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NEWS AND ANALYSIS OF ARAKAN ROHINGYA NATIONAL ORGANISATION (ARNO), ARAKAN, BURMA

MONTHLY

ARAKAN

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BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY WILLIAM HAGUE MEETS DAW AUNG SAN SUU KYI IN RANGOON



U HKUN HTUN OO, EX. MP



U KYAW MIN, EX. MP



ASHIN GAMBIRA, MONK



88 GENERATION STUDENT LEADERS: U MIN KO NAING, U MYA AYE, U KO KO GYI

**BURMA RELEASED SOME HIGH PROFILE POLITICAL
PRISONERS ON 13 JANUARY 2012 BY PRESENT GOVT.**



EDITORIAL**'NASAKA' LICENSED TO TYRANNIZE ROHINGYA IN ARAKAN**

While U Thein Sein government did make some changes in Burma, the situation of the human rights of Rohingya still remains unchanged. Their condition is terrible with increased persecution, brutalities and discrimination perpetrated against them by soldiers, particularly by the Nasaka border security forces.

Two Rohingya Members of the Parliament -- U Aung Zaw Win, MP (Upper House) and U Htay Win MP (Lower House), both of them belong to the ruling Union Solidarity and Development Party (USDP) — had arrived at Maungdaw on January 9, 2012 from Rangoon and held a public meeting on January 12 in Kawarbil (Kyigan Pyin) village, under Maungdaw Township. The MPs asked the participants at the meeting to apprise them of any problem and difficulties being faced by the villagers. Taking the chance some villagers had complained about the persistent harassment of the Nasaka. For that reason, the infuriated Nasaka forces started arresting and harassing the Rohingya villagers for revenge. Within three days from January 19 to 21 the Nasaka arrested 20 innocent people from Kawarbil (Kyigan Pyin) village while they were going to collect firewood. They are being detained in Nasaka headquarters at Kawarbil (Kyigan Pyin).

Then the Nasaka is disdainfully asking the victims to call their MPs to come at their rescue. As usual the Nasaka hounds are now engaged in felonious act of extorting money. Under threat of violence and torture to the arrestees, their family members or relatives have to pay, on demand, Kyat 20,000 for each of them, in addition to Kyat 2,000 per day for the food of each person. Now the Nasaka is combing the villages for all those who complained to MPs against them. Even the religious teachers are not spared. Since December 21, forces of Nasaka area No.6 are trying to arrest Maulana Ismail (40) of Paung Zaar village for the same reason.

On January 24, a group of Nasaka from Naribil out-post intruded on the house of Mohamed Sidique (60), son of Oli Ahmed of the Naribil West village, Maungdaw Township, and seized 100 bamboos worth Kyat 40,000. He bought them with official authorization from Bawli Bazar for the renovation of his house paying a tax in the amount of Kyat 3,000 to the concerned authority. This is extortion and bullying for which the perpetrators are not answerable, rather encouraged and rewarded for their criminal acts against the Rohingyas.

Forced labour is still continuing in North Arakan. The Nasaka and army personnel daily forced the Rohingya villagers to work in their camps and family houses, to carry water and collect firewood and bamboos for them, to work in paddy fields and vegetables gardens controlled by them, and to clean their latrines. They also engage the villagers to stand guard at night over nothing. Every night the Nasaka patrol group tortures the sentries under concocted charges to extort money.

A Rohingya villager has to pay Kyat 500 for travelling outside his village within the same locality. Still one needs to pay to the Nasaka

patrol groups whether or not he/she formally obtains a movement pass from the authorities. Severe restrictions on the basic freedoms of Rohingya have not been lifted yet. Freedom of movement, marriage and education remain under humiliating restrictions despite promises made by USDP members and Nasaka Director. In fact, the Nasaka has resorted to medieval (AD 1100-1500) forms of harassments creating an impossible situation for a living of the Rohingyas as human beings.

President Thein Sein has introduced series of reforms to some extent. He has made cease-fires with ethnic armed groups that have been fighting the government for decades, relieved restrictions on the media, and released a significant number of political prisoners notwithstanding doubt about his government's sincerity. Many groups have reached a truce with the government, while others are in negotiations. Conversely, the government is not showing any softness in its attitude towards Rohingya people. Brutality and criminal atrocities against them have been accelerated instead. This is a serious concern of the whole Rohingya people.

U Thein Sein's government reaffirmed its discriminatory racial profiling at the end of August 2011. Now anti-Rohingya propaganda by state and vested interest groups, including Rakhine National Development Party (RNDP), are in increase. They continue to accuse the Rohingyas of illegal Bangladeshi immigrants. The Rohingya, without citizenship, are left to live in their homeland in a position of 'statelessness'. However, they are, by all legal standards, an integral part of the Burma society. Here we have the reason to believe that the government is not sincere for democratic and political reforms. Whatever they are doing are to get credit or to ward off sanctions from the international community. Unless the government is moving towards genuine peace with commitment to deal justly with all, including Rohingya, the international community should mount effective pressures using all available levers.

