

Comprehending the Solutions of Rohingya Refugee and underneath Politics: Bangladesh-Myanmar Perspectives.

Md. Jahangir Alam¹
Tauhid Hossain Khan²

Abstract: In the history no 'Rohingya' word exists before 1951. As a Muslim minority group, Rohingya face systematic discrimination. An outbreak of severe violence in the western Burmese state of Rakhine has refocused international and regional attention on the issue of the area's stateless Muslim threatening to destabilize. An escalation of violence involving local Buddhist and Muslim communities that resulted in an unknown number of deaths and hundreds of home burning. The government, including the military, police and local security forces, has responded with violence including mass arrests and reported use of torture against the Rohingya population. Tensions in the region, which borders Bangladesh, have historically been fueled by Myanmar's denial of citizenship to the Rohingya who are also not recognized as one of the country's official ethnic nationalities. In this paper we have spent the past several years documenting the plight of the Rohingya and believe their story is one of the most forgotten, neglected and worst cases of human rights abuse in Asia. In Myanmar, the Rohingya have been abused, excluded and denied the most basic of human rights and citizenship. As refugees in Bangladesh, they have been neglected and forced to exist in the darkest margins of society, they are unwanted and unwelcome. This paper exposes the stories and also provides evidence of their sheer courage to stay alive whatever the ground beneath their feet which capture the suffering, the struggle and the fortitude of the Rohingya. The paper is accompanied by short accounts of the lives of the subjects and collectively these provide an illuminating cross-section of Rohingya issues.

Keywords: Rohingya, Refugee, Bangladesh, Myanmar.

1. Introduction

Rohingya people who are living in Myanmar don't have rights. Even a bird has rights which can build a nest, give birth, bring food to their children and raise them until they are ready to fly. We don't have basic rights.³ Disowned and excluded by the 1974 Emergency Immigration Act and 1982 Citizenship Act of Myanmar, the Arakanese⁴ living in the northwestern part of the Rakhine State of Myanmar are the world's

1 Assistant Professor, Japan Study Center, University of Dhaka, Bangladesh.

2 Assistant Professor, Department of Sociology, Jagannath University, Bangladesh.

3 Constantine, Greg (2012) Exiled to Nowhere: Myanmar's Rohingya. Canada: UNHCR.

4 The Arakanese Muslims also known as Rohingyas.

'nowhere people' with a long history of institutionalized discrimination, state-backed oppression and systematic alienation from the society and state. Since the 1970s, different waves of refugees have arrived in Bangladesh including the major ones in 1978, 1991, 1992 and the latest in 2012.⁵ Failure to draw a plausible consensus between the government of Bangladesh and the government of Myanmar on Rohingya issue has made a durable solution for the refugee situation in Bangladesh elusive. The lives of around 29,000 registered refugees with some 200,000-300,000 unregistered refugees are still now in limbo.⁶ The UNHCR and other human rights organization working for their access to food, fuel, healthcare, education and other basic rights. Only three States are parties to the 1951 Refugee Convention and only one State has signed the 1954 Statelessness Convention. The lack of asylum laws and diversity of national legal frameworks, as well as government practices and protection environments in the region's countries, make achieving regional harmonization challenging. Rohingya exodus of 2012 turned out tortuous as the government of Bangladesh strictly denied hosting new refugees on a durable basis given its incapability and resource constraints. Bangladesh was facing the dilemma between humanity vs. reality. Local politics and the sensitivities of the local people toward the Rohingyas resurfaced sturdily which later made the situation even more complicated for the Bangladesh government to reach in a durable solution. Following such a crisis, while the international community had pressured the Bangladesh government to open up her border for the new influx of Rohingya refugees, they failed to pressurize the Myanmar authority to address and fix this long standing problem effectively.

