HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS AND THE IMPLICATION OF THEIR STATELESSNESS

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: Bangladesh is a country that is consisted of various ethnic groups. After the 46 years of freedom, Bangladesh remains under the title of a developing country with numerous afflictions. Rohingya is one of such misery. They face mass killing, execution, forced labor and deportation or denied them the most basic of human rights and rendered them stateless. The main purpose of this study was the causes of the Rohingya refugee crisis and find out the implication of their statelessness.

Methodology: It was both descriptive and exploratory research in nature (Interview Schedule and Case study used for data collections). This study analyzes from theoretical frameworks, Migration theory to figure out the Rohingya crisis and their impact on local peoples.

Main Findings: This study is an attempt to find out local people view on causes of Rohingya refugee crisis and the implications of their statelessness.

Applications: According to the findings of the study, around 93% of local peoples think that Rohingyas are the original citizens of Myanmar and the causes of their persecutions in Myanmar were mainly religious and their political economy.

Originality: In the future, this study will be helpful for the background study of the Rohingya Refugee crisis.

Keywords: Rohingya, Refugee, Local Peoples, Crisis, Statelessness, Implication.

1. INTRODUCTION

Bangladesh is one of the major countries facing the problem of refugees. The emergence of Bangladesh as an independent country bears testimony of development and nation-building has exposed the people of this country to different forms of migration and displacement (Ahmed, 2010).

A large number of Rohingyas also began arriving in Bangladesh in 1990, 1991-92, 2012, 2016, and 2017 after experiencing various forms of persecution in their home country. Still now, whenever any kind of insurgency takes place in Myanmar it just hit Bangladesh with its Refugee influx. The effects of Rohingya refugee on the place of destination are not convenient. It has huge negative effects on Socio-Economic, Demographic and Environmental factors.

A series of global and national efforts had made to resolve the Rohingya refugee crisis in Bangladesh. Nevertheless, these initiatives have not been able to resolve the problem entirely. Today Bangladesh hosts 33,542 officially documented Rohingya refugee until 31 July 2017, in the two camps of Kutupalong and Nayapara in its southern Cox’s Bazar district (Kader,2017). It is known to all that still more than 1 million Rohingyas are living outside the official camps and staying here and there around the country. Bangladesh has expected to obey various types of regulations such as maintaining rules and norms in conducting with refugee by international organizations. In doing so, Bangladesh has been thrown in a paradoxical situation regarding with Rohingya crisis. Authors conducted this study for Humanitarian obligations and academic used also.

2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Refugees always are seen as a threat to the internal security of a receiving country. Whenever a refugee flow enters into a country, it wants to share the limited resources, which are being used by the local people. Consequently, it contributes to the Breakdown in the socio-economic, demographic, political and environmental system of receiving country. That consequently leads the denied and persecuted Rohingya to engage in illegal and destroyed activities. Most of the news has published in media shown the engagement of Rohingyas in various types of criminal and unwanted activities in several areas of Bangladesh.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This research was conducted in front of the objectives-
1. To know the causes of the Rohingya refugee crisis;
2. To know the implication of Rohingyas statelessness.

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4. METHODOLOGY
This study was both descriptive and exploratory research. Teknaf and Ukhia of Cox’s Bazar district were selected for the present study. The duration of the study was Six Months. 80 local peoples were purposively selected from Teknaf and Ukhia Upazila of Cox’s Bazar from the total populations. Based on the objectives of the study an interview schedule and case study has done accordingly. Study data collected from both primary and secondary source. And the data collected from the survey were compiled, classified and analyzed statistically and finally presented in tabular form and figures.

5. CONCEPTUAL AND THEORETICAL DISCUSSION

**Refugee**
According to article I A (2) of the 1951 convention and 1967 protocol the refugee shall apply to any person who: Owing to well-fouled fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events is unable or owing to such fear is unwilling to return to it (Hathaway,1991).