For real change, all human rights violations and abuses must be ended against Rohingya and all other people. The Nasaka brute forces must be withdrawn from North Arakan. All oppressive laws, including Burma Citizenship Law of 1982 must be repealed. The remaining political prisoners must be released. Complete media freedom must be allowed. Above all, the 2008 undemocratic constitution must be amended in conformity with the generally accepted democratic norms and practices. Over and above, the Rohingya should be treated as equals in Arakan. They must be a part of the country's democratic and political process. Their citizenship rights and ethnic rights must be restored on a par with other nationalities of the country. ##



THE NATIONAL FLAG OF ROHINGYA

**FIGHT
FOR YOUR
RIGHT
TO SAY
"ROHINGYA"**

BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY WILLIAM HAGUE MET BURMESE OPPOSITION LEADERS DAW AUNG SAN SU KYI AND ROHINGYA REPRESENTATIVES IN RANGOON BY M.A.ALAM

British Foreign Secretary William Hague visited Burma on 5-6 January 2012. This was a historic visit; the first by a British Foreign Secretary since 1955. It was an opportunity to show that British recognise the efforts of opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the government to drive forward important reforms. He also wanted to set out clearly to the government the changes that they would want to see before they could support lifting EU sanctions.

Mr. Hague met the Burmese President, the Foreign Minister and the Speaker of the Lower House. He welcomed progress made so far, including the dialogue between the government and opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi and the changes in the law that allowed her party to register for the forthcoming by-elections, the initial releases of political prisoners, and the moves towards greater media freedom. He informed them of the allocation from the Department for International Development of £10 million of existing aid for microfinance for the Burmese people, and announced an additional £2 million of humanitarian aid to benefit people in Kachin State, the site of some of the worst ethnic conflict.

Mr. Hague set out clearly with all his interlocutors the steps which would be needed before a more fundamental shift in their relationship could take place. These are: the release of all political prisoners in time for the by-elections on 1 April 2012; the free and fair conduct of those by-elections; and humanitarian access to conflict areas, particularly in Kachin State, alongside a clear process of reconciliation. He made clear that if these three conditions were met the UK would support the easing of the EU sanctions.

He was assured by the President that the reforms would continue, that further political prisoner releases would go ahead, and that by-elections would be free and fair. He was confident that the Burmese government would soon achieve ceasefires nationwide, and acknowledged the need for humanitarian assistance in conflict areas.

Mr. Hague raised with the Foreign Minister the discrimination suffered by the Rohingya community, who have been denied citizenship and access to basic services and rights. UK will continue to press the Burmese government on this issue.

He held two meetings with opposition leader Aung San Suu Kyi, and assured her of the UK's continued support for her efforts

to promote reform and democracy in Burma. She repeated her core priorities: the release of all political prisoners and an improvement in the rule of law; and the need for the by-elections to be free and fair as well as progress on the complex ethnic situation.

The Foreign Minister met representatives from other opposition groups, including the 88 Generation Leaders and former political prisoners. He also met a range of representatives from ethnic communities, including the Kachin, Rohingya, Shan, Rakhine, Chin, Mon, Karen and Karenni to hear more about their concerns and aspirations. UK will continue to stay close to these and other ethnic groups to ensure they remain seized of the issues they face.

He is delighted to say that following his visit, there have been significant further developments on some of the issues he raised with the Burmese government. On 12 January, 2012 the Burmese government and the Karen National Union signed a cease-fire after 63 years of conflict. There is still a long way to go to rebuild fully trust between the parties, but this is an important step in the right direction.

Mr. Hague also warmly welcomed the release of a significant number of political prisoners on 13 January 2012. Exact numbers are still being verified but those released include Generation 88 and ethnic leaders. This is another positive step on the road to reform in Burma. The British Government will continue to follow developments in Burma closely. They will support progress, while remaining vigilant on human rights issues, especially in areas affected by ethnic conflict.

BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY WILLIAM HAGUE MET ROHINGYA REPRESENTATIVES IN RANGOON

Representatives of Rohingya, Chin, Kachin, Shan, Kayah and Mon ethnic groups met British Foreign Secretary William Hague at the residence of the British ambassador in Rangoon on Jan. 5, 2012 at 5pm- 6pm, according to a source from Rangoon and BBC Burmese.

"The two Rohingya representatives who attended the meeting are Mr. Yunus from National Democratic Party for Human Rights that participated in 1990 elections and Mr. Abu Taher from National Development Party for Development (NDPD) contested in 2010 elections."

"Mr. Abu Taher highlighted the situation on Rohingya people of Arakan who are facing recently on – force labors, extortion, health, education, movement restriction, marriage restriction, religious persecution, unprecedented taxation, arbitrarily arrest and land confiscation- with recent report and appeal letter of NDPD to Burmese government which mention to find a solution about Rohingya issue of Arakan," according to a Rohingya elite from Rangoon.

Master Yunus is CEC of NDPHR – 4 seats winner of 1990 general election from Maungdaw and Buthidaung - mentioned about Rohingya citizenship rights – the historical facts - in Burma which still the Burmese government not clearly mention on it. NDPD complained to Township Election Commission, the votes were recounted by the Commission where Abu Taher (NDPD) got 56,882 votes and Shwe Maung (USDP) got 53,702 votes, according to election watch in Buthidaung report.



British Foreign Minister William Hague with Rohingya and other ethnic representatives of Burma in Rangoon on 5 Jan. 2012

Cont. P. 4

BURMA RELEASED SOME HIGH PROFILE POLITICAL PRISONERS**BY M. A. ALAM**

Burma's new government released 615 detainees of its most high profile political prisoners on January 13, 2012 including prominent student leaders from the 1988 pro-democracy uprising Min Ko Naing and Ko Ko Gyi, Ko Mya Aye, Buddhist monk Ashin Gambiya, Shan leader Khun Tun Oo, former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt and Rohingya MP U Kyaw Min, according to sources.

