

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

The issue of the Rohingya Refugee Crisis was a result of an ethnic conflict between the Burmese and the Rohingya people<sup>1</sup>. Although the Rohingya refugee crisis has been going on for as recent as 2015, the issue of ethnic conflict in Myanmar has been going on for almost half a century. The ethnic conflict is often misinterpreted by the media on how it is the case of religious issue between the Rohingya Muslims and Burmese Buddhists. Although there are many differing perceptions of history, the ongoing refugee crisis due to ethnic-conflict is far beyond more than just an issue of religion. Having it occur for almost half a century, the conflict has escalated far into a case of genocide or an ethnic persecution conducted by the Myanmar government.

To understand the issue of ethnic cleansing (and root causes) that led to the ongoing refugee crisis, we first need to learn who the Rohingya people are<sup>2</sup>. Like every other ethnic groups, the Rohingyas have their own language, customs, and traditions; they are the Indo-Aryan ethnic group that resides in the Rakhine State of Burma<sup>3</sup>, close to the border of Bangladesh. To further emphasize on how this is not

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<sup>1</sup> "Rohingya Crisis." Human Rights Watch. Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.hrw.org/tag/rohingya-crisis>.

<sup>2</sup> "Rohingya Refugee Crisis." OCHA. January 25, 2019. Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.unocha.org/rohingya-refugee-crisis>.

<sup>3</sup> "Documentation of Atrocities in Northern Rakhine State." U.S. Department of State. September 24, 2018. Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.state.gov/j/drl/rls/286063.htm>.

a religious based conflict, is to look back on the history of ethnic groups present within the state of Myanmar. The Rohingyas are not the only Muslim ethnic groups; there are even other ethnic group in Myanmar that are Muslims such as in Burmese itself – marked as the largest ethnic group in Myanmar and many of them are Muslims. However, the focus of this conflict has always been on the Rohingya people – who *happens* to be predominantly Muslims.

To apprehend the identification of the Rohingya humans, we need to understand the concept of identity itself. Identity indicates each electricity and shelter. whilst the knowledge of identity as electricity has been sufficiently dealt with in recent times, there had been fewer attempts to see identity from the perspective of shelter. Indeed, within the case of the Rohingyas the usage of the time period – Rohingya - is not a lot a demonstration of strength as it is an act of shelter, although it too is lately searching for ‘strength’ to transform its position of vulnerability and melancholy. It is critical to keep this difference in mind, lest we succumb to the worldview of the majoritarian community or the nation, which sees ‘identification formation’ extra as a sign of power and a challenge to its lifestyles.

There may be sufficient space for shelving variations and having confrontation among communities replaced by a more sanely aim of sharing differences. However first, taking up the problem of a social institution looking for refuge within the phrase, Rohingya, inside the Arakan nation of Myanmar. According to the 1997 Statistical Yearbook, published with the aid of the government of Myanmar, the reliable populace of the Arakan or Rakhine country, wherein most Rohingyas reside, numbered round 2.6 million. Similarly, to this 2.6 million, some other

million plus Rohingyas live inside the Rakhine state (2009 UN figure of Rohingya population within the Arakan is 723,000). This will mean that the general populace of the Rakhine state is around four to 5 million. Inside Iity's circles, but the Rakhine country is the home of the officially specified majority - the Buddhist Rakhine's. The distinction between 'Rohingyas' and 'Rakhine's' here is a planned one, not so much for the reason of semantics as for the cause of the country. The word 'Rohingya' is a taboo inside the Capital town of Yangon and in the rest of Myanmar. In each country wide (or greater correctly, governmental) and international circles within Myanmar, the phrase simply does not exist. Even the countrywide Museum in Yangon which has an excellent collection of materials of all sub-nationalities (categorized by Iities as 'national races' and labeled into seven in phrases of language beginning – Shan, Mon, Karen, Kayah, Chin, Kachin and Rakhine) makes no mention of the Rohingyas nor does it have any series dedicated to them.