2. Conceptual framework of the study

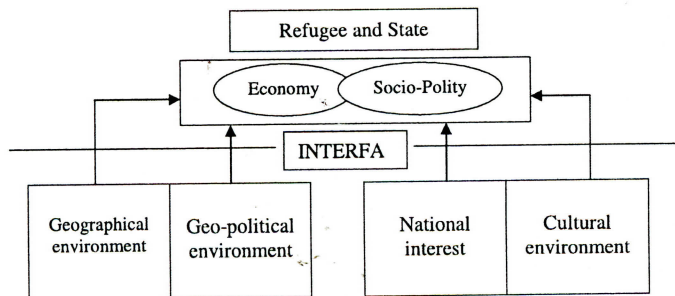
Refugee intrusion across the Bangladesh and Myanmar border as a direct threat to national sovereignty and progress, nevertheless, we should never forget our own agony of being refugee in the recent past that dates back to Liberation War of 1971. In the face of the potential threat of being environmental refugees in the near future, we need to be more compassionate for our fellow human beings who are suffering to their deaths. It is true that Bangladesh may no longer host new Rohingya refugees for a prolonged time period, but it is even more absolute that

5 Nemoto, Kei (2000) The Rohingya Issue: A Thorny Obstacle between Myanmar (Myanmar) and Bangladesh available in http://www.Myanmarlibrary.org/docs14/Kei_Nemoto-Rohingya.pdf, accessed on November 23, 2014.

6 UNHCR Bangladesh Fact-sheet, March 2014

turning Bangladesh's back from those 'unwanted' Rohingyas and pushing their boats to the open sea with an uncertain future are not going to limit or avert refugee problems. It is rather important for the state actor to find out the plausible and doable policy solutions to manage the already stationed refugees and the potential influx of Rohingya refugees effectively. Besides that any attempt taken by the Bangladesh government will not act appropriately if the other stakeholder, that is Myanmar, is not involved in the process. Additionally the international community including state and non state actors like the media and human rights organizations have also important and meaningful role to play in regard of Rohingya issue. Managing Rohingya refugee exodus is no longer just a matter of Bangladesh. Hence Bangladesh can't solve this issue single handed. In this milieu, it's also important to understand the response of the state and non-state actors to the Rohingya refugee issue and also the intricate play of politics that drive their moves.

Diagram 1: Refugee and state relations



Refugee management issue is important in the context of Bangladesh particularly because sectarian violence and state backed discrimination have compelled hundreds and thousands of Rohingyas to flee from Rakhine state to neighboring Bangladesh. The recent two major outbreaks of clash since June, 2012 causing more than 1,10,000 people displaced most of who have fled to Bangladesh. In the face of resource constraints, while hosting any more refugees on a durable basis is getting difficult for Bangladesh, time has ripen on part of Myanmar for initiating new and effective strategies to address and fix this long standing problem. After remaining a long time under tyrannical rule, the political environment of Myanmar is recently experiencing new changes in the wind. Myanmar is in its transition toward democracy. Recognizing the Rohingya issue as of great importance for both Bangladesh and

Myanmar, we have found this issue both important and interesting since the Rohingya problem is also a problem for Bangladesh and it is the collective responsibility of the international community including the state and non state actors.⁷ Bangladesh and of course, Myanmar to work united and dedicatedly to bring effective and sustainable change.

3. Objective of the study

This paper attempted to expose the possible solutions of the Rohingya crisis on part of Bangladesh and Myanmar and also to reflect the politics over these solutions. Finally an attempt has been taken to illustrate a sketch of the future outlook of this problem which is so uncertain up to now. The paper also opens with a succinct history of the Rohingya and a time line of their repression within Myanmar since the early 1960s. We would strongly recommend the ability to address such an important issue and to capture it so movingly is impressive. This paper is an intelligent way to bring us deeper into worldly issues beyond the typical centralized governmental disagreements that absorb so much of our mass media today.

4. Methodology of the Study

This research is a qualitative one. In order to proceed in our research work, we have used survey method where data were collected through expert interview including academia and secondary sources. Expert interviews included NGO personnel working on Rohingya refugees, politicians and government personnel. The reason behind interviewing people of the policy level is to find out state's outlook on this issue and to incorporate the attitudes of government people and the existing strategies in the policy level to deal with refugees. Although, interviewing the local politicians and government representatives of Cox's Bazar would be of immensely beneficial for this respective research, given the time limitation and resource constraints, our focus was rather to follow alternative approaches to attain the most appropriate data while stationed at Dhaka within the limited time frame ranging from March, 2014 to October, 2014 and to update the findings of the paper and facilitate our understanding of how the government of Bangladesh could manage the refugee issues.