Among them, there were political activists, leaders of democratic uprisings, a former prime minister, heads of ethnic minority groups, journalists and relatives of former dictator Ne Win.

From P. 3 BRITISH FOREIGN SECRETARY WILLIAM HAGUE

Master Yunus is CEC of NDPHR – 4 seats winner of 1990 general election from Maungdaw and Buthidaung - mentioned about Rohingya citizenship rights – the historical facts - in Burma which still the Burmese government not clearly mention on it.

Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO) heartily welcomes the written Ministerial statement, dated 16 January 2012, of the Foreign & Commonwealth Office, London, on the visit of Foreign Secretary William Hague to Burma on 5-6 January 2012.

The ARNO with the Rohingya people of Burma are overwhelmed with gratitude for the statement of the Foreign Secretary, "I raised with the Foreign Minister the discrimination suffered by the Rohingya community, who have been denied citizenship and access to basic services and rights. We will continue to press the Burmese government on this issue."

The Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) and Rohingya people would like to express our gratitude to the British Foreign Secretary for his meeting with ethnic representative groups, including Rohingyas, during his visit to Burma. We are very delighted to see his encouragement to U Thein Sein regime to bring genuine change, long-lasting peace, freedom and protection of human rights for all the people of Burma, according to Maung Tun Khin, the president, the Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK).

The 'systematic racism' against Rohingya has been institutionalized; and religious persecution against non-Buddhist people, especially Muslims and Christians, has increased. The credibility of U Thein Sein regime's promise of reform is now seriously questioned. However, we are in high spirit to see that the Foreign Secretary has cautiously welcomed the promises of political reform in Burma saying 'the military junta will be judged by its actions rather than its words', the BROUK statement said. ##

Rohingya MP U Kyaw Min, hailed from Buthidaung Township who was elected in the 1990 elections, was released along with his family members -- his wife, Daw Ti Zar, two daughters, Wei Wei Nu and Khin Khin Nu, but his son, Ko Aung Naing still remains in Insein prison. The family members had no involvement in politics, but were sentenced to 17 years jail each. Earlier, U Kyaw Min was an Education officer in Buthidaung Township. He was elected as MP of the National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPHR) and also a member of the Committee Representing the People's Parliament (CRPP). He was arrested in 2005 and was sentenced to 47 years imprisonment, said Kyaw Naing, U Kyaw Min's eldest son.

Rohingya political organizations in exile -- the Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO), the Rohingya Solidarity Organisation (RSO), Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) and National Democratic Party for Human Rights in exile (NDPHR)-- welcomes the release of a considerable number of key political prisoners in Burma, including members of the 88 Generation Student group. The organizations further welcomes and appreciate the release of U Kyaw Min (alias) Shamsul Anwarul Haque with his wife and two daughters.

In Buthidaung jail, nine political prisoners were released, they are -- Ko Htay Kywe, Situ Maung, Thant Zin Myo, Kyaw Min, Htun Nyo, Aung Zaw Oo, Pyay Kyaw, Wunna Pantha, Kyaw Win San, and Maung Maung Latt, according to sources.

A relative of MP U Kyaw Min said, "We would like to thank to President Thein Sein, Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, all political activists and international communities and leaders specially --- US Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and British Foreign Secretary William Hague --- who constantly worked hard for this triumph."

Releasing prisoners is a "positive sign" for future democratic country. We welcome the release, said a Rohingya leader from Maungdaw Town. Another businessman from Buthidaung said, "We are highly pleased and delighted of political prisoners of consciences released yesterday. For us, yesterday was our victory Day. Everyone inside Burma and abroad is very happy."

The message conveyed by Western countries has been clear: They are encouraged by the reform process under President Thein Sein, but economic and political sanctions could not be lifted unless the prisoners were freed, sources said.

"The latest moves come just ahead of visits by some U.S. senators influential in foreign affairs, including Mitch McConnell and John McCain."

Releasing of political prisoners is a key development in promoting human rights in Burma. But, people believe that there are more than 1,500 political prisoners are still remaining in Burmese jails, said local leader from Maungdaw Town.

Among those released yesterday was Min Ko Naing, a prominent student leader from the failed 1988 pro-democracy uprising. He was serving a 65-year sentence. He was released from Thayet prison. His most recent arrest came in 2007 along with 14 other student leaders while protesting fuel price increases that preceded the monk-led Saffron Revolution, which was violently suppressed. Among them was Ashin Gambira, 32, a militant monk who led the Saffron Revolution in 2007.

Shan ethnic leader Khun Tun Oo, Chairman of the Shan Nationalities League for



Aung San Suu Kyi, center, poses together with members of the 88 Generation Students group at her home in Rangoon on Jan. 24, 2012. (Photo: NLD)

Cont. P. 5

THE ROHINGYA : MYANMAR'S OUTCAST

BY AMBASSADOR AKBAR AHMED

Monday, January 30, 2012, Al Jazeera

Millions of residents of western Myanmar have been stripped of citizenship and basic human rights. Will Suu Kyi help?

