the Rohingya were methodically driven out of Myanmar by their own government. Over the years, ethnic communities have faced various forms of persecution, policies of injustice, and deprivation of fundamental human rights. The majority of countries in Southeast Asia have not ratified the 1951 agreements that guaranteed the rights of refugees. The researcher used ethnographic fieldwork to interview 29 Rohingya refugees. According to this report, men, women, and children in Rakhine State, Myanmar, were routinely assaulted by law enforcement authorities, including the military, police, and other officials. In Myanmar, where Rohingya and other ethnic minorities have long faced severe obstacles, state-sponsored violence is a frequent occurrence. Additionally, their study show that Myanmar is the only and main cause of the Rohingya catastrophe in these areas.

The above-mentioned research works have reviewed different issues followed by international migration and refugee politics, the Rohingya crisis, and Myanmar's involvement in regional anxiety. However, this study has focused on the instrumental factors of the Rohingya crisis and its financial impacts on the economy of Bangladesh with an Analysis of Humanitarian Response to the Repatriation Process.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

There is a dispute and mixed arguments to identify the Rohingya people as migrant or refugees in terms of Bangladesh domestic laws and policies. Bangladesh refers to Rohingya as 'Forcibly Displaced Myanmar's Nationals'.

The objectives of the study are, respectively:

- a) To explore the instrumental factors that led Rohingya people to migrate to Bangladesh.
- b) To examine the financial impacts on the economy of Bangladesh for the Rohingya crisis and explore the donors for humanitarian aid.
- c) To evaluate the methods of other countries' strategies to address the migrated people and analyze their contributions to human resource development.
- d) To calculate the ratios of Rohingya people who migrated to Bangladesh and find out the challenges of the repatriation process.

### **4. Methodology of the Study**

By examining published papers and secondary sources, the study was carried out using a qualitative research technique. Besides, this study used an inductive method and a theoretical framework to investigate migration, refugee crises, and ethnic conflict. Additionally, it has reviewed different types of published research works, documents, articles, and other open sources as per the current study.

## 5. Theoretical Underpinning

There are huge arguments and discord among the scholars for the migration and refugees theories, as the subject is complex and multiple actors are involved in this matter. However, theorists, social scientists, researchers, and policymakers have given different types of theories and models to analysis to come up with new theoretical foundations to analyze migration and refugee issues.

### 5.1 Critical theory of migration control

Karl Marx evaluated the political economy with reference to the critical struggles of the working class. He condemns the contemporary social order that contradicts a fuller comprehension of human liberty (Georgi & Schatral, 2012). However, the people of the global south have migrated to different parts of the world for survival strategies since the 1980s to free themselves from cold war-related civil wars, insolvency, poverty, neoliberal structural adjustment for an open market economy, or free trade. To enhance dignified management for asylum seekers, people are promoting the following slogans: no borders, global freedom of movement, no one is illegal, etc. The outbreak of migration occurred in many parts of the world due to the involvement of different developed and developing states in civil wars. The Green Party of Germany, for the first time, appealed for the free movement of people on earth due to the anti-racist migrant solidarity movement. On the other hand, there is a counter-response to Marx's argument about the struggle of critical theory (Georgi & Schatral, 2012).

## 6. Results and Discussion

### 6.1 The instrumental factors that led Rohingya people to migrate to Bangladesh

Rohingya refugees left their country for a violent campaign of ethnic cleansing in Myanmar, crossed the border, and settled in Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh. The Rohingya people were bound to leave their homeland due to an operation clearance that was led by the Burmese military in late August 2017. Primarily, Bangladesh had to open its border due to international diplomatic pressure from the international community and humanitarian grounds (Alam, 2018).

The people who are regarded as the most persecuted people, they are Rohingya community over the last couple of years. However, a huge number of non-governmental organizations are assisting them, which is not sufficient for their household expenses. They have been deprived of their basic rights and other

issues from states. On the other hand, they are also now regarded as a burden for the hosting countries, like Bangladesh, where it is one of the most populated countries in the world (Faye, 2021).

The Myanmar government considers the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA) as a terrorist organization. However, it has been revealed that ARSA admits the recent attack on police and army posts. Therefore, the recent crisis was blown up in August 2017 after the crackdown of military personnel against Rohingyas, which created a huge influx of Rohingya people in Bangladesh. On the other hand, the military atrocities took 6,700 Rohingya lives immediately in the first attack. Therefore, Rohingyas fled their country of origin to save their lives and fear of persecution at the hands of security forces (Albert and Maizland, 2020).