7 UNHCR Bangladesh Fact-sheet, March 2014.

5. Present status of Rohingya Refugee in Bangladesh

The Rohingya are a Muslim minority who has lived in the Arakan State of western Myanmar for generations. Myanmar and Rakhine is predominantly Buddhist, the Rohingya have been the minority in Rakhine and their connection to Myanmar has been challenged and manipulated by successive Burmese governments. It's estimated that some 800,000 Rohingya live in the townships of North Rakhine. The legacy of persecution against the Rohingya that there are up to 300,000 Rohingya living in Bangladesh and most are not recognized as refugees and tens of thousands living in Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, and several other countries in the region.⁸ In Myanmar, Rohingya people are subjected to forced labor, land seizures, religious persecution, arbitrary taxes, and constant harassment from the Burmese security force Nasaka.⁹ The Rohingya are a Muslim minority group who predominantly live in the isolated North Rakhine State of western Myanmar. Over the course of only a few months in 1978, many Rohingya fled Myanmar when authorities launched Operation Naga Min, to root out people who lived in Myanmar illegally. But less than three years later, the Burmese government passed the 1982 Citizenship Act, which effectively denied citizenship to the Rohingya. Nations around the world have legislation that defines the criteria on which citizenship is extended to an individual. But the significance of Myanmar's 1982 Citizenship Act is that one of the motives for the drafting of the act was not to define who belonged, but rather who was excluded. In many ways, the Citizenship Act formalized the exclusion that the Rohingya had experienced at the hands of the Burmese military junta since 1961, when General Ne Win took over the country in a military coup and set forth the Burmese Way to Socialism.¹⁰ The Citizenship Act created three categories of citizens, and the Rohingya did not fit any of them. The Rohingya are neither citizens of Myanmar nor Bangladesh.¹¹ With no resolution in sight, many young men choose to leave Bangladesh for third countries like Malaysia, Thailand, and even Saudi Arabia in order to send money home to impoverished families.

8 UNHCR Bangladesh Fact-sheet, March 2014

9 Nasaka is the Burmese Government's border security force.

10 Yegar, Moshe (2002) *Between Integration and Secession: The Muslim Communities of the Southern Philippines, Southern Thailand and Western Myanmar*. Oxford: Lexington Books.

11 Uddin, Nasir (2013) *Life in Locker: The State of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh*. London: Scholar's Press. p.56, Siddiqui, Dr.Habib A Long History of Injustice Ignored

6. Present reforms related to Rohingya Refugee in Myanmar

Thirty years after the 1982 Citizenship Act was passed, the Rohingya remain a stateless people. It is the denial of this right to citizenship that has been used to deprive them of many fundamental rights. As a result of the abuse and hardship, it is estimated that some 300,000 Rohingya have left Burma and now live in southern Bangladesh, where most are not recognized as refugees. (Jafar, age 34), who came to Bangladesh with his family in 1991, feels time is running out. So do a growing number of Rohingya who have lived in Bangladesh for years. Myanmar is my home and that is where I want to go back-Jafar says. But none of us have citizenship and because we don't have citizenship we are like a fish out of water, flapping and unable to breathe. If we were to get citizenship in Burma, we would be like the fish that you catch and then throw back into the water where he belongs. But we can't do anything right now. We are still that fish out of water and when a fish is out of water, he suffocates to death. We don't think the Rohingya in Rakhine State have benefited at all from the new reforms. Many of the abuses the Rohingya are subjected to on a daily basis are totally invisible to the international community. They haven't come in the form of violence or killing. These brutal administrative tactics make life so miserable and untenable for the Rohingya that many find they have no choice but to leave Myanmar in order to live with dignity and a normal life. Rohingya will tell you that all the tactics of the Burmese authorities are motivated by one thing to force the Rohingya into Bangladesh.

7. Possible measures and Subsequent Politics to Manage Refugee Crises

The century old oppressions and persecution that the Rohingya people are facing need immediate attention of the state and non state actors. Standing in twenty first century, when human right protection has emerged as a crucial non-traditional security, we, the citizens of the world, could not afford to remain silent after seeing all the miseries that the Rohingyas are experiencing. Lives of the Rohingyas are not well. They are just suffering well and the ruling powers of Myanmar have proved to be brutal, tyrannical and race-blind. They are neither guarantor nor a protector of minority's human rights. The plight of Rohingya has unfortunately failed to attract the concern of many otherwise good-natured Buddhists.¹² Since this problem originated from Myanmar, the

12 Siddiqui, Dr.Habib A Long History of Injustice Ignored: Rohingya: The Forgotten People of Our Time, available at <http://theamericanmuslim.org/> , accessed on 23 November 2014.