Ambassador Akbar Ahmed



This article is the first in a series by Ambassador Akbar Ahmed, a former Pakistani high commissioner to the UK, exploring how a litany of volatile centre/periphery conflicts with deep historical roots were interpreted

after 9/11 in the new global paradigm of anti-terrorism - with profound and often violent consequences. Incorporating in-depth case studies from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East, Ambassador Ahmed will ultimately argue that the inability for Muslim and non-Muslim states alike to either incorporate minority groups into a liberal and tolerant society or resolve the "centre vs periphery" conflict is emblematic of a systemic failure of the modern state - a breakdown which, more often than not, leads to widespread violence and destruction. The violence generated from these conflicts will become the focus, in the remainder of the 21st century, of all those dealing with issues of national integration, law and order, human rights and justice.

Washington, DC - The image of a smiling Daw Aung San Suu Kyi receiving flowers from her supporters is a powerful message of freedom and optimism in Myanmar, the symbol of democracy in a country which has known nothing but authoritarian oppression for decades. Yet few ask one of the most pressing questions facing Daw Suu Kyi. How will she deal with the Rohingya?

"The Rohingya", you will ask. "Who are they?"

The Rohingya, whom the BBC calls "one of the world's most persecuted minority groups", are the little-publicised and largely forgotten Muslim people of the coastal Rakhine state of western Myanmar. Their historic lineage in Rakhine dates back centuries, as fishermen and farmers. Over the past three decades, the Rohingya have been systematically driven out of their homeland by Myanmar's military junta and subjected to widespread violence and the total negation of their rights and citizenship within Myanmar. They are a stateless Muslim minority.

From P. 4 COVER STORY Democracy and one of Burma's most famous political prisoners was released from Putao prison, who was serving a 93-year sentence. He was arrested and imprisoned in 2005 as the Shan refused to take part in a military-directed constitution drafting process.

Former Prime Minister Khin Nyunt also was released from house arrest along with his son. He was ousted in 2004 after falling out of favor with the junta and convicted a year later of insubordination and corruption, and sentenced to 44 years of house arrest.

There are 32 prisons across the country, 5,922 prisoners in 2005, 2,831 prisoners in 2007, 9,002 prisoners in 2008, 13,432 prisoners in 2009, 14,578 prisoners in 2001, and 651 political prisoners were released. Within eight years period, Burma's government released 60, 729 prisoners including 1,258 political prisoners, sources said. ##



The Rohingya ethnic group of Myanmar is not recognised by the government [GALLO/

Myanmar and as refugees abroad, casts a dark shadow over the bright hopes and prospects for democracy in a country plagued by violence and civil war. Suu Kyi is ideally placed to extend democratic reforms to all ethnic peoples, including the Rohingya, in a free Myanmar.

Though the Rohingya may be small in number at less than two million, the real lesson of the Arab Spring is that no notion of democracy can succeed without the inclusion of all people within a country's borders. Every member of society, regardless of race and religion, must be given their due rights as citizens.

"While many ethnic minorities in Myanmar have been the victims of the central government's oppressive measures, the Rohingya stand apart in that their very existence is threatened."

While many ethnic minorities in Myanmar have been the victims of the central government's oppressive measures, the Rohingya stand apart in that their very existence is threatened. The Rohingya's plight abroad as refugees in places such as Bangladesh and Thailand has seen glimmers of the media spotlight, but less attention has been brought to the underlying cause of their flight: the violence and cultural oppression at home.

These policies were enacted by Myanmar's government to force the Rohingya outside of Myanmar as a result of their being Muslim and ethnically non-Myanma. The government erroneously labelled them as "illegal Bengali immigrants" in their efforts to eradicate the Rohingya culture.

Kings to Refugees

Yet, the long history of the Rohingya and the Rakhine state contradicts the government's claims. The medieval Kingdom of Arakan, encompassing the Muslim Rohingya, was once an enlightened centre of culture, knowledge and trade, displaying a harmonic blend of Buddhism and Islam in its administration and court life. The kingdom's cosmopolitan and international capital city, Mrauk U, was described in the 17th century as "a second Venice" by a Portuguese Jesuit priest and was often compared to Amsterdam and London by travellers and writers of the time.

It was the 1784 military conquest by Bodawpaya, the king of Burma (now Myanmar), that transformed this once vibrant kingdom into an oppressed peripheral region. After this, many haunting tales began to circulate of Burmese soldiers rounding up the Rohingya in bamboo enclosures to burn them alive, and marching thousands to the city of Amarapura to work,

Cont. P. 6

From P. 5 effectively as slave labour, on infrastructure projects.

With the rise to power of the military junta in 1962 under General Ne Win, a policy of "Burmanisation" was implemented as an ultra-nationalist ideology based on the racial purity of the Myanmar ethnicity and its Buddhist faith. The Rohingya, as both Muslims and non-Myanma, were stripped of their legitimacy and officially declared foreigners in their own native land. With the passage of the junta's 1982 Citizenship Law, they effectively ceased to exist legally.

Stripped officially of their citizenship, the Rohingya found their lives in limbo: prohibited from the right to own land or property, barred from travelling outside their villages, repairing their decaying places of worship, receiving an education in any language or even marrying and having children without rarely granted government permission. The Rohingya have also been subjected to modern-day slavery, forced to work on infrastructure projects, such as constructing "model villages" to house the Myanmar settlers intended to displace them, reminiscent of their treatment at the hands of the Burmese kings of history.

The denial of citizenship and rights was accompanied by a military strategy of physical and cultural war designed to drive the Rohingya out of Myanmar.