One concept indicates that the Rohingyas are descendants of Moorish, Arab and Persian traders, consisting of Moghul, Turk, Pathan and Bengali squaddies and migrants, who arrived among ninth and fifteenth centuries, married neighborhood ladies, and settled in the area. Rohingyas are therefore a mixed institution of people with many ethnic and racial connections. This position is particularly upheld by using the political organizations of the Rohingyas, consisting of pupils sympathetic to their purpose. The second concept, however, indicates that the Muslim population of the Rakhine country is generally Bengali migrants from the erstwhile East Pakistan and now Bangladesh, with a few Indians coming for the duration of the British period. This principle is similarly premised at the fact that considering

most of them speak Bengali with a robust 'Chittagong dialect,' they cannot but be unlawful immigrants from pre-1971 Bangladesh. Ities of Myanmar, which includes the majority Burman-Buddhist, subscribes to this function. There may be detail of fact in each these theories, however earlier than dwelling on them any further permit's mirror on the problem of identification within the Arakan. Arakan' is a Bengali/Arabic/Portuguese model of the nearby term 'Rakhine,' which in flip turns into 'Yakhine' in trendy Burmese. Eight Critics suspect that the term Arakan/Rakhine has come from the Pali name 'Rakkhapura,' (in Sanskrit, 'Raksapura'), this means that the 'Land of Ogres,' a call that was given to the place by using Buddhist missionaries, certainly, with a few pejorative, racist rationale. However, the linguistic content had in addition transformation. In fact, extra interestingly, in Chittagong dialect, Rakhine came to be stated as 'Rohong' or 'Rohang' and the people from this land, 'Rohingyas.'

The distinction between the various terms and the identification arising out of them changed into no longer completely linguistic in nature. Although for many long years the humans of Arakan have been called Rakhines and for cause of nearby dialect a number of them later on referred to as the Rohingyas, it did not take long for the 2 identities to be politicized, with the Arakanese Buddhists calling themselves 'Rakhines' and the Arakanese Muslims calling themselves 'Rohingyas.' faith on my own, however, cannot be blamed for the refuge sought with the aid of the Arakanese Muslims within the term 'Rohingya.' A unique colonial legacy played an essential role in dividing the humans of Arakan, indeed, contributing to a sluggish refuge of the Arakanese Muslims into a more recent

identification. The duration among 1824 and international conflict II remained essential in the organization of the Rohingya identity. The former date refers to the annexation of the Arakan by using the British, at the same time as the latter date refers to the expulsion of the British from the Arakan by the Japanese. In every of those dates, the Arakanese Muslims played out in a way, which only led to an accelerated alienation between them and the Buddhist populace of Arakan. It has been alleged that the British annexed the Rakhine location in 1824 when the Burman army commenced pushing the Arakanese Muslims further west well inside the British Raj territories.

For any purpose, a few of the Arakanese Muslims, in particular whose mother and father or grandparents had formerly lived in Burma however left the region on the account of the Burmans conquest of Arakan closer to the quilt of the eighteenth century, lower back to the Arakan following its annexation with the aid of the British. positioned in another way, the British annexation of the Arakan advocated a steady movement of populace from the west to the east, that is, from Bengal or India to the Arakan. an affidavit of this lies in the fact that the population of Maungdaw Township expanded from 18,000 in 1831 to about a hundred,000 in 1911. The fate and political position of the Arakanese Muslims in any other case became carefully tied up with the British colonial power.

Now not incredibly, therefore, that once the Japanese occupied Burma in 1942 and expelled the British from the Arakan, a sizable section of the Arakanese Muslims fled Burma and the Arakan and took refuge in Bengal. indeed, it changed into at some point of this era that the political association of the Arakanese became

clean; with the Arakanese Buddhists supporting the Japanese while the Arakanese Muslims assisting the British. Such political association, but, proved fatal for the Arakanese Muslims, who more and more sought safe haven in a more recent identity, Rohingya, no longer only to distance themselves from the Arakanese Buddhists but also to cement unity inside their very own ranks to overcome their function of vulnerability and despair. The deadly results could not be contained.

In line with a few students favorable to the Myanmar government, the latter cannot be blamed absolutely for the fate of the Rohingyas. this is due to the fact, as it's far argued, on the time of Burma's independence, the Rohingyas not only fashioned their own military however additionally approached the 'Father of Pakistan,' Muhammad Ali Jinnah, 'asking him to contain Northern Arakan into East Pakistan.' The Rohingyas continued with their demands even within the 1950s. the new country of Burma had no different preference but to consider them as non-Burmese and dissidents who had been bent on wrecking the territorial integrity of the country. aside from subscribing to the argument of 'authentic sin,' this kind of role is ill disposed towards the assignment of resolving the issue and overcoming the plight of the Rohingyas. Moreover, it is important that we trackback to the history on the sole existence of the Rakhine state itself, where the conflict initially began due to a territorial conflict and the people staying within the state – the Rohingya people. Before the conflict reaches its tipping point and led to refugee crisis, there has been a long history regarding the Rakhine State of Burma. The Rakhine State was previously subjected to many kingdoms in the past, mostly Hindu kingdoms until eventually in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, the Burmese King

conquered the land and took over the land in the 1800s<sup>4</sup>. Myanmar<sup>5</sup> was called 'Burma' back then as they used to be a subject of the British Empire. At the time, it was also an era of modernization where people often migrate back and forth to India and neighboring countries such as Bangladesh, Thailand, and Laos. However, as soon as the Second World War emerged, the rulings over territories gets out of hand. Back then, the Rohingya people were allies of the British and insisted on seceding their land to East Pakistan (now Bangladesh).