Myanmar government has to take the greater responsibilities and therefore, the following part would attempt to identify the remaining scopes where the respective government could work to bring changes in the present Rohingya situation. And after that, considering the fact that Bangladesh is hosting a huge number of Rohingyas as refugees, an effort would be made to depict the possible steps that the Bangladesh government could take to achieve effective solution to the Rohingya problem.

7.1 Solutions on Part of Myanmar

Myanmar holds the greater responsibility to ensure the security and human rights of the Rohingyas. Given the fact that it is the responsibility of every governments to ensure such rights entitled to citizens regardless their race, ethnicity, religion, political ideologies or sex, Myanmar must have to guarantee quality and secured life to its Rohingya minority and also to bring effective changes in the years old conflicting issue. Apart from this humanitarian ground, Myanmar has to do hard to solve this ethnical tension between the Muslims and the Buddhists for reasons that have strong realistic ground. After a prolonged period of closeness and military rule, Myanmar is recently in a transition to democracy and is gradually opening its door to the global community with windows of opportunities. In chorus with the possibility of such potential development, Myanmar has to assure the international community that it is sincerely working on reducing ethnic tensions and promoting greater human rights since the international community is showing their willingness to ease pressures of previous sanctions posed on Myanmar's military regime. If the government of Myanmar fails to do so, it can easily be assumed that the international community would give a second thought over the issue of withdrawing sanctions on Myanmar.

Considering the reasons about why should the Myanmar government would strive to address the Rohingya problem, it is the time when there should be attempt on part of Myanmar to discover the solutions to the Rohingya issue. However, the followings are certain possible steps that can possibly help to reduce tensions between mainstream Buddhists and Rohingya Muslims of Myanmar.

7.1.1 Addressing Status of the Rohingya

As the historical hindsight has made it evident that the ancestors of the Rohingyas lived in the western part of former Myanmar even before the

first Anglo-Burmese war in 1823 and since then, the Rohingyas have been living there generation after generation, by every considerations, they truly deserve to be treated as full citizens of Myanmar.¹³ By the Citizenship Act of 1982, the Myanmar government has withdrawn citizenship rights to the Rohingyas rendering them foreigners in their own land. Such withdrawal of citizenship status has made the Rohingyas unable to coexist with Buddhist majority and also made them not only stateless but also effectively impoverished them. Additionally, such denial of citizenship status has undoubtedly remained the root cause of the Rohingyas' endless cycle of forced migration. Furthermore, in 1977, the Burmese military government launched an operation called Naga Min, or Dragon King, to register the citizens and prosecute the illegal entrants which started in Rakhine State and ended in the mass arrests and persecution, accompanied by violence and brute force, triggered an exodus in 1978 of approximately 200,000 Rohingyas into Bangladesh.¹⁴ Myanmar president Thein Sein's position that the Rohingyas should find their place in other countries, is a breach of citizenship laws grounded in historical claims, let alone the provision for citizenship by naturalization that countries can and do apply in legitimate cases.¹⁵ Awarding citizenship status would also make the Rohingya Muslims more loyal to the Myanmar government, act more reasonably and would create greater sense of togetherness and ownership in long run.

7.1.2 Assimilation with the conventional society

Once awarding the citizenship status to the Rohingyas, what the Myanmar government has to do is to take effective initiatives to integrate the Rohingyas into the mainstream community. The first obstacle to such integration is the Secret Memorandum of 1988. Through this Secret Memorandum, the Myanmar government has begun a project of institutional discrimination towards the Rohingyas following the demands made by the Rakhine Nationalist Democratic Party. Restricted movements for the Rohingya, restricted higher education and professional courses and introduction of a system to control their birth rate are only a few of the many unequal steps that the nationalists wanted to be imposed on the Rohingyas. So, as the integration of the Rohingyas

13 The Daily Star, December 3, 2012.

14 Holland, Médecins Sans Frontiers (2002) 10 Years for the Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Past, Present and Future. p.10.

15 The Daily Star, September 24, 2012.

into the mainstream community has appeared as one of the plausible solutions to the long standing Rohingya problem, the Myanmar government has to withdraw such mechanism that promote discriminations to the Rohingyas and prevent them from being truly integrated into the mainstream community. Quality education, access to health care and job could enhance the capacity of the Rohingyas to get integrated into the mainstream society which in turn would lessen the chances of ethnic tensions and conflicts with the majority Buddhists.