The initial push of the military's ethnic cleansing campaign came in 1978 under Operation Naga Min, or Operation King Dragon. The purpose of this operation was to scrutinise each individual within the state as either a citizen or alleged "illegal immigrant". This resulted in widespread rape, arbitrary arrests, desecration of mosques, destruction of villages and confiscation of lands among the Rohingya people. In the wake of this violence, nearly a quarter of a million Rohingya fled to neighbouring Bangladesh, many of whom were later repatriated to Myanmar where they faced further torture, rape, jail and death.

In 1991, a second push, known as Operation Pyi Thaya or Operation Clean and Beautiful Nation, was launched with the same purpose, resulting in further violence and another massive flow of 200,000 Rohingya refugees into Bangladesh.

Non-governmental organisations from Europe and North America estimate that 300,000 Rohingya refugees remain in Bangladesh, with only 35,000 residing in registered refugee camps and receiving some sort of assistance from NGOs.

"While many ethnic minorities in Myanmar have been the victims of the central government's oppressive measures, the Rohingya stand apart in that their very existence is threatened."

Acknowledging the Rohingya

Those remaining, more than 250,000, are in a desperate situation without food and medical assistance, largely left to slowly starve to death. The December 2011 refugee repatriation agreement reached between Myanmar President Thein Sein and Bangladeshi Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina will exclude the Rohingya, due to their lack of Myanmar citizenship, one of the conditions for repatriation for the expected 2,500 returning refugees.

The Rohingya predicament underlines a paradox for the world's great faiths, straddling the divide between Islamic Asia and Buddhist Asia. Each emphasises compassion and kindness and yet, we see little evidence of this in their dealings with the Rohingya people.

As part of this current study on the relationship between centre and periphery in the Muslim world, we recently interviewed Dr Wakar Uddin, Chairman of the Burmese Rohingya Association of North America (BRANA). A gentle and learned man, he is an energetic ambassa-

dor for his Rohingya people with a firm grasp of regional history. All the Rohingya want is the reinstatement of their citizenship in their own land, as revoked by the former dictator General Ne Win, and the dignity, human rights and opportunities that come with it.

Daw Suu Kyi and the National League for Democracy have a unique opportunity to reach out to the Rohingya people and include them in the new democratic process. The NLD should work with the central government to expand the role of all ethnic minorities as full Myanmar citizens.

By acknowledging their rights, the government will bestow upon the Rohingya the dignity and the responsibilities of citizenship and present opportunities for mutual cultural understanding and the repatriation of the thousands of refugees existing in purgatory, separated from their homes and families. Great strides have recently been made by the Myanmar government towards the creation of an open and democratic political system and an end to ethnic violence, yet this is only the beginning.

With the recognition of the Rohingya as Myanmar citizens, Suu Kyi will honour the memory of her father, Aung San, as he, before his untimely and tragic death, also reached out to ethnic minorities to participate in an independent Myanmar. Only then can a democratic and modern Myanmar be legitimate and successful in the eyes of its own people. ***But the first step is to acknowledge the Rohingya existence. ##***



This article is based on research being conducted by Prof. Akbar Ahmed, Ibn Khaldun Chair of Islamic Studies at American University, Washington, DC, and Harrison Akins, a Research Fellow attached to the Chair, for the forthcoming study, Journey into Tribal Islam: America and the Conflict between Center and Periphery in the Muslim World, to be published by Brookings Press, exploring the conflict between Muslim tribal groups and central governments across the Muslim world in the context of the US-led 'war on terror'. Ambassador Ahmed is a former Pakistani High Commissioner to the UK and former administrator in Waziristan and Balochistan. He is the award-winning author of numerous books, including Discovering Islam, and Journey into America: The Challenge of Islam (Brookings Press, 2010).



Recently arrested Rohingya Boat People by Thai security forces in Phuket, Southern Thailand.

ROHINGYA: LIFE IN THE SHADOWLANDS

They've been called the worst treated refugees in the world: an estimated 200-500,000 Rohingya from the western Rakhine (Arakan) state in Burma live as illegal refugees in Bangladesh. Living in a shadowland between the two countries, where they remain the unseen victims of poverty.

Back in Burma, the Rohingya are not recognized as citizens, they are not free to marry, to move out of their village, or to work on their own land without being forced into labour for the army. If they are not present when the irregular roll calls are called in their villages, they are struck off the registers and become, in effect, invisible in their own country. So many choose to flee to a life of slow starvation in Bangladesh.

Less than 28,000 Rohingya refugees are registered in Bangladesh and housed in the "five star" camps run by the UNHCR where they can receive at least basic rations and schooling for their children. The rest – hundreds of thousands of people – are scattered around the country living illegal shadow lives.

A few thousand more live in what many seasoned international NGO workers call the worst camps they've ever seen. Kutapalong camp near Cox's Bazar in southern Bangladesh houses some 20,000 illegal refugees, crammed into a maze of miniature muddy alleys and huts made of plastic, mud and twigs. During the heavy monsoon rains, the huts are washed away almost as soon as they are repaired.

Corruption

Some men manage to travel to town to work as day labourers, fishermen or *rickshaw pullers*, but they are prey to corrupt police and border guards looking for bribes and exploitative employers who pay them a fraction of the already meager Bangladeshi day wage.

The Rohingya camps, teeming with the children of the extraordinarily large families, receive almost no help from aid agencies. This is not because the aid agencies don't want to; the Bangladesh government is reluctant to allow any form of outside help.

Refused Permission

Just this summer it flatly refused permission for the implementation of a 30 million euro project that had already been OK'd by the EU, and which would have benefitted local poor Bangladeshis as well as the destitute Rohingya.