On the other hand, the Burmese government were allies of Japan and thus, war continued to take place until they gained full independence. Once the Burmese government gained independence, they demanded that the Rohingya people should leave the Rakhine State as they are 'outsiders' or illegal migrants (who supported the British colonizers) who should migrate to Bangladesh. However, the Rohingya people insisted to stay, making the Burmese government angry as they perceive the Rohingya as illegal Bangladeshi immigrants who are stateless, uneducated, and refuses to migrate from 'their' land – hence, pretty much not recognized as the citizens of Myanmar<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> Prager, Susanne. "The Coming of the "Future King": Burmese *Minlaung* Expectations Before and During the Second World War." *Journal of Burma Studies*8, no. 1 (2003): 1-32. doi:10.1353/jbs.2003.0000.

<sup>5</sup> "The Case of Myanmar." *Building States, Building Peace*. doi:10.1057/9781137274168.0015.

<sup>6</sup> Kim, In-A. "A Historical Consideration on the Formation of Muslim Society at Rakhine Region of Myanmar." *The Journal of Asian Studies*21, no. 3 (2018): 1-22. doi:10.21740/jas.2018.08.21.3.1.

In their defense, after their independence, the Burmese government had established the citizenship law<sup>7</sup>. The Citizenship Law of 1982<sup>8</sup>, Section 3 states that “Only members of ethnic groups that settled within Myanmar prior to 1823 are automatically eligible for Myanmar citizenship – and If they have descendants that have entered prior to 1948, they can apply for naturalization if they can submit a strong and conclusive evidence of their status”. It is important to take note that for the Rohingya people to gain a concrete evidence of their status is not easy and this is because first, they claimed that they are descendants of the Arab traders that came and settled into the area for over a thousand years ago (which made this even more difficult to bring proof), second, they do not have the proper documents – which adds to Myanmar government suspicions that they were illegally crossing the borders from Bangladesh<sup>9</sup>. However, it is important to acknowledge that the Rohingya people were not given the proper paperwork to begin with.

The conflict then further escalated when *Rohingya Muhajideen*<sup>10</sup> came into existence and challenged the Burmese government for their land to be seceded to Bangladesh. Following these events, right after General Ne Win and his Burma Socialist Program Party (BSPP) took power in 1962, the Myanmar government

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<sup>7</sup> Cheesman, Nick. "How in Myanmar “National Races” Came to Surpass Citizenship and Exclude Rohingya." *Interpreting Communal Violence in Myanmar*, 2018, 127-45. doi:10.4324/9781315146263-7.

<sup>8</sup> Haque, Md. Mahbul. "Rohingya Ethnic Muslim Minority and the 1982 Citizenship Law in Burma." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 37, no. 4 (2017): 454-69. doi:10.1080/13602004.2017.1399600.

<sup>9</sup> Parnini, Syeda Naushin, Mohammad Redzuan Othman, and Amer Saifude Ghazali. "The Rohingya

<sup>10</sup> Rahman, Utpala. "The Rohingya Refugee: A Security Dilemma for Bangladesh." *Journal of Immigrant & Refugee Studies* 8, no. 2 (2010): 233-39. doi:10.1080/15562941003792135.

began to dissolve all Rohingya social and political organizations. To further execute this plan, a Burmese immigration and military authorities conducted what is called the ‘Operation *Nagamin* (Dragon King)’<sup>11</sup> which aims to register all the people in the area and expel the ‘illegal immigrants’. By May 1978, this national effort had led to more than 200,000 Rohingya fleeing to Bangladesh: where the Burmese authorities claimed and signified the Rohingya’s illegal status in Burma.

Adding fuel to the fire, Rohingya’s solidarity organization was formed, backed by the Indian National Army, the Taliban and Al-Qaeda – they destroyed the Buddhist statue and attacked 30 Burmese police posts<sup>12</sup>. Sensing the threat of ‘terrorism act’ as a national threat, the Burmese government enforced a straight military force against the paramilitary group<sup>13</sup> within the Rakhine state. It resulted with a lot of Rohingya lives lost and the long term impact: The Rohingya refugee crisis – with over half a million people fleeing the country by boats (and other means of transportation) to neighboring countries.