7.1.3 Stimulate Collective Accord

The legacy of hate politics between the Buddhists and the Muslims of Myanmar has always persisted as a major hindrance in the way of generating communal harmony. Years old hatred, animosity and suspicion might not be overcome all in a sudden but measures could be taken by the government of Myanmar to ease tensions gradually and ruling out the chance of any further ethnical cleansing or oppression. The existing ethnical discords have appeared as bleeding wounds for Myanmar in its transition to democracy and openness. Therefore, it would be more realistic for the government to strive for solving communal tensions. By awarding the citizenship status to the Rohingyas, government could make the majority Buddhists feel that the Rohingya Muslims too are part of their history, culture and society. Erasing suspicions toward each other would contribute to confidence building and create greater harmony in the community that is so very important for a new Myanmar waiting to be opened up to the world.

7.2 Politics over Solutions

Not surprisingly the presence of politics has appeared as reality making the situation of the Rohingyas more adverse and also the solution to this problem more complicated. Finding solutions are somewhat easier than bringing them into force. The play of politics and the related political gains of the parties in power are much more real than any kind of humanitarian thinking; the ruling power's attempt to find out political solution to a humanitarian problem is evident in this regard. The following sub-points would try to highlight the play of politics over the solutions that have protracted the Rohingya problem and made solutions difficult to achieve.

7.2.1 Politics of Religion

Politics over religion has predominantly been a root cause of the Rohingya problem in Myanmar. Throughout the history, Arakan had been ruled as an independent sovereign monarchy by Hindus, Buddhist and Muslims. Arakan was under Muslim influence for approximately 350 years until it was invaded and occupied by Burmese king Boddaw Paya on 28 December 1784.¹⁶ The Rohingya Muslims had coexisted relatively peacefully with the Rakhine Buddhists until the Second World War when the communal riot broke out and the situation worsened when approximately 100,000 Rohingyas were massacred and another 80,000 fled from their ancestral homes on March 28, 1942. In the face of such bitter experience, Muslims carried out an armed rebellion demanding an autonomous state within the Union of Myanmar in 1948 which ultimately failed and resulted in a backlash against the Muslims. Since then, there is a kind of divide and rule policy in place by the Myanmar government that has strained the relationship between the Rohingya Muslims and the Rakhine Buddhists. Today, with a rare exception, most of the Rakhine Buddhists want nothing but decontaminate Arakan of the Rohingya Muslims. The military regime of Myanmar has successfully and systematically used such religious hatred and animosity of the Buddhists and the Muslims to keep them apart.

7.2.2 Policy above Awarding Citizenship Status to the Rohingyas

Awarding citizenship status to the Rohingyas as present remains the most realistic solution to address the statelessness of the Rohingyas. Though the Myanmar government has repeated its commitment to address the Rohingya issues, calm the situations in the Northern Rakhine state and also to address the issue of citizenship for the Rohingya during US President Obama's historic visit to Myanmar, Myanmar President Thein Shein has reportedly held the position that given the present situation, finding a third country to relocate the Rohingyas would be a plausible solution. Such reluctance to recognize the Rohingyas as the citizens of Myanmar is deteriorating the crisis and making it more prolonged. Rohingyas residing in Myanmar are considered by the authorities to be resident foreigners, not citizens and this lack of full citizenship rights in practice means that the Rohingya are subject to other abuses, including restrictions on their freedom of movement, discriminatory limitations on

16 Dr.Habib Siddiqui, A Long History of Injustice Ignored: Rohingya: The Forgotten People of Our Time, available at <http://theamericanmuslim.org/>, accessed on December 7, 2014.

access to education, and arbitrary confiscation of property.¹⁷ The politics that contribute to the denial of citizenship and of the rights that go with it, unavoidably making the achievement of a durable solution to the refugee flows more complicated.