The government says it wants to avoid a "pull factor" where access to aid, food, medicines and education may attract more of the 800,000 Rohingya currently in Burma.

Daily Burials

Meanwhile back in Kutapalong, the sound of digging for the daily burials continue, and as evening falls, little girls emerge with made up faces – on their way, I'm told in a whisper, to contribute in their own way to their families' meager finances.

My little group has attracted too much attention, and the crowd of children is getting too much to handle. People are trying to pull me to visit their crippled child, the husband back in the hut with an untreated disease, the man with the broken leg who has nothing but a paracetamol to ease his pain.

My fixer wants to get me out of there before the police comes and start asking uncomfortable questions.

'Not human?'

But as I'm leaving, Nural Amin, head of a family of ten, poses a question that haunts me long after I've physically left Kutapalong: "Why doesn't anyone recognise us, give us citizenship? We don't want so much – just the right to survive. Of the 192 countries in this world, there is not one country that wants to take us. Did we drop out of the sky? Are we not human?" ##

Source: This story features South Asia Wired Radio Programme On Air 28 July– 3 August 2011 on Rohingya People of Arakan.

STATELESS CHILDREN IN ARAKAN STATE OF WESTERN BURMA

BY BILL DAVIS, MA, MPH

Monday, January 23, 2012

Last week the human rights group Arakan Project released a report on children's rights in Northern Arakan State, in western Burma. Arakan State is home to about 735,000 Rohingya Muslims, one of the most oppressed ethnic minorities in Burma.

The report stated that over 40,000 Rohingya minority children in Arakan State do not have Burmese (or any), citizenship, despite being born and having parents who live in Burma. The children's stateless status, along with several other draconian laws that discriminate against Rohingya, are in fact severe human rights violations and can have dire consequences on their health.

According to the report, Rohingya children are not given birth certificates, and if they receive a government registration card (which many do not), there is no documentation of place of birth on the card, and therefore none of these children have proof they were born in Burma. Children born to parents that have not paid exorbitant fees to obtain a marriage license do not receive registration cards. Later in life these children cannot attend public schools, try to obtain travel permits, or get marriage licenses.

All Rohingya living in Burma, according to Arakan Project, are required to pay bribes to get permission to travel outside of their villages. Some are forced by the Army or border forces to build roads and guard and clean bases. Rohingya have been pushed off their land, and Arakan Project estimates that only 30% of Rohingyas have access to farmland, with the rest working mostly as casual day laborers.

These kinds of human rights violations have been linked to high rates of child malnutrition and increased maternal and child mortality on other ethnic minority areas in Burma. Human rights violations in Arakan State may have similar consequences. An FAO survey in 2009 found that 60% of children under 5 years old were moderately underweight and that 27% were severely underweight.

The UN reported in 2010 that the under-5 mortality rate – the probability of a child dying before he or she reaches 5 years of age – in Buthidaung township, Arakan State was 224/1000, higher than that of Afghanistan (at 144/1000 the country with the highest U5M), and much higher than the Burma national average.

Exceptionally poor living conditions and government discrimination against Rohingya have caused many to flee. However, the Rohingya who have left Arakan State have faced similarly bad conditions. PHR reported atrocious conditions in refugee camps in Bangladesh in 2010, and Rohingya attempting to flee by boat have been detained, shipwrecked, and allegedly set to drift at sea by the Thai Navy.

The history of abuses against Rohingya is continuing into 2012, despite the changes going on in other parts of Burma. The Arakan Project report highlights the need for the international community to maintain pressure on the Burmese government to extend the policy changes to ethnic minorities in addition to the Burmans living in the central part of the country.

Rohingyas have a right to belong to a state, they have a right to be free from forced labor and land confiscation, and they have a right to travel without restriction. The Burmese government should work to uphold these rights, in addition to fulfilling the right to health, of the Rohingyas and all other ethnic peoples in Burma. ##

Issues: [Crimes Against Humanity in Burma](#), **Places:** [Burma](#),

Source: [Physician for Human Rights](#)

ONE MINOR STUDENT KILLED, ANOTHER ONE SERIOUSLY WOUNDED IN BUTHIDAUNG**Buthidaung, Arakan State, Thursday, 19 January 2012**

One minor Rohingya student, aged 9 years was killed, another one aged 8 years became unconscious state by school guard (Rakhine community) on January 10, at about 8:00 pm, while on their way home after finishing their annual school farewell party of Myoma Zedidaung middle school, said a close relative of a victim.

"The students are identified as Ma Asma alias Khin Ma Cho (9), daughter of Maulana Yunus, and Ma Hawthiza (8), daughter of Hafez Mohammed Hussain, hailed from Zabber Para (village) of Buthidaung, nearby Railway Station. They are learning at class II of Zedidaung middle school."

The two little girls joined the annual school farewell party from 2:00pm to 5:00pm on January 10, but the school guard kept them till dark and tried to snatch the earrings of Hawthiza while they were trying to return home, according to Hawthiza.

The two students screamed for help but the guard twisted the neck of Asma causing her death and throttled Hawthiza with his bare hands. He kept the two students inside the bushes at the bottom of a hill which is near the school.

As both girls did not back home till 9:00 pm, their parents accompanied by other relatives went to the school to look for their daughters. But on the way, they heard a howl from Hawthiza, so they rushed to the spot and found that the 9-year-old girl was already dead and the 7-year-old was lying on the road in unconscious state near a hillside at the last end of the Rakhine village. There were many wounds on the bodies, said another relative of the victim.