**Rohingya**
The Rohingyas is an ethnic group majority of whom are Muslim who lived for centuries in the majority Buddhist Myanmar. Currently, about 1.1 million Rohingya lived in the Southeast Asian country. The Rohingya speak Rohingya or Rohingya, a dialect that is distinct to others spoken in Rakhine state and throughout Myanmar. They were not considered as one of the country’s 135 official ethnic groups and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless. The Rohingya differ from Myanmar’s dominant Buddhist groups ethnically, linguistically and religiously.

**Border People**
People living in border areas of two or few countries are called border populations. In this study, the border people refer to all the populations living in the border areas of Bangladesh, Myanmar, in Cox’s Bazar district.

5.1 LEE’S THEORY OF MIGRATION
According to the lee’s Theory of migration, major driving forces of Rohingyas break away summarized below-

- **Denial of citizenship.**
- **Restriction of movement.**
- **Forced Labour and expulsion.**
- **Forced eviction and relocation.**
- **Deprivation of the right to education.**
- **Restriction of business and economy.**
- **Massive killing.**
- **Sexual harassment and barring marriage.**
- **Looting of properties.**
- ** Burning homestead and breaking mosques and other institutions.**
- **Anti- Rohingya riots.**
- **Lack of religious freedom, etc.**

- **Bangladesh is the nearest destination for them.**
- **Some basic cultural and racial similarities.**
- **Mostly religious similarities.**
- **Their predecessors stay here safely.**
- **The possibility of getting government and foreign co-operation.**
- **Freedom of speaking and expressing an opinion.**
- **The safety of life and the probability of future descendants safely live.**
- **Opportunities for social mobility.**
- **The possibility of departure to neighboring countries or any other country.**

6. CAUSES OF ROHINGYA REFUGEE CRISIS AND THEIR STATELESSNESS
The Rohingyas were stripped off their citizenship and right to self-identify by the 1982 citizenship law (European Commission, 2017). The Rohingya were always persecuted in Myanmar and subject to many restrictions in their daily human life. The brutal killing of the Rohingyas and violence against them had occurred almost every year previously by the military government in Myanmar have forced them to leave their country. Most of the persecuted Rohingyas fled to Bangladesh since 1982, 1991-92, 2012 and 2017.
6.1 WHO ARE THE ROHINGYA?

The Rohingya are often described as “The world most persecuted minority” Rohingya are the original population of Myanmar who was born as a citizen of Myanmar or who have lived for centuries in the majority Buddhist Myanmar. The brutality is that now they are not considered as one of the country’s 135 official ethnic groups and have been denied citizenship in Myanmar since 1982, which has effectively rendered them stateless. Now continuous persecution in Rakhine state most of the Rohingyas fleeing to Bangladesh. Currently, about 1.3 million Rohingyas in Bangladesh live the different makeshift camps in CoxsBazar district and someone throughout the country (Siddiquee, 2012).

6.2 ROHINGYA ISSUE

The Rohingya refugee issue is a very crucial one that complicates the relation between two countries Bangladesh and Myanmar. Bangladesh experienced an unprecedented refugee crisis from 1978-2017, and it was the forcible exodus of the minority Rohingyas in Bangladesh. Even though the Rohingyas had been living in the Arakan state of Myanmar for hundreds of years, they were deprived of their citizenship rights by the military govt. of Mymaner on the ground that they were an alien people in Myanmar. They were also denied from freedom of movement, freedom of marriage and legal rights to own land or property in their own country (Uddin & Ahamed, 2008).

At first, the Myanmar military government created the refugee crisis by treating the Rohingyas as illegal immigrants and pushing them into Bangladesh. Myanmar government viewed the immigration that took place during British rule as illegal, and this has led many Buddhists to consider the Rohingya to be Bengali, rejecting the term Rohingya as a recent invention, actually which is created for religious, economic and political reasons.