7.2.3 Politics over Local integration

While integration of the Rohingya Muslims into the local community has appeared as a plausible solution, the existing politics has again made the solution difficult to attain. The majority people themselves do not want the Rohingyas to be integrated into the community. They view the Rohingyas as pernicious, capricious and wicked. Therefore, according to them, if the Rohingyas are allowed to be integrated into the local community, they would badly influence the good people, would increase crime rates and destroy the purity of the Buddhist society. Since the Rohingyas are poor and willing to work at a lower wage, the majority Buddhist also presumed that this will create a wage depression against them. All such moves drive the politicians who are also part of the majority to act against the Rohingyas and preventing them from being locally integrated.

7.3 Possible Solutions to the Refugee Crises in Bangladesh

Sectarian violence and state backed discrimination have compelled hundreds and thousands of Rohingyas to flee from Rakhine state to Bangladesh in the year 1978 and 1991. While Bangladesh is currently hosting around 29,000 registered Rohingya refugees and some two to three Lac unregistered, the recent two major outbreaks of clash since June, 2012 in Rakhine state have made more than 1,10,000 people displaced most of whom have fled to Bangladesh in fear of persecution. The dilemma that Bangladesh is facing between humanity vs. reality has further made the scene more complicated. It is, therefore, crucial to find out the possible solutions to the refugee crises on part of Bangladesh. Currently there are three possible solutions to the refugee crisis:

Firstly, Voluntary repatriation to the country of origin if possible,

Secondly, Integration into the asylum country and

Finally, Resettlement in a third country as a final measure.

¹⁷ Human Rights Watch, Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution. 1 May 2000, C1203 available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a86f0.html>, accessed December 2, 2014.

7.3.1 Repatriation

The Myanmar government also agreed to an MOU with the UNHCR in November 1993 stating that the refugees would be able to return to their places of origin and be issued appropriate identification papers and assured the returnees 'the same freedom of movement as all other nationals in Rakhine State'; and it also ensured UNHCR's access to all returnees to monitor their reintegration.¹⁸ And only after getting such an assurance of secured presence in Myanmar, the UNHCR took a large scale repatriation program with an aim to repatriate the remaining 190,000 refugees by December 1995. The UNHCR shifted its approach in July 1994, from information sessions to promotion sessions, and from private interviewing to mass registration.¹⁹ The year 1996 marked the arrival of an increasing numbers of Rohingyas, including those previously repatriated, with stories of consistent ill-treatment back home and also marked an increase in the number of refugees reluctant to return home. Apart from such events, the repatriation program continued. Mid-July 1997 marked the time when aggression reached its highest peak causing the deportation of 350 refugees overnight.²⁰ This event initiated a 14 months long strike in the Nayapara by the refugees, involving some militant elements, in which the refugees took over the camps and boycotted humanitarian services and MSF was eventually allowed back in the camp, but other agencies were still barred.²¹ Bangladeshi security forces regained control in the camps by October 1998 resulting in the arrest of hundreds of refugee men and a halt in the repatriation process. Repatriation resumed in November 1998 and in early 2002, the Myanmar authorities verbally agreed to accept approximately 5,000 cleared refugees.²² The last organized repatriation movement from Bangladesh took place in July 2005.

18 Smith, Martin (1991) Myanmar: Insurgency and the politics of Ethnicity. London: Zed Books.p.26

19 Reid, Anthony (1993) Southeast Asia in the Age of Commerce, Volume 2 (Expansion and Crisis). London: Yale University Press. p.17.

20 Holland, Médecins Sans Frontiers (2002) 10 Years for the Rohingya Refugees in Bangladesh: Past, Present and Future. p.22.

21 Jilani, AFK. (1999) The Rohingyas of Arakan: Their Quest for Justice. Dhaka: Ahmed Jilani Publication.p.24

22 Uddin, Nasir (2013) Life in Locker: The State of the Rohingyas in Bangladesh. London: Scholar's Press.p.76.

7.3.2 Local Integration

Integrating the Rohingyas into the local community has appeared as a solution to the refugee problem. Local integration involves the long-term or permanent settlement of refugees in the country of first asylum where the success of such integration depends on several factors. These include:

- a. The willingness of the refugees to settle locally;
- b. The receptiveness and commitment of the host country and local population towards the integration of refugee populations;
- c. Access to livelihoods and means for the socio-economic survival;
- d. Opportunities for refugees to acquire citizenship and achieve full integration into the host society.²³