*The dead body of Ma Asma after autopsy*

"The dead girl had already been buried after taking permission from the authority concerned, and the other one after taking medical treatment at the Buthidaung general hospital was released discharged on January 12, 2012."

After the release of Hawthiza from hospital, the school guard was arrested and kept in police custody for interrogation. He

was not produced to the court yet.

Another businessman said, "This event is happened because of greediness of some local goons for taking the victims' gold earrings. Both victims have gold earrings at their ears."

Source: **KALADAN PRESS NET WORK**

Following is a joint press release dated. 19 th. January 2012, issued by National Democratic Party for Human Rights (NDPHR – in Exile), Arakan Rohingya National Organisation (ARNO), Burmese Rohingya Association in Japan (BRAJ), Burmese Rohingya Community in Australia (BRCA), Burmese Rohingya Organisation UK (BROUK) and Rohingya Community in Norway (RCN) .

13 ROHINGYAS ARE NOT TALIBAN, IT WAS ALL FRAMED

The below-named Rohingya organisations strongly disapprove the statement, dated 14 January 2012, of the Burmese Home Minister Lt. General Ko Ko where he said, "the 13 persons arrested from Arakan border last year, for having connection with Taliban and taking explosive training, will be further detained."

The arrested persons are innocent Muslim Rohingya villagers. They have had neither links with any terrorist groups or Taliban nor had they taken any explosive training. They are peace-loving people held in high esteem and honour in the society.

Following a rumour that two persons from Bangladesh entered and held meetings with villagers in the border area of Kammongseik in Maungdaw Township in March 2010, Nasaka forces arrested about 80 Rohingya villagers and inhumanly tortured them into admitting links to insurgents.

During general elections held on 7 November 2010, there were clashes between two rival groups of SPDC backed United Solidarity Development Party (USDP) and Rohingya political party of National Democratic Party for Development (NDPD). Most villagers supported the NDPD candidates for which the local authorities, Nasaka collaborators and USDP supporters were very angry. All the arrestees supported the NDPD and so it was done for revenge.

The Nasaka director Lt. Col. Aung Gyi in a public meeting held in the madrasa of Maungnama village on 21 March 2011 said, "the rumour of 'Taliban link' is a false report. It is a creation out of the rivalry between the supporters of USDP and NDPD. After investigation, all innocent people arrested on suspicion will be released soon on the recommendations of the village authorities and religious leaders." Despite this politically motivated cases were framed against them under Sections 17(1) and 17(2) of Unlawful Association Act under the instruction of the authorities. They were tried in Maungdaw district court. Quoting a lawyer of Maungdaw the Irrawaddy reported on 8 April 2011, "Although the trial is being presided over by the local court, the Nasaka is taking a leading role in the case." So justice could not be done to the defendants due to executive interference.

The Narinjara, an online electronic media of the Rakhine community based in Bangladesh, is largely blameable to intricate and provoke the matter by affixing to its report a highly controversial and unrelated picture of masked Taliban fighters of Afghanistan, with intent to confuse them with Rohingyas, in order to mislead the minds of the people and to make it more sensitive, with racial hatred. Here its editor had violated the media ethic and the principles of freedom of speeches which need the judgement of right and wrong.

It was a false tale with false alarm. The allegations against them are largely unsubstantiated. The head of the Thailand based Arakan Project Chris Lewa told DVB that "there was no evidence to link the group to Mujahideen group".

We, therefore, urge upon the government of U Thein Sein to conduct an independent and impartial inquiry in to the case of so-called 'Taliban link' in the interest of the rule of law, peace, security and justice. We also request the President to release them on humanitarian grounds.##

BURMA'S BLACKLISTING OF MUSLIM BABIES REVEALS ENTRENCHED RACISM

BY FRANCIS WADE, JANUARY 26, 2012

On 19 January 2012, a NGO named *The Arakan Project* took a report detailing *State discrimination against Muslim babies in Burma* to the *UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)* meets in Geneva to review the situation of children's rights in Burma, a State party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Muslim minority in question, the Rohingya, has suffered for decades as a result of an outwardly racist governmental policy toward non-Buddhists in Burma, which has also seen Christian communities in Karen, Kachin and Chin states suffer *relentless Persecution*.

The report details how Rohingya children are subject to racial profiling immediately after birth – those born outside of wedlock (wedding without mirage permit) are placed on blacklists, and denied travel permits and access to education. While none of 750,000-strong population in western Burma's Arakan state are registered as citizens, those children blacklisted suffer heftier treatment from authorities, and are unlikely to be able to marry when they grow up.

A strict two-child policy for the Rohingya (and only the Rohingya) is also in place, and the same treatment detailed above applies to children born above that limit. The report says that families with unregistered children face constant threat of arrest, which is only avoided via "unending extortion" by government authorities.

"Despite signs of political reforms in the past five months, the [Burmese] government has reaffirmed specific deeply discriminatory policies against this minority group on national security grounds, using justifications of 'illegal migration management' and 'control on population growth'," said *The Arakan Project*, who submitted the report to the CRC. The Organisation is one of the few that persistently attempts to spotlight the abuses against the Rohingya, and deserves huge commendation for its work.