Table 1: Percentage Distribution of Rohingyas Identity

| Rohingyas | Yes | 6   | 7.50 |
|------------|-----|-----|------|
| Identity   | No  | 74  | 92.5 |
|            | Total | 80  | 100.00 |

Source: Field level survey, 2017

From the table, we see that almost 92.5% respondent said that Rohingya were not Bangladeshi citizen. Yet they also said that Rohingyas are the citizens of Myanmar and they have been living there centuries ago, but Myanmar government repeatedly persecuted them for religious, economic and political reasons.

6.3 THE MAJOR PUSH OF ROHINGYAS

The entire population of Myanmar is practically color-coded! Actually, following the launching of the “Operation Nagamine” in 1977, which continued for over a decade almost the whole of Myanmar’s population was registered and provided with identity cards (Ahmed, 2010). And, those residing lawfully in Myanmar had been divided into four colors: Pink- those who are full citizens, Blue- those who are associate citizens, Green- those who are naturalized citizens, Lastly, White for the foreigners. The Rohingyas do not fall under any of these four colors and that no such cards had issued to them. First big push took place in 1991-92. Again, another big push took place within three decades mostly in 2012 and finally in 2017. Right now, all the Rohingyas who are residing in Bangladesh for decades including the new arrivals fleeing Myanmar are being registered under the Biometric registration system. Refugee Relief and Repatriation Commission Cox’s-Bazar (RRRC) reports that the total number of Rohingya people in Bangladesh Stand at probabilistically 1.1 million, with hundreds still crossing the border each day. Some 6,50,000 Rohingyas have entered Bangladesh since Nov 25, 2017, where they have joined more than 4,00,000 who fled in earlier three decades. Now 7,15,103 Rohingya refugee including the long-term ones were registered by Bangladesh government (Kader, 2017).

Table 2: A Report of Bangladesh’s Push Back Policy (April 1992 - September 2000)

| Date         | Number of Rohingya enter into Bangladesh | Means of transport used by Rohingyas | Channels used to enter Bangladesh | Pushed back by Bangladesh | Arrested by Bangladesh |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------|
| April 1992-September 1992 | 265,000 | Boats and trawler | Nayapara ferry, serapid, shahpori island | 627 | 183 |
| 1993-1997   | ...                         | ...                                 | ...                              | Repatriated 2,30,000     | ...                    |
| 2000        | 33,000 Rohingyas recognized as refugees | ...                                 | ...                              | ...                       | ...                    |

Source: Ahmed, 2010.

Table 3: A Report of Bangladesh’s Push Back Policy (June 2012- April 2013)

| Date         | Number of Rohingya enter into Bangladesh | Means of transport used by Rohingyas | Channels area used to enter Bangladesh | Number of Rohingyas pushed back by | Number of Rohingyas arrested by |
|--------------|------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|

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6.4 CAUSES OF ROHINGYAS PERSECUTION IN MYANMAR

It is a universal truth that the persecution of Muslim Rohingyas in Myanmar that continues 1982 to the present day. In 1982, the government introduced regulations that denied citizenship to anyone who could not prove Burmese ancestry from before 1823 (Parnini, 2013).

The largest Muslim group in Myanmar are the Rohingya people; the Rohingyas have been the most persecuted group under Myanmar’s military regime. Since 1948, successive Government carried out several military operations against the Rohingya (including in 1975, 1978, 1982-83, 1991-92, 2000, 2012, 2016 and 2017). During the operations, Myanmar security forces have driven the Rohingyas off their land, burned down their Masques and committed widespread looting, arson the household and rape of women. Therefore, it was continuous persecution, for which they forced to flee from Myanmar.
From the above table, we see that almost 57.5% of respondents said that the Myanmar government persecuted Rohingya for their religious belief. If we serve the data as total, we see that they think that Economic and political cause is also responsible behind their persecution and other 12.5 percent respondents think that they persecuted Rohingya for the fear of being grabbed Arakan region and also the future possibility of being damaged by Rohingyas in future.