In the total process of local integration, the international community has important role to play which may include financial assistance to the host government, local communities, and to the refugees to assist in their integration into the host society. Apart from all these reluctance of the Bangladeshi government to locally integrate the Rohingyas, local integration might be a feasible solution where sharing the financial burden of integrating the Rohingya into the local society is one option. Local integration, however, must be voluntary.²⁴

7.3.3 Resettlement

Resettlement engages a strategy of transferring refugees from the country of first asylum to a third country which has agreed to provide the refugee with protection. Resettlement is an appropriate protection strategy for refugees whose safety and security cannot be secured in the country of first asylum or who have special humanitarian needs which cannot be met in the country of first asylum and it is also an appropriate durable solution for those who are unable or unwilling to return to their own country or to locally integrate in their country of asylum.²⁵ Recognizing that voluntary repatriation and local integration are not real options in the present context, resettling the Rohingyas in other countries could be another viable option. Donor countries in recent years have offered to resettle thousands of Burmese refugees. Although such proposal may sound

23 UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*, 1997, pp. 92-93, 96-97.

24 UNHCR, *The State of the World's Refugees*, 1997, pp. 92-93, 96-97.

25 Human Rights Watch, *Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution*, 1 May 2000, C1203 available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a86f0.html>. Accessed 23 November 2014.

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plausible to many, challenges would definitely be there in terms of implementation.²⁶ There has been little attempt to resettle Rohingya from Bangladesh until recently. This could also be a useful solution where the international community has greater contribution to share in regard of Rohingya refugee crisis.

7.4 Underneath Politics over the Rohingya Crises

Refugees who have fled their country in fear of persecution cannot be forced to repatriate until and unless that is voluntary repatriation and the home country has assured physical and legal safety of the returnees. Unfortunately, there has been well grounded allegation against the government of Bangladesh to often press the refugees to return before the situation in their home country has sufficiently been improved in favor of them. Since these helpless Rohingya people have been accorded prima facie refugee status shortly after their arrival in Bangladesh, under the international law, it is the duty of Bangladesh to provide them assistance and protection. But UNHCR in one of its publication acknowledged that premature or coercive repatriation took place amongst the Rohingya in Bangladesh in 1991-1992, and there is an evident need to prevent any repetition of this scenario.²⁷ A bilateral memorandum of understanding between Bangladesh and Myanmar paved the way to repatriation of some 50,000 Rohingya refugees from September 1992 and November 1993 where the UNHCR participated from October 1992 but withdrew in December when it became clear that the principle of voluntariness was not being respected.²⁸

7.4.1 Politics over Local Integration of the Rohingya People

Local integration could be a plausible solution to the refugee crisis, the play of politics that is so persistent can complicate the situation and make the solution difficult to achieve. In Bangladesh, the government is seriously concerned about the local sensitivities toward the Rohingyas and the associated difficulties that are happening due to hosting refugees. Now, though the official position of the government holds the view that it is unwilling to consider the notion of local integration of the Rohingyas,

26 Available at <http://www.mmtimes.com/index.php/national-news/1778-the-rohingya-conundrum.html>. Accessed on December 4, 2014.

27 Review of the Policy Development and Evaluation Service (PDES) on the UNHCR response to the protracted situations of the stateless Rohingya refugees in Bangladesh, The UNHCR Country Operations Profile, 2012.

28 Human Rights Watch, *Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution*, 1 May 2000, C1203 available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a86f0.html>. Accessed December 7, 2014.

the reality is that Bangladeshi society has a history of allowing Rohingyas for integration for decades, if not centuries.²⁹ As is the case revealed by a report of the Human Rights Watch (May, 2000), the Rohingya have been able to make their way into the economy and, in some instances, play a role in the local community and the government apparently is fearing that institutionalization of what already is happening on the ground would attract still more Rohingya, serving as an additional pull factors.

It may be mentioned that information we have got from the local people of the Cox's Bazar are almost same as the regular beliefs that the host community usually hold toward the refugees. They view Rohingyas as problem creating and they also blamed them to be involved in different types of illegal activities. According to local people, crime rates have increased after the Rohingyas came in Cox's Bazar. Moreover, Rohingyas are believed to be involved in the recent Ramu incident where the Buddhist minorities and their holy places were under attack from some religious extremists with political purposes. Given their extreme poor conditions, Rohingyas are willing to work at a lower wage and such willingness would create tensions in employment sector. Such local sentiments are often exploited by the local politicians to gain their personal political gain and such ill motive politicizes the process of integrating the Rohingyas into the local community. Apart from these views, they have also acknowledged the lamentable situation in which the Rohingyas are living. They found the Rohingya situation unchanged or same irrespective of the government in office.