As the recent *furor over a BBC report* that labels the Rohingya as Burmese shows, racism against the group is also widespread in Burmese society. Chat forums are filled with venomous attacks on the Muslim minority (*some examples here*), whom many Burmese claim are Bengali immigrants, with their dark skin often cited as proof that their origins lie outside of

Burma. Advocacy groups counter this by arguing that in Arakan state Islam traces back to before the spread of the now dominant Theravada Buddhism.

Debating their origins however is somewhat extraneous to the inquiry we should be having – few ask why this deep-seated fear of the Rohingya exists among Burmese, and moreover how society there will reconcile the fact that current reforms are means to open up the country to the outside world, an inevitable by-product of which will be a greater foreign presence. Burma's borders have historically been porous enough to allow huge migration of peoples into and out of the country, and while this has not always sat easily with Burmese (note the anti-Chinese riots in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and indeed current animosity at the huge presence of Chinese in places like Mandalay, many of whom, unlike the Rohingya, are granted legal status), its xenophobia needs to be addressed now more than ever as it attempts to join a globalised world.

In a country where persecution against ethnic minorities makes regular headlines, the plight of the Rohingya is woefully underreported. Moreover, very justifiable claims from Burmese across the spectrum of egregious abuses committed against them by the government do not stretch to the Rohingya, who are seen as foreign infiltrators and therefore not deserving of the world's sympathy and assistance. That hypocrisy is publicly reinforced by the government – the head of *The Arakan Project*, Chris Lewa, told me that she came face to face with Burma's representative at the UN upon submitting the report to the CRC:

"As the experts insisted on a reply, the Burmese [representative] Maung Wai took the floor and just claimed that he recognized that there was a problem in Northern [Arakan] state, which was illegal immigration. Not surprisingly, he said that there was no Rohingya in Myanmar and that Rohingya is not one of the 135 national races ... Then a Committee member asked how he called them. He replied Bengali."

Note also that current sitting ambassador to the UN, Ye Myint Aung, wrote in a *letter to fellow diplomats* during his prior tenure as Consul-General to Hong Kong that Rohingya were "*ugly as ogres*".

Up to 400,000 Rohingyas are believed to be living in neighbouring Bangladesh, only 28,000 of whom can receive official assistance from the UN (Dhaka worries that additional assistance would act as a pull-factor for those Rohingya still in Burma). Each year hundreds make the perilous ocean voyage from Bangladesh to Thailand or Malaysia in search of work and safer refuge, often meeting grisly ends – in January 2009 Thai coastguards pushed a boat packed with around 190 refugees that had washed up on its southern coast *back out to sea and left them to die*. Last year a boatload of Rohingya that only made it as far as southern Burma were brought ashore, and the 63 on board *jailed on immigration charges*.

The CRC is due to issue concluding observations on *The Arakan Project's* report on February 3. How that will affect the fate of Rohingya, described by *Medicins Sans Frontières* as one of the world minority groups "*most in danger of extinction*", remains to be seen, but between the praise and condemnation of Burma's government by the international community, their names are not uttered. Wisened Burma observers know that the country's ills cannot be solved overnight, no matter how many ceasefires or reforms are enacted, and weeding out such entrenched and vitriolic discrimination from Burmese society will be a very long, very painful process. ## Source : ASIAN Correspondent .com



Burma's Blacklisted Rohingya Babies . Photo – *The Arakan Project*



Burma's pro-democracy leader Aung San Suu Kyi (C) smiles after receiving France's highest award The Legion of Honor from France's Foreign Minister Alain Juppe at the French Embassy in Rangoon on January 15, 2012. The award is seen around her neck. Photo : REUTERS/Soe Zeya Tun



On 25 January 2012 Pakistani President Asif Ali Zardari (left) meets with Burmese democracy icon Daw Aung San Suu Kyi at her house in Rangoon. He presented her with an award in recognition of her long struggle for democracy " *Shaheed Benazir Bhutto Democracy Ward* ". Photo : Khin Maung Win

TROPICAL DISEASES SPREAD IN ALL ROHINGYA REFUGEE CAMPS IN BANGLADESH

Cox's Bazar, Bangladesh: A recent Health Survey in the Rohingya refugee camps in Bangladesh reveal that Tropical diseases -- chicken pox, pneumonia and measles -- have spread inside Kutuplong makeshift (unregistered) camp and Lada camp recently, reports the Survey.

"Many refugee children including some woman have been suffering from chicken pox and measles since middle of January 2012. The affected children are taken to the clinic of Medicins Sans Frontieres (MSF) where doctor provided medicine to refugees." "Mostly the refugee children under five to seven years old are suffering with these diseases."

The Kutupalong makeshift camp is situated on the hills and open field where cool air waves cross the camps where the shacks

of the refugees are made with plastics, bushes and branches. The refugees are suffering cool as they have no warm cloth to protect the cool waves. The refugee children are now suffering with pneumonia, cold and etc., said a refugee health worker from the camp. Similarly, over 12,000 undocumented refugees live in the Leda (unregistered) camp is also facing topical diseases recently, said an aide who works in the Muslim Aids.



Over 40,000 Rohingya refugees live in Kutupalong makeshift and more than 12000 refugees in Lada camp, without recognizing from UNHCR or Bangladeshi authorities.

The refugees are working with their own styles to survive their live but some time the authority and local people bar to them to go for work, said an aide member of NGO form border. ##

Source :
Kaladan News



Many children have fallen ill with various diseases and illnesses such as chicken pox, measles, and fever