## ***6.2 The financial impacts on the economy and sources of funds for the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh***

Bangladesh needs humanitarian monetary aid from the relevant stakeholders to bear the burden of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. About 1.1 million Rohingyas are dwelling in Bangladesh temporarily, and they need basic things, respectively, food items, safe drinking water, health care, and other pertinent items that support their daily lives. However, the United Nations (UN) can play a pivotal role in getting financial aid from donor agencies before starting the repatriation process (Jamshed, 2021).

Rohingya people are considered one of the most vulnerable human beings in this universe. The local economy and employment opportunities have been transformed in bad positions due to the influx of Rohingya in the Chittagong division. There are mixed reactions due to this crisis in the following cases: e.g., some local employment youths get the opportunity to work with government, NGOs, and development partners in different sectors where the turnout of tourists has reduced in Saint Martin Island's Bazar and tourist areas due to the instability in these regions (Khuda and Scott, 2020).

Though it has resource limitations, Bangladesh has sheltered more than one million Rohingya people. The local people of Chittagong have been deprived of insufficient income due to the influx of Rohingya people. However, 50% of the daily wages have been reduced for the day laborers for the Rohingya refugees in Chittagong. On the other hand, the house rent has increased to 120% in this area for Rohingya and for the employees of aid agencies (Ansar and Khaled, 2021).

Bangladesh requires 7 crore BDT for Rohingya people's food and other expenditures every year. This fund needs management from foreign and humanitarian aid; otherwise, it affects the internal economy and budget of Bangladesh (BBC Bangla, 2017). Bangladesh government spent 59920.25 lac (allocated 10835.00 lac) under the emergency multi-sector Rohingya crisis response project in the fiscal year of 2022-23 from September 2018 to June 2024 (MODMR, 2023).

### ***6.3 The strategies of other countries to address the Rohingya people and incorporate them into human resource development***

It is estimated that about 52% of the refugees are women, and 80,000 (eighty thousand) Rohingya women are pregnant. However, the family size and fertility rate of Rohingya are so high that they need humanitarian aid to take care of them (Khuda and Scott, 2020).

The ethnic minorities and Rohingya Muslims have confronted systematic discrimination and protracted persecution in Myanmar. A large number of Rohingya people have left Myanmar and taken shelter in Bangladesh since the 2012 and 2017 communal violence in Myanmar. The ethnic and religious minorities are deprived of basic and human rights due to weak democracy and military coups in Myanmar. The democratic future of Myanmar is at stake and is controlled by military personnel. Myanmar authorities did not ensure a safe and sustainable repatriation process or implement the Security Council resolution of 2669 (2022) for ethnic and religious minorities. However, Myanmar needs to ensure a responsible political system that is delegated and fully elected in order to set up an inclusive future (Al-Nashif, 2023).

#### ***Implementing the Security Council's Resolution***

The relevant stakeholders and the world community put pressure on Myanmar to implement the Security Council resolution that was adopted on December 21, 2022. The resolution 2669 underlines to ensure the rule of law and respect for human rights. On the other hand, it mentions that Myanmar should defend democratic institutions and prioritize the will of the Myanmar people. The resolution expresses concern for the contemporary situations in Myanmar that destabilize the sustainable, dignified, and voluntary return of Rohingya refugees in Myanmar. It also praises the initiatives of the Bangladeshi government for Rohingya people (UN Security Council Resolution 2669, 2022). Recently, UN Secretary-General came to Bangladesh to show solidarity with the Rohingya people. However, Antonio Guterres, UN Secretary-General, and Muhammad Yunus, the chief adviser and head of the government, attended an iftar party with displaced Rohingya people in Bangladesh (Hafizur, 2025).



#### **6.4 The ratios of Rohingya people who migrated to Bangladesh and the challenges of the repatriation process**

Starting the repatriation procedure is the ultimate resolution to address the contemporary crisis of Rohingyas that exists between Myanmar and Bangladesh (Jamshed, 2021). Without ensuring this process, it needs financial aid to support Rohingyas daily basic and human rights demands.