7.4.2 Politics over Resettlement

Recognizing the continuous worsening of situation in Myanmar against Muslims and also the reluctance and incapability of the Bangladesh government to host refugees for a durable basis, attempt could be taken to resettle the refugees in a third country, though implementing such solution in reality might be more challenging. Since 2004, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) has helped to resettled more than 57,000 Burmese refugees from Thailand who belonged to the Karen and Karenni ethnic groups and they were mostly resettled in the US, as well as Australia, Canada and New Zealand.³⁰ But until now there has been little resettlement of Rohingya from Bangladesh which might be

29 Human Rights Watch, *Burmese Refugees in Bangladesh: Still No Durable Solution*, 1 May 2000, C1203 available at <http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/docid/3ae6a86f0.html>. Accessed December 7, 2014.

30 Available at <http://www.irinnews.org/indepth/87861/82/Myanmar-s-refugees-still-on-the-run>. Accessed on 23 November 2014.

due to their religious background. Countries like the USA, Canada or New Zealand might be cautious about the reported crime prone and extremist elements present in the Muslim Rohingyas. The Islam phobia on part of these countries is somehow making them reluctant to resettle the Rohingyas in their country. However, it has been reported that Australia has shown interests in hosting Rohingya refugees.

It is noted that emphasis may be given on engaging the stakeholders including Thailand and Malaysia along with Myanmar, Bangladesh in dialogue to resettle the Rohingyas in these countries, whereas he also mentioned the interests and generous funding of the Australian government to solve this issue. Shamsul Bari, PhD (Chairman, RIB) appropriately exposed the reason behind Malaysia's interest in hosting more Rohingya refugees who are supposed to provide the pool of cheap labor. He had also talked about the politics that is very much persistent within and outside the country over the Rohingya issue. Muslim countries, in his opinion, are somehow trying to keep this problem unsolved rather than taking attempts to resettle the Rohingyas.

8. Recommendations

We have tried to make clear the present situation from the perspective of Rohingya Refugee. Some may not count this is a conflict because it has not taken the obvious shape. But it should not be a wise work if we give the decision so early. Because we the academicians of conflict analysis know that conflict crosses many stages to become an obvious one. So, it might be the astute work to identify and find the possible solutions of the conflict when it belongs to the incipient level. We would like to suggest some plausible recommendations to mitigate the problem before taking the fierce shape as follows:

- a. The retribution should be strict in case of the person who are kindles the situation against the minority.
- b. Most of the local people assume that the Refugee of Bangladesh have link with Myanmar.
- c. Special commission should be shaped to overlook the circumstances.
- d. Religion is very touchy issue for all and would be excellent not to share any kind of disparagement relating to religious actions in open.

- e. Confidence building mechanisms should be constant to remove all misperceptions.
- f. The manifestation of dogmatic groups should be prevented through a planned way.
- g. Everybody should be reverential to the religious belief of other.
- h. Particular should have to be constituted to handle any kind of emergency.

9. Conclusion

I am fed up with my life. I neither want to live here nor in Myanmar. I want to go to anywhere else ...anywhere... any place where I can get my own life; I can live a life of human being.³¹ Time Changed but the Rohingya safety security remained unchanged. An understanding of the politics that have provided a crucial impetus to this issue can be helpful in finding out the answer. The Rohingya issue has undoubtedly arisen from Myanmar and therefore, it is the responsibility of the respective government to single out the reasons and moving toward solutions. The undisputed truth is that human movement is an ancient phenomenon which gets stronger with the passage of time despite the simultaneous growth of heavily militarized state borders. Hence, increasing securities across the border, planning and executing strong anti-refugee policies are not going to help the state actor to diminish threats posed by refugee movement. On top of that, Rohingya people with their centuries old experience of being tortured are also evidence of human fluidity. Keeping all these realities in consideration, it is crucial to find out how best the Government of Bangladesh can manage the already residing refugees and control refugee movements across the border while keeping the spirit of humanity in place. And before doing all these policy planning and implementation, it is also equally imperative to understand what Myanmar government can and should do to single out this problem.

31 Male refugee at Nayapara Camp, Age: around 25.

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