6.5 THE IMPLICATION OF STATELESSNESS

Looking back at history it was clear that in the after a month of Burma’s war of Independence from the British colonial rule in 1842-1948, ethnic minorities of Burma have been repressed and harass and from that time, the relations between the Muslims and the Buddhists of Arakan began to deteriorate (Ahmed, 2010).

The Rohingya are not new in Myanmar, they lived for a century ago but when the 1982 citizenship law passed, any kind of official legal status was banned for them. The military regime of Myanmar labeled them Muslims as residence foreigners and persecuted them to flee from Myanmar.

Because of the law, their rights to study work, marry, practice their religion and access health services have been continuing to be restricted.

Since the 1970s, a number of crackdowns on the Rohingya in Rakhine state have forced hundreds of thousands to flee to Bangladesh as well as Malaysia, Thailand, and other Southeast Asian countries during such crackdowns; refugee had often reported rape, torture, arson and murder by Myanmar security forces. As a result, the majority of Rohingyas ended up as stateless Muslim nations in the world.

Table 5: Causes of Rohingyas Persecution

| Causes                        | Percentage |
|-------------------------------|------------|
| Religious                     | 57.5       |
| Economic                      | 7.5        |
| Political                     | 22.5       |
| (Possibility of Future damaged by Rohingyas, Both Political & Religious reason) | 12.5 |
| Total                         | 100.00     |

Source: Filed level survey, 2017

Table 6: Trends of Myanmar Oppression

| Year             | Rohingyas Oppression in Myanmar                                                                 |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1977-78          | A military operation in what is now known as Rakhine state drives out more than 200,000 Rohingyas to neighboring Bangladesh. Refugees report widespread rape and murder Bangladesh and Burma, as the country was then known, soon agree on a repatriation plan Many Rohingyas flew to India but authorities in Bangladesh cut food rations and camp conditions worsen. More than 10,000 Rohingyas died, according to Medecins sans Frontieres. An estimated 180,000 Rohingya return to Burma by 1979. |
| 1982             | Burma enacts the 1982 citizenship law, introducing a three-tier level of citizenship that effectively makes it impossible for Rohingyas to become official citizens of the country. Some 200,000-250,000 Rohingyas flee Rakhine state bringing allegations of force labour and rape by Myanmar’s military. Bangladesh houses the refugee is in a series of camps spread out through Cox’s Bazar district but insists the Rohingya must return to Myanmar. |
| 1991-1992        | Rohingya refugees are repatriated in spurts, but much of the process is mired in controversy. There are early reports of forced repatriation and coercion. The role of the UN’s refugee agency, UNHCR, is also criticized when they fail to repatriate Rohingya refugees. An estimated 2,30,000 refugees are return. |
| 1993-1997        | In the early 1990s influx, Kutupalong and Nayapara, which grow to a combined population of 33,000 officially recognized refugees. But more than 200,000 other Rohingyas are spread out in makeshift settlements in southern Bangladesh. |
| September 2000   | Myanmar’s military junta transfers power to a quasi-civilian government, which soon begins political and economic reforms aimed at engaging with the global community. |
| 2011             | Aung san suu kyi, who had spent parts of two decades under house arrest, wins a seat in parliament by-elections. |
| April 2012       | A nationwide census is held with support from the UN populations Fund, or UNFPA, but authorizes refuse to allow people to identify as Rohingya. The census estimates that roughly 1,090,000 people in northern Rakhine state were not counted during the enumeration. |
| 2014             | More than 5,000 people including Rohingyas from Myanmar and migrants from Bangladesh are stranded at sea after the ships they were traded at in were abandoned by smugglers. Aid groups believe 370 people died. The survivors come ashore in Indonesia, Thailand and Malaysia joining a growing number of Rohingyas in countries around the region and beyond. |
| May 2015         | |
November 2015
Aung San Suu Kyi’s National League for Democracy wins national elections Rohingya barred from voting, while the NLD does not run a single Muslim candidate.