Rohingya shelters in Myanmar over the years. Rohingya communities are living in Myanmar. Recently, they have been forcefully migrated from Myanmar to Bangladesh. However, they lost their citizenship rights due to the Citizenship law that was enacted in 1982. The influx of the Rohingya refugee crisis pervaded a lot of problems for Bangladesh as this nation is striving for economic well-being since its independence. They are living in different camps of Bangladesh, followed by Cox's Bazar, Kutupalong, and other respective areas (Reza, 2024). For ensuring a secure situation, Muhammad Yunus, Bangladesh's chief adviser, emphasized to the world community the need for accelerating the Rohingya repatriation process. He appealed to mediators and superpowers to resolve the crisis as Bangladesh shelters over 1.2 million displaced Rohingya people in his sideline discussion of the 79th United Nations General Assembly in New York (TOI, 2024).

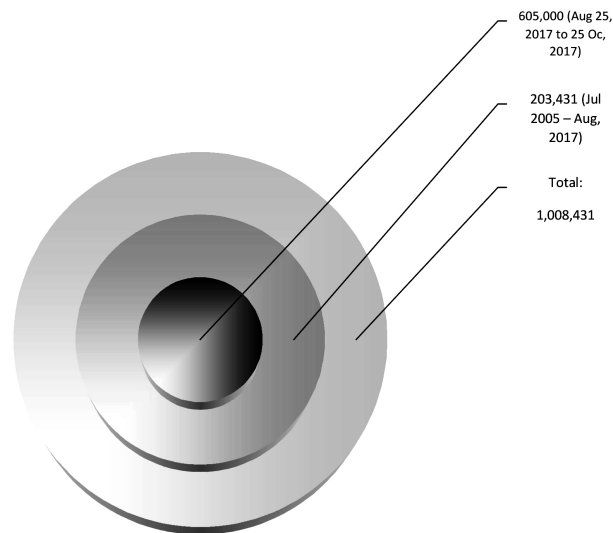


Figure 01: Rohingya shelters in Bangladesh over the years, Source: (Khuda and Scott, 2020; (MODMR, 2023).

There are 1200,000 Rohingya people are living in Bangladesh according to Bangladesh government's statistics since 1992's Rohingya persecution (MODMR, 2023). The latest report shows that Bangladesh is extending its hands to 1.2 million Rohingyas in Chittagong and other parts of Bangladesh (TOI, 2024).

It is alarming news that Bangladesh is unable to repatriate a single person to Myanmar since the latest crisis of August 2017. On the other hand, there are lots of challenges in the repatriation process for weak diplomacy and legal battles against Myanmar. However, some countries like Canada and UK sheltered a hundreds of Rohingya in their country that is small portion of a huge influx of Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh (BBC News Bangla, 2024). However, The Repatriation Agreement is not active between these two countries. However, it is observed that there has been no implementation of a repatriation agreement since 1978. Therefore, Rohingya people are passing their days with a lot of hardship. Gambia issued a case for Rohingya genocide against Myanmar at the UN Court with support from other countries. On the other hand, it has tremendous impacts on conflicting parties to address the crisis effectively. However, Gambia submitted a 46-page application to the International Court of Justice against Myanmar due to the persecution, rape, genocide, and demolition of Rohingya communities in the Rakhaine State of Myanmar (Bowcott, 2019).

## **7. Conclusion**

Bangladesh needs humanitarian monetary aid from the relevant stakeholders to bear the burden of the Rohingya crisis in Bangladesh. About 1.2 million Rohingyas are dwelling in Bangladesh and need basic things, respectively, food items, safe drinking water, health care, and other pertinent items that support their daily lives. Rohingya people are considered one of the most vulnerable human beings in this universe. The local economy and employment opportunities have been transformed into a new dimension due to the influx of Rohingya in Chittagong division. Though it has resource limitations, Bangladesh has sheltered more than one million Rohingya people. The local people of Chittagong have been deprived of insufficient income and other problems due to the influx of Rohingya people.

Bangladesh should cooperate with Gambia, ICJ, and other countries in order to proceed with the legal procedures against Myanmar. Therefore, it will take a long time for them to put pressure on Myanmar's diplomatic and international sectors. Finally, it will ensure the rights of Rohingya people and facilitate peace and security in this region.

The democratic future of Myanmar is at stake and is controlled by military Junta. Myanmar authorities did not ensure a safe and sustainable repatriation process or implement the Security Council resolution of 2669, 2022 for ethnic and religious minorities. However, Myanmar needs to ensure a responsible political system that is delegated and fully elected in order to set up an inclusive future for different ethnic communities. Starting the repatriation procedure is the ultimate solution to address the contemporary crisis of Rohingyas that exists between Myanmar and Bangladesh. Bangladesh needs to comply with national and international laws and engage all stakeholders to address this crisis, as it is not confined to bilateral problems but rather is shaped by protracted international conflict.

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