Therefore, to conclude this background, the ongoing conflict was initially based on territorial issues and determining the fate of Rohingya people as citizens of Myanmar. The dispute between the Myanmar government against the Rohingya paramilitary groups had led to many humanitarian crises over the years, violating numerous amounts of International Human Rights law<sup>14</sup>. Addition to this, the

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<sup>11</sup> Sohel, Md.Salman, *The Rohingya Crisis in Myanmar: Origin and Emergence* (2017). Saudi J. Humanities Soc. Sci.; Vol-2, Iss-11A (Nov 2017). Available at SSRN: <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3307082>

<sup>12</sup> "What Forces Are Fueling Myanmar's Rohingya Crisis?" Council on Foreign Relations. Accessed February 26, 2019. <https://www.cfr.org/background/rohingya-crisis>.

<sup>13</sup> Beehner, Lionel. "State-building, Military Modernization and Cross-border Ethnic Violence in Myanmar." *Journal of Asian Security and International Affairs*5, no. 1 (2018): 1-30. doi:10.1177/2347797017748464.

<sup>14</sup> "The Foundation of International Human Rights Law." United Nations. Accessed

international community as well as the international organization like the UN and Human Rights Watch recognizes this as an act of genocide or ethnic cleansing.

## **1.2 Research Question**

Based on the conditions and background information explained above, I suggest the following research question: (1) What are the origins and objective of ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar government? (2) How does the international community contribute to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis?

## **1.3 Research Objectives**

The objective of the research is to not only elaborate the origins and the objectives, but it is also to emphasize on the modern act of ethnic-cleansing as a form of human rights violence. To further understand the issue of ethnic-cleansing, I chooses to use the ongoing Rohingya Refugee Crisis as a prime example as to how the acts of gross human rights violence are still conducted in the modern day today and how the international contributed further to the ongoing crisis and impacted every other aspect of our lives whether it is directed or not.

## **1.4 Research Contribution**

First and foremost, the result of this research proposal is to spread awareness upon the existence and the meaning of modern “ethnic cleansing”, how, why does

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February 26, 2019. <http://www.un.org/en/sections/universal-declaration/foundation-international-human-rights-law/index.html>.

it occur, and what triggered it further to have the conflict escalate into a humanitarian crisis. Secondly, this research will also provide an insight on how ethnic conflicts often not only create domestic issues, but it can also affect international relations as well as the foreign policy of every country which comes in both short and long term effects – varying in the sectors<sup>15</sup> (economic, political, society, security, government, environment) affected. Although the (long and short term) impact that the conflict has is clear, what we do need to understand is what kind of contribution does the international community has that led the conflict further escalate into a humanitarian crisis.

Moreover, although states do have the rights to accept or reject any kinds (humanitarian aid, observation, military intervention) of intervention from the international community, this thesis research will also further emphasize on the importance of how ethno-conflict can escalate into a humanitarian crisis when the international community actually contributes to it and, analyze the effects on the growth of regional states (neighboring countries) or countries indirectly involved in the crisis (e.g. accepting refugees, environmental degradation, humanitarian crisis) – towards the process of internationalization and globalization<sup>16</sup>. In addition, this topic also aims to enrich the public knowledge in social sciences, specifically in the field of international relations, international humanitarian law, and security borders. Thus, it is anticipated that this project will be beneficial in various of ways (for

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<sup>15</sup> Miklian, Jason. "Contextualising and theorising economic development, local business and ethnic cleansing in Myanmar." *Conflict, Security & Development* 19, no. 1 (2019): 55-78.

<sup>16</sup> Pocock, Nicola S., Syed S. Mahmood, Cathy Zimmerman, and Miriam Orcutt. "Imminent health crises among the Rohingya people of Myanmar." (2017): j5210.

further research or analysis) not only amongst the students of social sciences, but also among the public.