October 2016
A group of Rohingya fighters calling itself the3 Arakan salvation army, or ARSA, attacks border posts in northern Rakhine state. The resulting military crackdown pushes more than 87,000 people into Bangladesh. Swelling refugee numbers in the crowded camps. Refugee and rights groups claim widespread abuses, which the military denies.

March 2017
The United Nations started Mission to investigate claims of rights abuses in Myanmar, including the October 2016 violence in Rakhine. Myanmar refugee’s entry to the right probe.

Aug 24, 2017
The Kafi Annan-led Advisory commission on Rakhine state, established a year earlier by Aug san Suu Kyi to make recommendations on Peace Building in Rakhine, issues its final report, it includes a recommendation to revisit the controversial 1982 citizenship law. De fact to leader Suu Kyi promises to give the report full consideration.

Aug 25 2017
Within hours, ARSA fighters stage a new round of attacks in Northern Rakhine state, Myanmar’s military responds with a sweeping crackdown in Rohingya communities. By the end of the year, more than 6,50,000 new Rohingya refugees enter Bangladesh. Among them 82 thousand women were pregnant and 2 lac children at health risk.

Nov 2017
Bangladesh and Myanmar announce they have reached an agreement to repatriate Rohingya refugees, through details of the plan were unclear.

Source: IRIN, 2017 & filed level survey 2017

6.6 INTEGRATION PROCESS OFROHINGYA

Process of Rohingyas integration into the local community has appeared as a solution to the refugee problem. Such integration depends on several factors these include:

1) The willingness of the refugees to settle locally.
2) The receptiveness and commitment of the host country and local population towards the integration of refugee populations.
3) Access to livelihoods and means for Socio-economic survival.
4) Opportunities for refugees to acquire citizenship and achieve full integration into the host society (Alam, 2017).

The total process of local integration, the international community play an important role, which may include financial assistance to the host government, local communities, and to the refugees to assist in their integration into the host society. I found that the large numbers of Rohingya in Bangladesh derive in part from the social, ethnic, Linguistic and mostly same religious characteristics that they share with the host community.

The most important fact that many Rohingyas are integrated into Bangladesh society in mainly four ways-
1. Illegally collecting Bangladeshi national identity card with the help of local political leaders.
2. Inter-marriage with local Bangladesh.
3. Particularly their common adherence to Islam.
4. Moreover, their involvement in different informal jobs.

6.7 THE FUTURE OFROHINGYA CRISIS

Local people in Cox’s Bazar are worried about Rohingyas future as over 1 million Rohingyas have already crossed the border into the district fleeing ethnic cleansing in Myanmar putting immense strain on infrastructure, services and low paid job market even everything. Local people said that they continued assisting Rohingyas, but they were concerned about their future as the massive Rohingya influx was putting extra pressure on food, shelter, sanitation, market price, local job market, natural resources, and transportation cost. Most of the respondents said, “Our future is black, as Rohingyas are causing price hike, transport fee hike and added that the local poor would also lose jobs as Rohingya labour would be cheaper. Cox’s Bazar refugee relief and rehabilitation Centre declared that they would bring all Rohingyas into a mega camp to prevent their mingling with locals. However, UN warning about the conflict between locals and Rohingyas, RRRC said that such apprehension was there but no such situation had arisen so far. We are on alert about possible conflict.

After new waves of Rohingya influx has overcrowded Teknaf and Ukhiya Upazila’s health facilities and put extra pressure on water sources. Rohingyas are posing threat to the outbreak of diseases and hampering education. Since August 25, when last round of Rohingya influx began, market price increased significantly, transportation costs doubled, number of patients at health facilities tripled and Rohingyas have destroyed forest of at least Six kilometers and living in 12-k.m2 area of reserved forests. The way Rohingyas made shelter on hill slopes and cutting down the forest, a normal landslide and cyclone could call on heavy damages to the area. Beside they hamper tourism business in beach town Cox’s Bazar. Prices of coarse rice and flour increased significantly, and vegetable prices doubled. In the first week on October 2017 prices of all main food commodities, including rice, flour, salt, oil, potato, sugar, pulses increased. Local people also expressed fear of deterioration of law and order situation in the locality if the Rohingyas could come outside the camps and look for jobs and they might be involved in criminal activities. In addition, Rohingyas are working as an agriculture laborer, fishing boat worker, and rickshaw-puller. With physical features very similar to those of Bengalis, Rohingyas can easily mix
with the Bangladeshi community and in this way; maybe Rohingyas can assimilate with the people of Bangladesh in the future.

7. CONCLUSION

The Rohingya crisis has given rise to different problems for Bangladesh. This study conducted to find out the causes of the Rohingya refugee crisis and their statelessness. The main findings of the study were the causes of Rohingyas persecutions in Myanmar was their religious belief and obviously the political economy of Myanmar government. In addition, continuous persecutions of the Myanmar military government rendered them most persecuted and Stateless nations in the world. While the government of Bangladesh, Regional and international communities are playing the critical role to provide humanitarian and other support to the Rohingyas, but they were not taking the effective steps to resolve these problems permanently. In Bangladesh Though Rohingyas refugees are involved in various destructive activities, they have no other clear options for surviving here. Whence, they perceived as an unwanted burden for our society. Now, the Rohingya issue needs a permanent solution and not incremental fixings. Moreover, for that: First, provide them full citizenship status and rights in their country (Myanmar). Second, the government of Myanmar has to take back all the Rohingyas who have fled to different parts of Asia particularly in Bangladesh. Finally, the process of further “Burmanisation” of Myanmar has been stopped (Ranjjan, 2017).

However, repatriation could be a solution to the Rohingya refugee crisis, but this issue completely depends on the Government of both the countries of Bangladesh and Myanmar. In addition, before doing all these policy planning and implementation, it is also equally imperative to understand what the Myanmar government can and should do to single out these problems. According to my observation, provide humanitarian and other assistance to Rohingyas are not the real solution of this crisis. Rather we should take effective measures with the help of Regional and international body so that this crisis can be permanently resolved. In this case, we have to be less emotional and more rational. Therefore, life in makeshift camps does not solve the crisis rather prolongs the crisis.

8. LIMITATION AND STUDY FORWARD

The main limitations of the study that the study was only conducted on local peoples in Cox’s Bazar who lives in Camp area. Local peoples especially the women were reluctant to face interview. Data collected in rainy season for that some unintentional interruptions occurred. Data collector was not highly educated, for that some inconvenience observed during the data analysis. I think to get better inside on this issue in-depth interview would be better. In addition, we are not able to clarify the findings properly.

To do this I would like to suggest some plausible recommendations for future study. The recommendations are following

- All unregistered Rohingya refugees living inside or outside should be documented with the help of local NGOs and government organizations. Diplomatic efforts should be made to repatriate them to Myanmar through bilateral agreement.
- The retribution should be strict in case of the persons who are kindles the situation against the minority.
- A special committee should be formed to overlook the circumstances.
- Everybody should be reverential to the religious beliefs of others.
-Particular steps should have to be constituted to handle any kind of emergency.
- Most of the local people are more concerned about the hike prices of necessary goods and for this government should take proper steps. Some measures GoB will be taking such as tree plantations, stopped fuelwood collections, stopped hill cutting activities, etc.
- Keeping in line with its foreign policy, Bangladesh should take the first step diplomatically. As there exists a gap in terms of values and norms between Bangladesh and Myanmar.
- Bangladesh Government must take determined steps to stop illegal trade, arms trafficking under control.
- The government of Bangladesh has to continue energetic diplomacy, particularly with the regional partners (Myanmar, India, and China) to solve the problem.
- At first, Myanmar should bring all the Rohingyas back from Bangladesh and provide citizenship to them.
- ASEAN and SAARC can mediate between the two countries.
- UNHCR should take initiatives to solve the problems related to Rohingya refugees.
- As both are members of the UN, the UN can take measures to ease the relationship between Bangladesh and Myanmar.
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