Therefore to conclude this chapter, this research paper will solely focus on the two research question where the importance of first, the understanding and origins of ethnic cleansing is different from the term genocide – henceforth putting this case under the category of genocide is simply not as accurate and that cases of ethnic cleansing like this should be brought up where a the term can turn into a legal category that can be put under crimes of the international humanitarian law. Secondly, this research will also provide explanations as to why the ongoing crisis is never-ending – as a sequel to the first research question, the second question is meant to bring out the importance of non-domestic factors (international community) that may or may not involve directly into the conflict, whether it is in the form of (different kinds of aids), sanctions, responses, etc. This is because for an a case of ethnic conflict that has been going on for far two decades to this day, the crisis will never end and tension within the region will continue to increase gradually impacting not one country, but every other countries in the region. Though inner factors may have been clear, it is also important to look at the bigger picture as to how the international community contributed to the crisis, what have they done so far and why does the crisis never seems to end despite all the efforts.

The international community on the Rohingya Refugee Crisis differs in accordance to which level of international dimension that they are in and their contribution also differs to how much they are involved in the Crisis. Firstly, the international dimension includes national, regional, and international. At a national

level, Myanmar government is the main actor. However, in the international dimension, actors in the Rohingya Refugee Crisis includes (1) governments; Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia; (2) regional and international bodies; Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN), United Nations (UN), International Criminal Court of Justice (ICC), and International Criminal Court (ICC); (3) non-domestic groups and non-profit organizations; Rohingya Armed Forces (RAF), Amnesty International (AI) – these actors have differing intentions and contribution to the Rohingya Refugee Crisis that includes; rule-making, implementation, mediation, peace enforcements, peace-making, preventive action, and exacerbation.

### **1.5 Structure of Thesis**

To conclude, this research paper is divided into five chapters to discuss the following topic. Chapter one focuses on the background and historical issue of the Rohingya refugee crisis, where it all began, who was involved, and when did it all started or escalated into bigger problems such as turning into a matter of an ongoing humanitarian crisis. Chapter one also includes where this research paper will focus on: the two research question on 1) the origins of ethnic cleansing and objective of ethnic cleansing by the Myanmar government, and 2) what are the international community's contribution to the Rohingya refugee crisis? – this is in order to help and discuss the topic further, divided into clear sections and how both questions correlates with one another.

Chapter two consists of the literature review, it is where background understanding of concepts are put such as the origins of ethnic cleansing, their

objectives, so on and so forth must be put in order to understand the whole history of the ethnic conflict itself. This literature review is meant to answer the general understanding of theories and concepts that is applied to the case of Rohingya refugee crisis, and this also comes from many scholars who has done research like this as well.

Chapter three includes the research methodology, it is to highlight the sole purpose of this research by using the different methods of gaining information to be included in this research paper. Not only is it important to have the right selection of research methods that accommodates and extends the research questions, as the methods itself refers to the entire techniques of selecting cases, measuring and observing data, gathering, refining, and analyzing data before reporting on the result. Before going onto the selection of the suitable research methods, it is important to state and define the purpose and reasoning method of the research.

Chapter four is the analysis and discussion of the topic itself; combining all the brief background history in chapter one, applying the understood concepts in chapter two, and using the methods in chapter three to discuss the topic. Chapter four will not only further elaborate the difference between the term genocide and ethnic cleansing in its legal aspect in accordance to the international crime that violates international humanitarian law, but it will also discuss how these terms contradict with the case of ethnic-conflict within the Rakhine region. Moreover, this research paper will also emphasize as to how relevant legal terms are; their role once it is put into categorizing a certain case – this will not only determine the importance of the case, but it will also exhibit as to how the international

community respond to it. As for the second question in sequel to the first one, it is meant to bring out the responses, contribution, and the importance of non-domestic factors – how they play their role in dealing with the crisis through negotiations, cooperation, and the sorts of foreign policy used to work their diplomacy to lessen the tension within the political atmosphere. Though it may not be a direct impact, responses, and contributions such as: creations of groups and organizations, movements to oppose the government, sanctions, and international aids plays a significant role in escalating the conflict itself.

Chapter five is the conclusion and recommendation of the all chapters combined, especially from the analysis done in chapter four – it exhibits the recommendations from I to encourage the public and spread awareness upon what could be done to the (current) aftermath of the ongoing conflict. Though the impact of the Rohingya refugee crisis is very much clear in a case of humanitarian crisis, this research paper will also incorporate how the contribution and responses of the international community could backfire and lead to more problems – hence the ongoing conflict within the region itself. Bearing in mind that the ethnic conflict leading to humanitarian crisis has been going on for far two decades and to this day, tension within the region still arise – and this has not only affected other countries in the aspects of politics, economy, foreign policy, international security and borders, but also the lack of unity or diplomacy between countries in or with international organizations (or bodies), and their performance towards future developments (e.g. global markets, foreign direct investment, trading, etc.).